
Portrayal of Women With Postpartum Depression in Nollywood Movies

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Abstract

In 21st-century literary and cinematic productions, a notable fracture emerges through the voices of women grappling with the delicate balance between life and career. It surfaces through the imperative to confront issues like baby blues, postpartum depression, infanticide, and various conditions jeopardizing the mother-child relationship. Concurrently, representations of mental health issues, particularly postpartum depression in Nollywood films, tend to perpetuate existing myths, prejudices, misconceptions, and anxieties surrounding mental illness. Therefore, this study investigates the portrayal of women with postpartum depression in Nollywood movies. The study is guided by Framing Theory and employs a combination of quantitative and qualitative research designs, utilizing content analysis and key informant interviews. The non-human population sample comprises 10 Nollywood movies released in 2015, depicting women with postpartum depression. Key-informant interviews involve professionals from orthodox and alternative medicine, as well as the movie industry. Purposive and available sampling techniques were utilized, first selecting movies available on the Iroko TV app to ensure comprehensive representation. Subsequently, a Nollywood movie producer/director and experts from orthodox and alternative medicine were purposively sampled. Findings reveal that recent stressful life events are a major contributing factor to postpartum depression among women in Nollywood movies. The majority of afflicted mothers experience challenges in bonding with their infants. Content producers believe that counseling serves as a more

effective alternative treatment for postpartum depression compared to science-based treatments. This study recommends engaging the media to promote mental health education, rectifying inaccurate perceptions often depicted by auteurs.

Keywords: Nollywood Movies, Postpartum Depression, Women, Orthodox, Alternative Medicine

Word count: 241

Introduction

Common perinatal mental disorders, such as depression, anxiety, and somatic disorders, significantly contribute to disability during and after pregnancy, impacting the well-being of both mothers and children (Fairbrother, Janssen, Antony, Tucker, and Young, 2016). Depression is a leading global cause of disability for all age groups and genders (WHO, 2010). Unfortunately, women experience higher lifetime rates of depression (10%-25%) compared to men (WHO, 2010; Ayers and Shakespeare, 2015).

Pregnancy is recognized as a vulnerable state for mental health (Leddy, Haaga, Gray, and Schulkin, 2011), with motherhood encompassing a range of emotions, including excitement, joy, fear, and anxiety (Mayo Clinic, 2015). While fear and anxiety are common, they can also signal potential postpartum depression (Mayo Clinic, 2015). Mental health, encompassing emotional, psychological, and social well-being, plays a crucial role in overall health (CDC, 2018).

In June 2001, a tragic incident involving Andrea Yates, who purposefully drowned her five children, highlighted the severe consequences of untreated postpartum depression (Hamill, 2001). Despite its global significance, postpartum depression has often been overlooked, and the

causes, though unclear, are believed to be a combination of physical and emotional factors, including a lack of support and substance use disorder (Paulson, 2011).

Postpartum depression, or postnatal depression, ranks as the second leading contributor to the global burden of disease (WHO, 2012), affecting both mothers and children (Alharbi and Abdulghani, 2014). Studies indicate that approximately 13% of new mothers experience postpartum depression (Jones, Creedy, and Gamble, 2011), with one in seven women detected within a year of giving birth (Ertel, Koenen, and Rich-Edwards, 2011; APA, 2018). Despite its prevalence, postpartum depression often goes undiagnosed due to social stigma and constraints such as time (Gaynes, Gavin, and Meltzer-Brody, 2005 as cited in Horowitz et al., 2011).

Symptoms of postpartum depression range from persistent sadness and lack of energy to difficulty bonding with the baby and frightening thoughts (Logsdon et al., 2012). Women, facing unique challenges, often conform to societal expectations, contributing to the stigma associated with postpartum depression (Rizzo et al., 2013).

The portrayal of mental illness in entertainment media, particularly movies, holds significant influence over public perceptions and understanding. However, such depictions often perpetuate myths and stereotypes, contributing to the stigmatization of mental disorders (Kimmerle and Cress, 2013). Movies, as a powerful medium, play a crucial role in shaping beliefs and attitudes toward mental illness (Cape, 2003).

While movies have the potential to disseminate knowledge about mental health, their portrayal of mental illness tends to exaggerate and perpetuate stereotypes. In Nollywood, the Nigerian film industry, there is

a considerable gap in the depiction of postpartum depression, with limited attention given to the realistic experiences of women (Abah, 2008).

This study aims to explore how postpartum depression is portrayed in selected Nollywood movies and examines the treatments depicted in these films. Additionally, it investigates the perspectives of Nollywood producers/directors and professionals in both orthodox and alternative medicine regarding the portrayal of postpartum depression in women.

Statement of the Problem

While mental health concerns have garnered increased attention in recent years, postpartum depression remains an inadequately explored facet of mental health research (Abedzadeh et al., 2011; Tsai and Thomas, 2012; Rizzo et al., 2013; Alexander and McMullen, 2014; Mayo Clinic, 2015; Henderson et al., 2016; Upadhyay et al., 2017). This particular mental health disorder, pervasive among postpartum women, confronts the challenges of being understudied, under-documented, and poorly understood and managed, especially in Nigeria and other developing countries (Msiqwa, 2010). Despite its classification as a significant public health problem (Fitelson et al., 2010), postpartum depression has yet to receive the focused attention it warrants.

Sociologist Orna Donath's work on maternal ambivalence, as highlighted in "Regretting Motherhood," suggests that understanding this ambivalence can aid women in reaching a crucial maternal developmental milestone (Donath, 2017: 44). However, the role of movies as influential sources of information and catalysts for social change complicates this perspective. Some studies contend that media, including movies, can perpetuate misinformation, shaping public perceptions regarding the causes, symptoms, stigma, and treatment of mental illness (Knifton and Quinn, 2008; Atilola and Olayiwola, 2011).

Nollywood, the globally second-ranked film industry with extensive viewership in Africa and beyond (Sahara Reporters, 2015), has been implicated in reinforcing existing myths, prejudices, and misconceptions surrounding mental illness, contributing to negative depictions (Atilola and Olayiwola, 2013). The portrayal of mental illness in Nigerian films, including Nollywood, tends to connect it to demonic possession, witchcraft, or supernatural roots, perpetuating harmful stereotypes and hindering individuals from seeking psychological help (Egbejule, 2019). This cultural lens may impact public understanding and hinder efforts to accurately represent mental health struggles in films.

While some filmmakers, such as Grace Edwin-Okon, attempt to challenge prevailing narratives and depict mental illness more accurately in films like "Little Drops of Happy" (2017), these endeavors often contend with profitability challenges compared to sensationalized versions of mental health narratives. The need for responsible and nuanced representations that incorporate both spiritual perspectives and clinical understanding becomes apparent.

Therefore, the primary problem this study addresses is the depiction of women with postpartum depression in selected Nollywood movies, the treatment methods portrayed in these movies, and the perceptions of professionals in orthodox medicine, alternative medicine, and the movie industry concerning the portrayal of women with postpartum depression. This research seeks to fill the gap in understanding how Nollywood contributes to shaping societal perceptions of postpartum depression and explore potential implications for mental health awareness and public attitudes.

Research Questions

- 1) What distinct physical characteristics and attributes are portrayed in women experiencing postpartum depression in the selected Nollywood movies?

- 2) What factors are depicted as contributing to postpartum depression among women in the selected Nollywood movies?
- 3) In what manner are women with postpartum depression portrayed in the selected Nollywood movies?
- 4) What types of treatment options are presented for women undergoing postpartum depression in the selected Nollywood movies?

Research Objectives

- 1) To analyze the diverse physical characteristics and attributes attributed to women depicted with postpartum depression in the selected Nollywood movies.
- 2) To identify and explore the factors presented in the selected Nollywood movies as contributing to postpartum depression among women.
- 3) To examine the representations of women experiencing postpartum depression and the nuanced ways in which these depictions are portrayed in the selected Nollywood movies.
- 4) To assess and categorize the various treatment modalities showcased for women grappling with postpartum depression in the selected Nollywood movies.

The Concept of Postpartum Depression

The two most widely accepted standard definitions of Postpartum Depression (PPD) are those provided by the American Psychiatric Association Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Health Disorders Fifth Edition (DSM-V), and the 10th edition of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10) published by World Health Organisation (WHO).

Postpartum depression (PPD) is indeed defined by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) as a sub-category of major depression.

The symptoms you mentioned, including a sad mood lasting at least two weeks accompanied by at least four other symptoms such as crying spells, insomnia, depressed mood, fatigue, anxiety, and poor concentration, align with common criteria used to diagnose postpartum depression. Additionally, the onset of PPD typically occurs within four weeks of delivery, according to the APA (2013).

The ICD-10 classifies PPD as a depressive episode with three different stages: (a) mild (four symptoms); (b) moderate (five symptoms); or (c) severe (at least five symptoms, with agitation, feelings of worthlessness or guilt or suicidal thoughts or acts) (WHO, 2010).

The WHO (2010) stipulates that PPD must be diagnosed within a primary diagnostic category with a specifier to indicate an association with childbirth.

Postnatal mental illness is a global health concern with well-documented negative effects of postnatal mental illnesses on the infant and mother (Almond, 2009; Letourneau, et al., 2012). The most common disorders are depression and anxiety disorders, which affect between 10 and 20% of women (Ayers and Shakespeare, 2015).

Postpartum depression is an affective mood disorder that has symptoms similar to baby blues (Peabody & Santoro, 2010). The difference between baby blues and postpartum depression is that the symptoms of postpartum depression continue after the first two weeks of a baby being born (Peabody and Santoro, 2010).

In other words, postpartum depression is a serious mood disorder that may carry life-long consequences for a woman and her family (Corwin et al., 2010).

Stigma can delay help-seeking and many women feel postnatal mental illness is stigmatised and do not want to be seen as a “bad mother” and this is often cited as a barrier to care (Dennis and McLoughlin, 2013). Stigma can be external or internal. External stigma is the extreme disapproval of a person or a group of people due to a characteristic that is considered abnormal or highly undesirable by society.

Internal stigma occurs if the stigmatised individual agrees with the external stigma and applies the negative appraisal to themselves thus, internalizing the stigma (Corrigan, Rafacz, and Rüsich, 2011).

Movies and Women with Postpartum Depression

Today, the portrayal of mental illness in movies or as a backdrop for other themes is common (Anderson, 2003). More often than not the images they portray are negative or inaccurate but because they are carried by a potent medium, they can gain access to a large number of people, spreading stigmas about a highly misunderstood disease (Kondo, 2008).

In his article titled: "Representing postpartum depression in contemporary cinema," Giulia, (2018) examined Cristina Comencini's 2011 movies (*Quando la Notte*) and Alina Marazzi's 2012 first fictional film (*Tutto parladi te*) whose very different cinematographic languages challenge the traditional way of thinking about maternity.

In their movies, *Quando la notte* (2011) and *Tutto parla di te* (2012), movie makers Cristina Comencini and Alina Marazzi respectively display their uneasiness with the maternal role by questioning the conventional understanding of the experience of maternity, which does not always coincide with the most beautiful time in a woman's life. Comencini's film presents the story of a woman struggling to cope alone with her one-and-a-half-year-old son; Marazzi investigates stories of women who suffer from postpartum depression.

The directors explore the problematic emotions that characterize motherhood, including the contrasting feelings of solitude and solidarity and how both Comencini and Marazzi develop a female stance that hints at a re-appropriation of identity: the former through the assertion of female pleasure and the latter through a choral representation of a female symbolic order.

Maternity is simultaneously idealized and neglected. The society is rooted in the idea of an archetypal female disposition to “nurture, protect, and love” (Valcarengi, 2011: IX); maternity is largely perceived as the realm of pure “happiness and generosity” (Valcarengi, 2011: 3). Nevertheless, sociologists and researchers such as Donata Gottardi and Catia Iori (2015) have used the term island to describe the isolation, solitude, and fears of women's maternal condition, and denounce an overall inability to envision maternity as an important social issue.

Maternity remains a woman's question, (Gottardi, 2015) and the separation between the individual and society does not simply emerge in the lack of institutional support, or the lack of stability at the workplace, but also in women's difficulty not only to face but also express the challenges that come with their new or aspiring maternal role, within their family or circle of friends.

Indeed, by revealing the hidden side of the pain, fragility, pressure, and conflicts of maternity, movies represent on screen what Rich once called “anxiety, physical weariness, anger, self-blame, boredom” (Rich, 1986: 15). It has not been only recently that women have found the words to talk about the “taboos” and the “masks” that Adrienne Rich gives voice to.

As Laura Benedetti has demonstrated, 20th-century women's literature offers many examples of female protagonists who overcome the stereotypical and mythical representations of women “trapped in a web of

symbolic associations" (Benedetti, 2007: 4) to the sacrificial Virgin Mary or the powerful Medea.

Cottino-Jones (2010) has also illustrated how movies provide numerous examples of female protagonists who resist a traditional codification of "good" or "bad" and challenge "the dominant, conservative masculine point of view ... by decentering the masculinity and highlighting the female potential" (Cottino-Jones, 2010: 5).

Review of Empirical Studies

A prevalent criticism of media portrayals of mental illness contends that they are often unrealistic, inaccurate, and prone to misinforming the audience (Knifton and Quinn, 2008). Chan and Yanos (2018) emphasize the tendency for media to inaccurately depict mental illness, often emphasizing negative attributes and potentially influencing public perceptions. Notably, discussions on "postpartum depression" (PPD) frequently involve misleading information, linking it erroneously to maternal harm or neglect (Postpartum Support International, 2021).

Atilola and Olayiwola (2011) argue that cinematic depictions of mental illness, particularly in Yoruba language movies, are largely unrealistic due to the prevalence of magical and spiritual themes. Similarly, a study on media representations of pregnant and postpartum women reveals a consistent trend of unrealistic portrayals contributing to poor body image among women (Lila, 2017).

Moreover, a survey conducted by Toni Liechty and her team at the University of Illinois highlights the dissatisfaction among women with media images of pregnant and postpartum bodies, deeming them idealistic and disconnected from real experiences. Women expressed a preference for authentic depictions that focus on their experiences rather than solely on physical appearances (Liechty, unpublished data).

In a contrasting perspective, the media has the potential to depict postpartum depression positively, as seen in the storyline of *General Hospital* (Mary, John, and Vanessa, 2017). While created for entertainment, this portrayal offers a glimpse into the challenges faced by families dealing with postpartum mood disorders, ultimately emphasizing the importance of seeking treatment.

Conversely, controversies arise in the portrayal of postpartum depression in the film *'Tully'*, with critics questioning its marketing approach and the accuracy of its depiction (Warner, 2018). Research by Hannah (2019) suggests that media portrayals, as seen in TV shows like *Private Practice* and *Susanna*, can discourage women from seeking help for postpartum depression, perpetuating stigmatizing beliefs.

Shields (2005) recounts negative reactions to her openness about postpartum depression, indicating that media portrayals can contribute to individuals denying their own experiences with the disorder. Similarly, the portrayal of mentally ill individuals in Nigerian movies aligns with stigmatizing stereotypes (Atilola and Olayiwola, 2011).

Swami (2012) suggests that mental health literacy is influenced by gender role ideologies, reinforcing stereotypical views of masculinity and femininity. Media portrayals, according to studies (Clarke & Miele, 2016), tend to underrepresent men experiencing mental health disorders, contributing to the perception that men are less prone to postnatal depression.

Furthermore, the representation of alternative treatment options in media narratives often emphasizes supernatural methods, such as incantations and magical objects, over psychiatric care (Atilola and Olayiwola, 2013). While traditional and faith healers play a crucial role in mental

healthcare, their involvement can lead to delayed access to specialized services (Ikwaka et al., 2016).

In Nigeria, the preference for traditional healing methods before seeking psychiatric help is prevalent due to factors like stigma and cultural beliefs (Atilola and Olayiwola, 2011). The social acceptance of traditional treatments may be attributed to reduced stigma and cultural empathy (Atilola and Olayiwola, 2011). Nonetheless, the delay in seeking specialized care can contribute to prolonged untreated mental illness (Ikwaka et al., 2016).

Theoretical Framework: Framing Theory

Framing theory, introduced by Gregory Bateson in 1972, posits that certain issues attract a higher degree of attention from the media to place them within a meaningful context (Arowolo, 2017). This theory suggests that the media frames issues by shaping the way they are presented, influencing public perception and understanding. Framing involves contemplating news items and structuring story content within a specific framework.

As Zhou and Moy (2007) cite Goffman (1974), frames act as interpretive mechanisms allowing individuals to situate, gain perspective on, identify, and label events. Wang (2013) defines framing as the process of assigning meaning and voice to a person's subjective perception of an issue about their immediate environment. Frames, as emphasized by Entman (2003) and Bennett (2016), determine which issues will receive more prominence in communication.

Scheufele and Tewkesbury (2007) and Weaver (2007) argue that the extensive literature on priming, framing, and agenda-setting theories indicates connections among these concepts. Frames play a crucial role in communication, influencing how information is perceived and shaping

public opinion. The relationship between priming, framing, and agenda-setting is intricate, with agenda-setting focusing on "what," framing on "how," and priming acting as an underlying factor.

Frames serve different functions, influencing how individuals interpret and understand phenomena. Tewksbury and Scheufele (2019) note that framing effects occur when people apply culturally supplied interpretive schemas to their understanding of various issues. Frames inform people about how to comprehend a target by indicating which constructs and ideas are most applicable, shaping beliefs and attitudes.

Parrott and Parrott (2015) suggest that frames in a communicating text may define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies. For example, in the context of mental illness, frames may define the problem as linking mental illnesses to violence, diagnose the cause of crimes as related to mental illnesses, make moral judgments about the capabilities of individuals with mental illnesses, and suggest remedies such as incarceration for non-compliance with treatment programs.

This study adopts Framing Theory as a theoretical framework to explore how women with postpartum depression are framed in selected Nollywood movies. Examining the framing of postpartum depression in entertainment media is crucial as frames communicate considerations relevant to understanding a phenomenon or issue (Tewksbury & Riles, 2018).

Methodology

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative research. Content analysis, using a coding sheet, and key informant interviews were conducted to examine the portrayal of postpartum depression in Nigerian movies. The non-human population comprised ten purposively selected Nollywood movies depicting

postpartum depression, while the human population included a movie producer/director and practitioners from orthodox and alternative medicine. Key informant interviews gathered insights from individuals with specialized knowledge in mental health. Purposive and available sampling methods were used for movie selection and participant recruitment. Research instruments included a coding sheet for content analysis and an interview guide for key informant interviews with industry professionals. Validity and reliability were ensured through expert validation and pretesting of the instruments on individuals not part of the study, leading to refinements.

Data collection involved manual coding of content analysis data from Nollywood movies on the IrokoTV app. Key informant interviews were conducted through phone calls and online platforms, with transcriptions and thematic analysis performed by the researcher.

Thematic analysis was applied to interpret content analysis data, aligning themes with research objectives. Results were presented using tables and charts for clarity.

Presentation of Findings According to the Content Categories

**Table 1: Physical Characteristics of Women with Postpartum Depression in Selected
Nollywood Movies**

Movies	Characteristics/ Attributes	After Birth	Troubled Water	Omugwo	Little Drops of Happy	The Women	Tainted Canvas	For Maria Eburn Pataki	Therapy	Unseen	After One	Total	Percentage
Age Group	Young	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	9	90%
	Adult							*				1	10%
Social Status	Level of education (indicated)					*						1	10%
	Level of education (not indicated)	*	*	*	*		*	*		*	*	9	90%
Social Class	Upper	*	*			*		*	*			5	50%
	Lower		*		*		*			*	*	5	50%
Economic Status	Unemployed					*			*			2	20%
	Employed	*	*	*	*		*	*		*	*	8	80%
Role of Characters	Lead role	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	9	90%
	Supporting role					*						1	10%
The Mother Involved	First-time mothers	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*		7	70%
	Mothers of preterm babies	*				*				*		3	30%

Table 1 reveals key attributes of postpartum depression in the selected Nollywood movies. The data indicates a prevalence of young female characters as victims (90%), with only one adult mother (10%) among the ten analyzed cases. Additionally, only 10% of the characters had their education referenced in the narratives, shedding light on the varying emphasis placed by directors on education in depicting postpartum depression.

Analysis of social class representation shows that Nollywood portrays postpartum depression affecting women from both upper and lower classes. Regarding economic status, 80% of the depicted women did not engage in employment while experiencing postpartum depression. In terms of narrative roles, a significant majority (90%) of the characters with postpartum depression occupied lead roles.

Furthermore, the study reveals that a substantial portion (70%) of the depicted women were first-time mothers, while a smaller proportion (30%) were mothers of preterm babies in the Nollywood movies analyzed.

Table 2: Factors Responsible for Women with Postpartum Depression in Selected Nollywood Movies

Movies	After Birth	Troubled Water	Omugwo	Little Drops of Happy	The Women	Tainted Canvas	For Maria Ebun Pataki	Therapy	Unseen	After One	Total	Percentage
Frustration			*	*							2	10%
Having Baby Blues	*				*	*					3	15%

Mentally Unready								*			1	5%
Poor Social Network		*	*			*					3	15%
Marital Conflict	*									*	2	10%
Hormonal Change							*		*		2	10%
A history of Depression/ Mental Disorder	*										1	5%
Recent Stressful Life Events		*			*	*		*			4	20%
Ill-prepared motherhood				*	*						2	10%

Table 2 presents the contributing factors to postpartum depression among women in the selected Nollywood movies. The analysis unveiled the following recurring factors: recent stressful life events (20%), experiencing baby blues (15%), having a poor social network (15%), marital conflict (10%), hormonal changes (10%), frustration (10%), and feeling ill-prepared for motherhood (10%). Additionally, factors such as feeling mentally unready (5%) and having a history of mental health problems (5%) were observed at lower frequencies.

Table 3: Depicted Indicators of Postpartum Depression in Women in Selected Nollywood Movies

Movies	After Birth	Troubled Water	Omugwo	Little Drops of Happy	The Women	Tainted Canvas	For Maria Eburn Pataki	Therapy	Unseen	After One	Total	Percentage
Unkempt Appearance	*	*		*		*	*				5	12.8%
Low Mood/ Mood Swings	*	*		*		*		*		*	6	15.4%
Fear of Failure in Motherhood			*				*				2	5.1%
Suicidal Ideation				*					*		2	5.1%
Fatigue/ Low Energy	*							*		*	3	7.7%
Withdrawing from Family and Friends	*			*		*		*			4	10.3%
Insomnia		*		*			*			*	4	10.3%
Unprovoked Aggression/ Violence	*							*			2	5.1%
Trouble Bonding with the Baby	*	*			*	*	*	*		*	7	17.9%
Consistently Tearful	*			*		*		*			4	10.3%

In Table 3, the portrayed manifestations of women experiencing postpartum depression in the chosen Nollywood movies are detailed. The results highlight the following prevalent indicators: trouble bonding with the baby (17.9%), low mood or mood swings (15.4%), an unkempt appearance (12.8%), withdrawing from family and friends (10.3%), experiencing insomnia (10.3%), being consistently tearful (10.3%), and facing fatigue or low energy (7.7%). Conversely, less frequently depicted indicators include unprovoked aggression (5.1%), fear of failure in motherhood (5.1%), and suicidal ideation (5.1%).

Discussion of Research Findings

Data obtained through content analysis and key informant interview guide were analysed and discussed under each research question:

Research Question One: What distinct physical characteristics and attributes are portrayed in women experiencing postpartum depression in the selected Nollywood movies?

Findings indicate a notable emphasis on depicting young women experiencing postpartum depression in movies compared to their older counterparts. This prevalence suggests that a majority of postpartum depression cases in cinematic portrayals involve young mothers rather than older ones. Aligning with previous studies, the results affirm a correlation between giving birth at a young age and the manifestation of postpartum depression symptoms (Reid and Meadows-Oliver, 2007; Dahmen et al., 2013; Agnafors et al., 2019).

Additionally, a significant portion of the analyzed movies did not provide information about the educational background of the depicted women. This observation underscores the varying importance attributed by movie directors to linking education with representations of postpartum depression. This aligns with the findings of Aroyewun-adekomaiya and

Aroyewun (2019), suggesting a lack of emphasis on education in the portrayal of mental illnesses in movies.

The study also revealed the portrayal of women from both upper and lower social classes in Nollywood movies. Notably, characters in these movies, in terms of economic status, were predominantly depicted as not working to sustain themselves during the period of illness. Many characters struggled to concentrate on their work, often necessitating time off or completely discontinuing work during the duration of their postpartum depression.

Research Question Two: What factors are depicted as contributing to postpartum depression among women in the selected Nollywood movies? The results of the study highlight that recent stressful life events emerge as the primary identifiable cause for postpartum depression in women within the selected movies. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Atilola and Olayiwola (2011), which similarly observed that certain movies attribute severe psychological stress as a cause of mental illness.

Research Question Three: In what manner are women with postpartum depression portrayed in the selected Nollywood movies?

Most of the selected movies portrayed women with postpartum depression in a negative way. Findings revealed that mothers having trouble bonding with their babies tops the list of depicted indicators of postpartum depression in women. In many of the selected movies, most of the women did not want to see or carry their babies and at the same time, they nurtured hatred towards their babies. The husbands of these affected mothers were seen taking the responsibility of taking care of the babies throughout the period that their mothers were suffering from postpartum depression. Of course, this made it difficult for bonding or close relationships to take place between the mother and the child.

It was also deduced from the study that low mood/mood swings are the second highest depicted indicator in women with postpartum depression in the selected movies. In most of these movies, the mothers seemed to fluctuate sharply between excitement and sadness, good/happy mothers, and moody mothers.

Unkempt Appearance was the third most common indicator of postpartum depression victims in the selected Nollywood movies. Most of the characters were well-dressed and good-looking except the women with postpartum depression who had unkempt hair and wore dull clothing or mismatched clothing.

It was also deduced from the study that some of the affected mothers preferred to be alone and did not want to associate with friends and family members. It was disclosed that most of these affected mothers had insomnia- a disorder in sleep, showing some signs of fatigue/low energy and engaged in persistent crying as depicted by these movies.

Nevertheless, unprovoked aggression/violence, fear of failure in motherhood, and suicidal ideation were featured at lower rates. This is in opposition to studies that depicted violence and danger as the most common and popular depiction of mental illness in the media (Knifton and Quinn 2008; Morris, 2006, Atilola and Olayiwola 2011).

However, in this study, the theme of violence as a feature of the postpartum depression victims was not as prominent as it has been reported for other forms of mental illnesses in previous studies.

Research Question Four: What types of treatment options are presented for women undergoing postpartum depression in the selected Nollywood movies?

This particular research question inquired into the modalities of treatment available to the women with postpartum depression in the selected Nollywood movies. It is important to categorically state here that in most of the selected movies, it was discovered that most of the postpartum women were not aware that they needed help. They were persuaded by their family and friends to seek medical help as a way out of their illness. For this reason, both orthodox medicine and alternative medicine were reflected and investigated in the movies selected for this study.

However, findings revealed that visits to medical practitioners and the use of medications appear as the higher science-based treatment options in the selected movies, with psychiatric intervention and home/community-based taking the lower rates. However, science-based treatment has the least representation when compared to alternative treatment modalities in the narratives.

This study revealed that content producers of narratives believe that visits to practitioners for counseling are one of the most effective alternative ways of treating or managing women with postpartum depression. This research work corroborates the study of Aroyewun-adekomaiya and Aroyewun, (2019), where their findings revealed that content producers of narratives believe that alternative medicine is a more effective way to treat mental illness.

Use of herbs for treatment; and visits to centers like the church as options for alternative mental health care practice, incantation, and exorcism featured at lower rates. To this end, the study found out alternative medicine modality is preferable in movie representations for the treatment of women with postpartum depression than science-based treatment.

More Excerpts from Key-Informant Interviews

Key-informant interviews with professionals from orthodox and alternative medicine revealed dissatisfaction with the portrayal of women

with postpartum depression in movies. Dr. Funmbi Opadola, a psychiatrist, criticized the outdated and stigmatizing depiction in Nollywood movies, emphasizing the negative impact on survivors. He questioned the film industry's responsibility in addressing mental illness appropriately.

Dr. Lanre Bolarinwa from alternative medicine criticized the lack of research in movie-making, highlighting the potential harm caused by sensationalizing mental illnesses. He expressed concern about reinforcing negative cultural aspects and suggested that movies could contribute to regression.

Dr. Opadola further criticized the treatment modalities depicted in Nollywood, advocating for a balance between psychiatry and alternative medicine. He highlighted the importance of avoiding practices that dehumanize the mentally ill.

Dr. Lanre Babatunde echoed concerns about the inaccurate representation of alternative treatment in movies and urged filmmakers to seek proper understanding before depicting mental illnesses.

Nollywood director Diji Aderogba acknowledged the entertainment value of movies but stressed the need for adequate education and research on mental illnesses. While admitting some movies stigmatize mental illnesses, he emphasized the positive portrayals and the importance of collaborating with medical practitioners for accurate information.

In summary, professionals from both medical fields expressed concerns about the negative portrayal and inaccurate depiction of postpartum depression and mental illnesses in Nollywood movies, calling for responsible filmmaking, research, and collaboration with medical experts.

Conclusion

Postpartum depression in the movies has recurring themes that suggest specific meanings about mental health. Analysis of media representations of movies produced in Nigeria, with particular emphasis on English language genres, has confirmed the factor of recent stressful life events as the major explainable reason for the emergency of postpartum depression among women in movies. Stressful life events such as marital challenges, occupational problems, financial problems, problems related to the social environment, problems with access to health care services, and exposure to disasters/wars and other hostilities.

References made to full recovery or remission of symptoms of postpartum depression from alternative treatments reinforce perceptions of successor efficacy movie makers attribute to spiritual beliefs in the narratives.

Also, from this study, perceptions held about postpartum depression in these movies suggest recurring references made to women having difficulties in bonding or having a close relationship with their babies as possible depicted indicators for postpartum depression in women.

Recommendations

Every meaningful research aims at giving solutions to problems identified for specific categories of people, such as corporate organizations and individuals. This set of important entities has so much to gain from this study because their knowledge about postpartum depression will expand. Based on the findings and conclusions reached after investigating the portrayal of women with postpartum depression in Nollywood movies, the following recommendations are made:

To ensure that the media does not stigmatize women with perinatal mood and anxiety disorders, they should be engaged in addressing mental education in an attempt to replace inaccurate information and myths with

accurate conceptions about the nature and prevalence of mental illnesses, thereby improving mental health knowledge and overall mental health literacy. This would help correct some of the consistent errors we see in movies and also improve symptom recognition, help-seeking behaviours, early identification of the onset of mental disorders, reduce stigma and increase empathy.

Legislation on mental health issues should also be taken seriously and at the same time, the government and other corporate bodies should also sponsor research in mental health, to see where spiritual, traditional, and medical help converge in the treatment of mental illness. This way, causes and treatment modalities can be firmly established.

The Nollywood industry and censors board, NGOs/ advocacy organisations can set up media watch to reduce negative representations by sanctioning media organisations or filmmakers who portray people with a mental illness negatively or stereotypically. It is also recommended that movie makers be adequately trained and explain the ripple effects of stereotypic representations of postpartum depression and other mental illnesses. In essence, producers and directors should be more creative in producing movies that are compelling and do not fit the stereotypic patterns present in society.

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