



EXPLORING THE CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITIES IN SELECTED NIGERIAN VIDEO FILMS

AGBOOLA Olubunmi Tayo, PhD

Department of English, Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo

ot.olufolabi@acu.edu.ng

&

DARE Samuel Olugbenga

Department of English, Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo

Dareso@aceondo.edu.ng

Abstract

Masculinity has been an important topic in the study of gender and film, and this research seeks to contribute to the discourse on the representation of masculinities in Nigerian video films. Previous studies have largely focused on masculinity within the domestic sphere in Nigerian films and literature, leaving the role of masculinity in the crime genre underexplored. This study aims to fill this gap by analysing how the crime genre shapes the construction of masculinity in Kemi Adetiba's King of Boys and Jade Osiberu's Gangs of Lagos. The study employs Raewyn Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity as theoretical framework. Using an interpretative research design, the study analyses samples of Nigerian video films: Kemi Adetiba's King of Boys (2018) and Jade Osiberu's Gangs of Lagos (2023) to explore the ways in which masculinities are constructed, challenged, or subverted. Findings reveal that the two films challenge dominant patriarchal norms and stereotypes by presenting alternative forms of masculinity, including non-traditional gender roles, emotional vulnerability and transgressions. The study concludes that Nigerian video films have the potential to contribute to the deconstruction of dominant patriarchal masculinities, and recommends that filmmakers and other cultural producers consider the impact of their representations of masculinities on society.

Keywords: Masculinities, exploring, Nigerian video films, construction.

Introduction

Since the achievement of women's voting rights, gender debates have gained global prominence. Feminism, which emerged in the late 19th and 20th centuries with the ultimate goal of addressing the age-long issue of gender inequality, has indirectly influenced the shift from the traditional roles and expectations assigned to male and female in the society. In African society, particularly in the Nigerian context, traditional gender roles have been fashioned such that men are expected to be dominant and assertive while women are expected to be submissive and stay at the background of affairs. Solanke (2013) aptly captures it in one of his writings that:

*over the eons, man has posed as speaking for
and on behalf of God and Tradition.
His assumed positions on social issues,
therefore, are regarded as infallibles.*



However, in recent times, there has been a gradual interchange in gender roles as we have begun to see several instances in which both men and women manifest behaviours and discharge functions that cut across the traditional gender boundaries. These changes have been brought about as a result of the different reactions against feminism, particularly with regards to the radical turn of the movement which has led to the rise of ideologies such as womanism, motherism, masculinism, among several others. In turn, these ideologies have informed many theories in gender studies of which the theory of masculinity is one.

Masculinity refers to the societal construct of attributes, ideas, roles, manners of expression and behaviours perceived to be representative of the male figure (Adeagbo & Olukilede, 2019). Masculinity, like feminism, is a fluid concept whose interpretation varies from person to person, society to society, generation to generation. It is a social construct that encompasses attributes that are widely interpreted as “male-typed behaviours” which are classified as hegemonic masculinity, complicit masculinity, subordinated masculinity, and marginalised masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity, which is the focus of this study, refers to the dominant form of masculinity in a given society. It is typically associated with power, dominance, and control (Connell 1999). In Nigeria, traditional forms of hegemonic masculinity have often been associated with violence, misogyny, and homophobia (Amoda & Taiwo, 2011).

However, in recent years, there has been a shift towards the emergence of alternative forms of masculinity that challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes. (Adedun, 2018). This shift has been reflected in Nigerian video films, where both male and female characters are increasingly exhibiting traditionally masculine traits and behaviours, such as physical strength, assertiveness, and aggression. This also is found in our oral past in the heroic stories of Efunsetan Aniwura of Ibadan, Mọ̀rẹ̀mi of Ile Ife, Emotan of Benin and Queen Amina of Zazzau ever before the advent of masculinity studies.

In the global media world, the Nigerian film industry, Nollywood, has become a force to reckon with, ranking second in the world in terms of annual film output, with an estimated viewership of over 100 million people (Okolo, 2010). This makes it a virile medium for the portrayal of social realities and ideological reorientation. Nigerian video films are well known for their element of didacticism and have become a cultural phenomenon with a huge social impact. The impact of Nigerian video films on society is diverse. On one hand, they serve as a source of entertainment and means of escape for many people, providing a means of relaxation and enjoyment. On the other hand, they have been criticised for promoting negative stereotypes and perpetuating certain social vices, such as gender imbalance, religious bigotry, corruption and thuggery, to name but a few. While some Nollywood films have garnered praise for promoting positive social messages, such as gender equality and HIV/AIDS awareness, others have been criticised for their negative portrayal of women and the reinforcement of gender stereotypes. Scholars such as Nwaegbu, (2014) have noted the prevalence of hypermasculine characters in Nigerian video films, perpetuating the idea that men should be dominant and aggressive. In all, there is no downplaying the relevance of Nigerian video films as artistic tools used to reflect the social realities of the Nigerian populace. If film is seen as an edited reality and a mirror of society like drama, then a film reflects the value of a society, and can be used to influence and change the society.

Literature Review



Masculinity studies and its evolution over time

Masculinity as a field of study developed as a result of the direct contributions of the feminist movement (Carrigan, Connell, & Lee, 1985; Gardiner, 2005). However, it was not until the 1980s that masculinity and the study for the degree of what could be termed "manliness" began to gain interest among scholars such as Carrigan, Connell, & Lee (1985), Connell (1987) and Clatterbaugh (1990). Evolving over time, the study of masculinity has come to include a more diverse range of perspectives and voices, including those of men who do not conform to traditional masculine roles and women who do not conform to traditional feminine roles. Scholars such as Kimmel, (2013) and hooks, (2004) have explored the intersections of masculinity with race, class, and sexuality, highlighting the ways in which masculinity is not a fixed concept, but rather shaped by various social and cultural factors. In the Nigerian context, masculinity has historically been associated with the notions of power, dominance, and subjugation of the female gender. This has been reflected in the country's political, social, and economic structures, which have traditionally been male-dominated. However, this notion of masculinity is now being challenged by a new generation of Nigerian men and women who are questioning traditional gender roles and advocating for more gender equality.

The trending development in Nigerian video films of today now includes the portrayal of heterogeneous representations of masculinity. These representations are often informed by the everyday experiences of Nigerians, as well as broader socio-political and cultural trends. For example, some films have explored the impact of economic hardship on men's ability to provide for their families, while others have addressed the rise of gender-based violence and the need for men to take responsibility for their actions (Aluko, 2020).

Repeatedly, the reinforcement of hegemonic masculinity in Nigerian video films is perpetuated through the portrayal of violence as a means of asserting power and dominance. This can be seen in the prevalence of action films in which male characters engage in physical combat as a way of resolving conflicts. At the same time, however, some films are challenging this narrative by portraying men who reject violence and instead choose to use alternative means of resolving conflicts. (Udogu, 2019). Simultaneously, there is an introduction of female characters who navigate their existence by resorting to violence in several films such as the *Omo Ghetto* franchise (2010), *King of Boys* (2018) and *Gangs of Lagos* (2023).

Finally, it is important to note that the evolution of masculinity in Nigerian video films is not happening in a vacuum. Rather, it is reflective of broader changes happening within the Nigerian society as a whole. It is also a refraction of global trends towards greater gender equality. As such, it is important for scholars and filmmakers alike to continue exploring and challenging traditional notions of masculinity in order to create a more inclusive and equitable society.

Nigerian masculinity in historical and cultural contexts

Masculinity in Nigeria has been shaped by a number of historical and cultural factors that have contributed to the creation of a unique form of masculinity that is deeply embedded in the country's social fabric. A significant factor that has shaped Nigerian masculinity is the country's colonial past. As a former colony of the British Empire in the 19th century, the



country's social and cultural landscape has been largely influenced by British culture. The British colonists permeated the Nigerian society with their own version of masculinity which included ideas about stoicism, emotional restraint, and individualism. These ideas were in direct contrast to the traditional Nigerian ideas about masculinity, which emphasised communal values and social connectedness (Gbogi, 2015).

The impact of colonialism on Nigerian masculinity was further compounded by the country's postcolonial experience. Obadare (2010) avers that after gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria struggled to establish a stable and functioning democracy. This period was marked by a series of military coups, economic hardship, and social unrest, which had an intense impact on Nigerian masculinity. Consequently, the Nigerian society became more violent and aggressive, and men were forced to adopt more aggressive forms of masculinity as a means of survival in this challenging environment.

Despite the challenges posed by colonialism and postcolonialism, Nigerian masculinity has remained resilient and adaptive. Nigerian men have found creative ways to navigate the various social and cultural factors that have shaped their masculinity and they have created a unique form of masculinity that is deeply rooted in their cultural heritage. This form of masculinity is characterised by a strong emphasis on social connectedness, emotional expressiveness and communal values. One of the most notable features of Nigerian masculinity is its emphasis on communal values. Nigerian men are expected to be connected to their families, communities, and other social networks. They are expected to be responsible for the well-being of their families and communities, and they are often judged by their ability to fulfil these responsibilities. This emphasis on social connectedness has created a unique form of masculinity that is deeply rooted in the Nigerian society (Morrell, 2001; Beynon, 2002).

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this paper is hinged on Raewyn Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity which refers to the dominant form of masculinity in a given society. According to Connell (1999), hegemonic masculinity represents the cultural ideal of masculinity that is seen as natural and normal, and that all other forms of masculinity are judged in relation to it. This ideal is usually characterised by traits such as physical strength, emotional stoicism, competitiveness and aggressiveness. Connell argues that this ideal is not innate, but rather constructed through social practices and reinforced through institutions such as media, education and politics. This theory provides a framework for understanding how gender and power intersect in society and how the dominant ideals of masculinity can be harmful to men and women who do not conform to them.

Research methodology and scope

The paper employs an interpretative research design, utilising a content analysis of two selected Nigerian video films, namely, *King of Boys* (2018) and *Gangs of Lagos* (2023). The two films have been selected because they are relatively new, being released in the last decade. This implies that the films bring fresh perspectives and offer new narratives on masculinity that reflect contemporary societal changes. Data collection was achieved through an analytical identification of characters, themes and representations of masculinity in the two films.



Emerging masculine behaviours in Kemi Adetiba's *King of Boys*

The film, set in Lagos, Nigeria, tells the intriguing story of Alhaja Eniola Salami, a powerful businesswoman who covets a political seat in the country. Although wealthy, influential and a feared ruler of the underworld, Eniola does not get her political wish. She is opposed by the likes of Makanaki, a ruthless gangster, who seeks to avenge the murder of his father, and other political adversaries who pursue a vendetta against her. Along the line, Eniola gets framed and arrested by the country's financial crime commission but is acquitted for lack of evidence. She later loses her two children as a result of the power struggle and has to flee the country to Brooklyn, United States, where she continues to control the Lagos underworld with the advent of telecommunications. Overall, the film explores relevant themes such as corruption, political violence, family, loyalty and redemption.

A significant portrayal of masculinity in the film is exemplified by the female protagonist, Eniola Salami. The title of the film describes Eniola as the "King of boys." She is referred to as "king of boys because she dominates the underworld of Lagos. Also, the word "boys" which is an euphemism for the underworld presupposes the idea that the aforementioned underworld is a place for men. It is however interesting to find that not only is Eniola, a woman, a member of that underworld but also the leader of it. This portrayal resonates with Connell's hegemonic masculinity which is typically associated with power, dominance, and control. As "king", Eniola is allocated 40% due from loot from every robbery that takes place in the city. She is assertive, contrary to the societal construct of female attributes, violent if need be, feared and respected by all, hardened criminals even. Eniola's political ambition birthed her desire to keep retaining power, dominance and control. The roles she played as "king" conforms to the tenets of traditional hegemonic masculinity as it relates to the attributes of a king and as a female; however, this comes with a slight departure as Eniola is not a man but a woman. As a woman, she assumes the roles that are typically reserved for men in the society and her quest for power challenges traditional gender roles. This deliberate oxymoronic reference speaks volumes about the way Nigerian filmmakers are beginning to redefine masculinity in their films in the present day.

In *Kings of Boys*, Kemi Adetiba presents a typical scenario of a deconstruction of gender roles as construed by society in a way that forces the audience to have a rethink about constructing or reconstructing genders role ascription in the society. The first scene of the film presents the feminine side of Eniola as a gentle socialite with the expected roles of her gender. However, the audience soon realised that this is a total misconception of the true person of Eniola after witnessing the way she gruesomely murders a victim in the next scene. Eniola bludgeons the victim to death with a hammer, with a single blow, for taking time to answer her question. Afterwards she asked her goons to "clear the mess" without the slightest betrayal of emotions other than a smile; it was as if nothing had happened. Even her thugs shivered. The gruesomeness of the murder and her choice of words totally negate the societal expectations of the female gender. This is the first inkling of the manner at which the film redefines gender roles.

Eniola's use of language has a fluidity which allows her to switch seamlessly to that side of her she wants to project as occasion demands; just as we witnessed at the party scene and the murder scene described above, Qi Pan (2011) examines the features of female language and concludes that it is a form of social dialect that is shaped by "physiology, psychology...influence of the society and the culture". Pan classified factors that shape the



female language into social and cultural factors. The former include women's social status and sex role socialisation while the latter include the in gender culture and in gender ideology. In gender culture refers to how a culture conceives and asserts the male-female hegemony and most cultures place the man above the woman. Pan argues that even the bible supports this because it demands that women obey their husbands and this has affected how culture views the way women should behave, their use of language inclusive. Women's vocabulary should be polite even when it comes with expletives. Expletives are also used by women as a way of avoiding unpleasant expressions. It also reveals their love for "refined and veiled and indirect expressions". Quoting Jefferson (1922), Pan gave an example that is apt to this study, "for example, women say..." the other place" instead of "hell", specifically Eniola freely uses the word "hell" as and when she chooses. She tells Makanaki, "I will wait for you in hell". Arguably, her position as the king of the underworld has already conferred or forced on her, another role which is different from that of her gender. She also confidently affirms to Makanaki and other members of the table. The "Table" is the meeting of the leaders of the various clans in the underworld and even some religious leaders; Eniola affirms that "nothing moves in Lagos" without the knowledge of members of the Table. Eniola who is the Oba (king) of the Table boasts that the Yoruba saying "Olorun o ni je ka ri laburu" (May God not allow us to see evil) was about her. She declares, "I am Laburu, God's worst punishment in a person...I swear in front of everybody here today, including the man of God that I, Eniola Salami will stretch her hands over your dead body". The tone of her declaration, the fire in her eyes and their wider pragmatic implications send shivers down the spine of other members of the table. It must have further shredded their expectation of the comportment of a female. Eniola's use of language is devoid of the respectfulness and submissiveness that are expected of females. It is not that she does not have them but she puts them to use only when she deploys them as a strategy to employ her feminine nature for some nefarious ends.

Eniola has a social status that allows her to dine with the high and mighty. The political class which understands the depth of her connections with the underworld is in awe of her. Even before Aare, the political godfather of the land, she stands up to him but is also quick to apologise when occasion demands it. This apology is not like submissiveness which is the attribute of females. It is however a tactic that underscores her deadliness and crowns her as a femme fatale. It veils her seething anger and allows her time to strategise. Her ascension to the position of the king at the table of the underworld clearly shows her ruthlessness and foregrounds how her character continues to (de)construct gender attributes. Wiping of Chief's family in a well orchestrated accident smirks of a level of wickedness and debauchery that society does not associate with the female gender. However, her personal experiences and ideology have developed ruthlessness as a social construct in her feminine body. She orders murders, high heists, robberies with impunity. The robbery carried out on the political elites could not go on until Eniola had greenlighted it. Men shiver at the mention of her name; even men who are leaders of their respective gangs within the wider Lagos underworld. Even during her travails when other powers of the underworld and politics came for her head, she was still able to maintain her dignity of person at a time when she was mourning the loss of her two children and within the echelon of the underworld. She did not cower with death staring down her face. She chose to die a hero and planned to wait for Makanaki in hell. This also aberrates the roles ascription structures of the society on gender lines. A bereaved person should be calm and uninterested in life, especially a woman. Expectedly, Eniola is a different person; she is a woman, not a female.



Another deconstruction of the gender stereotyping in the story is depicted in the role reversal that we see in the characters of Eniola's children, Kiitan and Kemi; the former is a male while the latter is a female. However, this description seems to be valid only when we use physiology as yardstick, other than this, Kiitan embodies the expected attributes of females more than those of his sex as a man. Kemi, the daughter, interacts more with the underworld and understands the way "things work" more than Kiitan, the son. She laments how her brother is bereft of the psychosocial and political encumbrances around their mother. Both were always in argument. During one of their sessions, Kemi told Kiitan to his face, "I am more of a son than you would ever be". This is indubitably true considering all the dirty works she has done for her mother the king which has secured her trust for her. She fearlessly stood up to Makanaki, at the Table when he disrespected her mother. "Makanaki, se nkan n se e ni? What sort of insult is that?" (Makanaki, is something wrong with you? What sort of insult is that?). She was also beside her mother and got her bail before she was assassinated in place of her mother. Kiitan, on the other hand, only discovered how Amaka, his girlfriend, has been a mole for enemies in getting the needed information to assassinate his mum. This led to the death of his sister. He could only commit suicide after realising how "useless" he has been and how much he has cost his family. For a son, born into a family that controls the underworld, society expects Kiitan to have dispositions, both mentally and physically that puts him in the thick of things. However, his case was different. He was more of the female, the female-son.

Throughout the story, Eniola is in a position that pitches her against a patriarchal system that operates a societal belief structure which believes that women should be seen and not heard, for one that is highly connected, politically and to the underworld, she must be used and dumped. She was used to achieve their political ends most especially during elections and dumped afterwards. She challenges them and would not accept that position. She was ready to go the whole hog to seek a redress. As much as the institution she faces dealt with her, she was still able to hold her own against them. Formerly, Nollywood films such as *Mufu Olosa Oko* (2013) *Alani Pamolekun* (2015) to mention a few, have been known for portraying male characters as highly ambitious kingpins, criminal masterminds, and gangsters. Even when there is an inclusion of female characters, they usually do not take the lead as males. However, Eniola's character and the totality of her characterisation stands this traditional gender stereotyping on its head. It is a total deconstruction of the violent-male, peaceful-female belief and ideals. This is highly reflective of the trend that is observable in gender reality of late. We are beginning to see an increase in the way men and women in Nigeria evince behaviours and roles that overlap the normative expectations of their respective genders. The portrayal of Kemi, Eniola's daughter, is also not very different from that of her mother's as we are made to see a strong-willed, intelligent and ambitious young woman who does her best to stay relevant in her male-dominated society. As much as Kemi was murdered prematurely, her ideological leanings and actions clearly suggest that she would have been more ruthless than Eniola, her mother.

Let us also consider the different ways Odogwu Malay and Makanaki demonstrated masculinity in the film. Odogwu Malay concocts and executes a successful robbery plan with Makanaki and while Odogwu wants to remit the customary percentage of the loot to Eniola, Makanaki strongly opposes it. Here, we are made to witness two different portrayals of masculinity at play. While the character of Makanaki reinforces hegemonic masculinity which is typical of most African men, Odogwu Malay, on the other hand, demonstrates that



which is similar to transgressive masculinity which refers to a radical rejection of traditional and hegemonic masculinities and a deliberate deviation from gender norms and expectations. Transgressive masculinity often challenges the idea of a fixed, binary gender system and may embrace a more fluid and non-conforming approach to gender (Connell, 1995). In other instances in the film, Odogwu Malay resorts to violence and desires power, thereby alternating between several forms of masculinity.

Construction of masculine behaviours in Jadesola Osiberu's *Gangs of Lagos*

The film, also set in Lagos, Nigeria, follows the story of a trio, Obalola, Ify, and Gift, who are exposed to the gangster underworld at a young age and have to survive amid the treacherous realities that surround their lives. They are taken in by Ninalowo, a gang leader of Isale-Eko area of Lagos, who intended to help them through school. Ninalowo is, however, murdered and the trio work for Kazeem, another ruthless and scheming gang leader. Kazeem's inordinate lust for political power leads to his killing of London, a rival gang leader over his support for a governorship opposition candidate, for which he frames Ify and later kills too. Devastated at the loss of their friend, Obalola and Gift engage in a fierce vengeful war with their boss, Kazeem and other selfish and oppressive sit-tight leaders, with Gift fatally shooting and killing Kazeem.

Jade Osiberu's *Gangs of Lagos* reflects gender stereotypes and role reversal. These are found in the characters and their characterisation, thematic preoccupation, the plot and other important elements that marks the literariness of the story. It is discovered that the concept of masculinity which is in preponderance in the story is hegemonic but many other evidence of gender transgression abound in the film. It is a game of power, greed, over ambition and violence. Jade Osiberu's *Gangs of Lagos* presents a host of characters whose constructs, attitudes and behaviours challenge traditional concepts of masculinity. Their representations transgress traditional gender norms and expectations. One of these characters is Gift, who happens to be a member of the trio that propelled the plot of the story. Gift, as a young girl, finds herself in the midst of friends who are boys: Obalola and Ifeanyichukwu (Also called Ify or Panama). Their relationship and bond is extraordinary for young people growing up in a crime and violence-ridden environment. Let us consider the following excerpt:

IFY: (Speaking to Obalola after robbing a woman of her bag.) Eje mi ni e now. Ko s'eni to le fall eje mi bayan. (You are my blood. No one messes with my blood).

GIFT: Me nko? (what about me?)

IFY: Chill, you are our bro

IFY & OBALOLA: Omo aye for life, (street brothers for life).

GIFT: (Laughs and joins them) Omo aye for life. (Street brothers for life)...

IFY: (Facing Gift) Why are you doing like a girl?

GIFT: Kin wa n'imi tele o? Who am I before?

IFY & OBALOLA: You're a boy joor.

In the above excerpt culled from the film, Gift is referred to as a boy by her friends, Obalola and Ify, because that was how they see and perceive her. However, when she reacted to this



in a way, her masculinity was questioned by Obalola. She, nonetheless, affirmed that she is a girl and not a boy. Regardless, the boys still insisted that they are all blood brothers. Indirectly, the portrayal in that scene is like a foreshadowing of what Gift later became in the film. Contrary to erstwhile portrayal of females in Nollywood films of the past, Gift is highly opinionated, a skilled fighter, and a brutal gang leader. In several situations when the gangs are at war, Gift is seen showing great skill in martial arts and the use of weapons. She is not afraid of violence; the sight of blood does not faze her. Gift's masculine representation is further strengthened by the fact that she is the only lady in her group and is always at the forefront of all the gang wars. Despite being a woman, it was her bullet that killed Kazeem, the wicked and oppressive Eleniyan, the head of the gang. Osiberu intentionally introduced this to engrave the deviation in gender attributes in the minds of the audience. It also forces these thoughts into their psychosocial orientation so that they can begin to question the places of attributes like ruthlessness, maybe wickedness, tactfulness and aggressiveness as yardsticks for gender classification. This foregrounds Ify and Obalola's assertion that Gift is a boy, a male. In a sense, the film suggests that gender deviation could be nurtured over time.

So also, the relationship and friendship of Obalola, Gift and Ify throughout the film is devoid of gender consciousness. The trio transgressed gender norms in their actions in the film. Ify, who is a male, reveals more of the feminine attributes. He is soft, emotional, a music lover, not aggressive, and barely takes to violence. Even in a discussion with Ekun, a leader of a rival gang, Obalola refers to Ify as "Pana Kekere" (Harmless Pana). Ify's portrayal contradicts the tenets of hegemonic masculinity which expects men to be assertive, aggressive and dominating. This contrasts sharply with Gift. She, on the other hand, bravely asserts her intentions and carries them out in a gang dominated by men. She partakes in the bulk of the violence in the film unlike Ify who barely avers his intentions, let alone carries them out. While the characterisation of Gift, though a woman, conforms to traditional masculinity, that of Ify veers off and takes on a modern form.

Going further, the death of Ify caused great sorrow to Obalola, Gift and their gang. This also allows for another deviation from gender roles as we see Ify's mother, who is supposed to be sober, mournful and quiet, having lost her son, refuses to show any of these attitudes at his funeral. Instead, she accepted the death of her son with equanimity and a boastful speech calling for vengeance. This goes against the ascribed feminine qualities expected of a mother in such a situation. Her speech inspired a bloody revolt by the members of the various gangs against the Eleniyan.

Jade Osiberu's *Gangs of Lagos* further deconstructs masculinity through the representation of power dynamics in the film. The male figures in the film, as represented by the likes of Olorogun Agba, the long reigning governor of Lagos, Alaye Bambam, the retired Eleniyan, and Kazeem, the current Eleniyan, have dominated power in Isale Eko for decades using the Erukus at their beck and call to intimidate, blackmail and even eliminate the slightest appearance of opposition. The conflict in the film is heightened by the emergence of a woman, Bamidele Olanrewaju, who is contesting the governorship seat with Olorogun Agba. As a woman, Olanrewaju boldly resisted the many tactics employed by Olorogun Agba to stop her from running for governor. Although a number of Olanrewaju stalwarts such as London, were killed, the conclusion of the film hinted at a likely victory for her.

Interestingly, we can also find a number of instances in the film where hegemonic masculinity was reinforced. First, we see that the many scenes of violence and murders



brought about by wars between the gangs led to hundreds of casualties. A very good example is in the reprisal murders carried out by Ninalowo's gang after his murder, illustrating the Yoruba saying that "kings are not buried alone." In this instance, as revealed by the narrator in the film, at least a hundred men, not women, were killed. This perpetuates the traditional practice by filmmakers in associating short lifespan with male characters.

Secondly, the lead character, Obalola, on his part, is saddled with the responsibility of assuming his late father's position as *Eleniyan* "The owner of men." To achieve this, he has to toughen up and embrace a life of violence; a necessary feature of hegemonic masculinity. This is evident in the way he takes pride in himself as "Obalola" (A king tomorrow). It is the same story for Kazeem who in his bid to rule the entire Isale Eko gangs and also secure the governor's seat for his political godfather, Olorogun Agba, goes on a murdering spree, orchestrating the deaths of Obalola's father - Ogunmola, among several others. We cannot also ignore the opening scene of the film in which Ogunmola, Obalola's father, stands up to challenge the masked stranger who has invaded his home. Here, he displays the need to protect his family, a very common attribute expected of men in a typical African setting.

Also, the setting of the film, Isale Eko, which translates to "Lower part of Eko" gives credence to the assumption that one's environment wields great influence on how one perceives and exhibits gender roles. The film unequivocally presents Isale Eko as a dystopian community where intimidation, robbery, thuggery, violence and bloodletting reign supreme. To adapt in this kind of environment, it is expected that one toughens up and be daring in the face of danger. This is exactly the case of the character of the "Orobo woman" whom the trio robs at the beginning of the film. The "Orobo woman" fearlessly called to bluff the threat made by Ify who approached her with a knife, asking that she surrender her bag. However, she later gave in when Obalola threatened her little child. It can thus be inclined that the environment also contributes to the construction of gender.

Conclusion

In this study, we have seen the different ways Nigerian filmmakers are now portraying gender in films. In *King of Boys*, the female protagonist, Eniola, defies traditional gender roles of her society, conforming to strong masculine traits that have erstwhile been associated with men, most especially in the quest for political power leveraging on the ruthlessness of the underworld. Gift also displayed the deviation in gender roles as she demonstrated attributes that society tagged "male or masculine". To achieve a balance in these role reversals, Ify in *Gangs of Lagos* and Kiitan in *King of Boys* did not measure up to society's expectation of their roles as males in comparison to Kemi in the former and Gift in the latter film.

These films also provide imaginative and relatable realities which the audience might not have witnessed before and foreground the possibility of this in real life. This is perhaps reflective of the gender evolution of the day. It is also noteworthy that the two films are directed by women who are thriving in the male-dominated post of directors in the Nollywood industry. The possibility that the gender of these directors might have somehow influenced the portrayal of gender roles in the films cannot be ruled out. As the world navigates progressively towards gender equality, it is becoming even more necessary to reconsider the definition of what could be termed masculinity. Men and women are forced to



begin to consider gender role ascription anew and in ways that accommodate emerging contemporary understandings in gender relations.

The setting of the two films in Lagos suggests a metaphorical reference to the idea that urbanisation wields a large influence on the emerging masculine behaviours of present times. We also witnessed men who exemplified a milder form of masculinity. People express masculinity irrespective of their genders and this notion is now being portrayed and reinforced in contemporary Nigerian video films. Through these portrayals of gender realities, the society is compelled to begin to redefine the markers of male and female as people are grouped along gender lines.

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