



The Stars Must Shine: Nollywood Talent Scouts' Influence on Theatre Arts Students' Body Image in Nigerian Universities

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Abstract

The influence of the Nigerian film industry, (Nollywood) on youth culture is overwhelming with several talent hunt shows organised to recruit them young at schools, with the promise of making them superstars. This has also impacted on the rate at which students seek admission into universities to study theatre art. This article examines Nollywood talent scouts' influence on theatre arts students' body image as well as talent in selected Nigerian universities. Specifically, the study investigates scouts' intrigues on the dynamics of cosmetic usage, bodily and behavioural adjustments of male and female students. The study shows that theatre art students' first time contact with Nollywood scouts and talent hunters marks the beginning of their celebrity consciousness and sojourn in the world of bodily enhancements. Students' narratives shows that scouts and talent hunters' concerns were initially on their bodily appearance, height, complexion and weight before their talents and abilities. Thus, at the end, different shades of lighter skin, side beards, and bodily uplifts emerged with different attributions corroborating scouts' narratives. The article concludes that the influence of Nollywood scouts, through talent hunts, creates a diversionary atmosphere for learning, with expensive and vulnerable lifestyles on and off campus.

Keywords: Bodily enhancements, behavioural adjustments, dietary behaviours, lifestyles

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Résumé

L'influence de l'industrie cinématographique nigériane (Nollywood) sur la culture des jeunes est accablante. Des spectacles sont organisés pour les recruter à partir des écoles, en les promettant un avenir de superstar. Cela a eu un impact sur le taux d'admission d'étudiants en arts dramatiques dans les universités. Cette article examine l'influence des recruteurs de talents de Nollywood sur l'étude porte en particulier sur les stratagèmes des recruteurs sur la dynamique d'utilisation de cosmétiques, les ajustements corporels et comportementaux des garçons et des filles. L'étude montre que le premier contact des étudiants en arts dramatiques avec des recruteurs de talents de Nollywood marque le début de leur attitude de célébrité et de leur séjour dans le monde des améliorations corporelles. Les récits des étudiants montrent que les préoccupations des recruteurs de talents portent d'abord sur leur apparence physique, leur taille, leur teint et leur poids, bien avant leurs talents et capacités. Ainsi, en définitive, différentes nuances de peaux claires, de favoris et d'améliorations corporelles ont émergé avec différentes attributions, corroborant les récits des recruteurs. L'étude conclut que les recruteurs de Nollywood détournent les étudiants de l'apprentissage, leur influence les poussant vers des modes de vie coûteux et vulnérables sur le campus et en dehors.

Mots-clés: Améliorations corporelles, ajustements comportementaux, comportements alimentaires, modes de vie

Introduction

The Nigerian film industry, also known as Nollywood, is Africa's most prevalent movie activity in both the number of productions and value, roughly producing between 1,000 and 1,500 movies annually (Ebewo 2007; Moudio 2013; Obayiuwana 2011). Nollywood is making its mark in the film business. According to Moudio (2013:1) in her article, "*Nigeria's Film Industry: A Potential Gold Mine*", "Nollywood, produces about 50 movies per week, second only to India's Bollywood, more than Hollywood in the United States". Although its revenues are not at par with Bollywood's and Hollywood's, Nollywood still generates an impressive \$590 million annually (Moudio 2013; UNESCO 2009). This, in turn, assists the Nigerian government in employment creation and poverty alleviation (Obayiuwana 2011). Similarly, its snowballing effect has been found to impact many Nigerian youths' craving admission into the universities to study theatre arts. The wakeup call to improve scriptwriting, cinematography, and film direction in the industry, is a factor in both students and many institutions establishing departments of theatre arts (Ibagere 2015). For instance, in the first indigenous university in Nigeria (University of Nigeria, Nsukka), popularly referred to as UNN, the establishment and approval of the

Department of Theatre and Film Studies was officially established at the 138th Senate meeting held on July 6, 1983. From that time onwards, the department began to award a degree in Dramatic Arts. It then operated as a sub-department under the Department of English until the year 2004 when it achieved a full departmental status.

Correspondingly, student admission rose from ten in 1983/84 to 95 in the 1989/90 academic year, and to 220 in 2016. In the same trend, graduation figures rose from three in 1986/87 to an expected figure of 62 in the 2014 academic year. The current population of postgraduate students is over forty. The need for professionalism in the Nigerian film industry and the increasing demand of youths to study theatre arts are some of the reasons for the widespread establishments of the Department of Theatre and Performing Arts across universities in Nigeria. Many of these institutions and movie directors are striving to reintroduce professionalism and quality to Nollywood, in order to elevate the quality of the film business; attracting more audiences and increasing box office returns. The need to produce more and more celebrities and television personalities can only be achieved through these programmes. The university space, thus, becomes a fertile ground, not only to breed talent, but also to hunt for talents by film and movie directors, charlatans and touts in the business (Ibagere 2015).

The university environment and the film industry are often synonymous with the expression of beauty and fashion in terms of social life, particularly among youths and specifically among theatre art students. Through observations and dailies reports from dailies theatre art students offer more glamour to universities where they are present (The Nation 2014). They are expected to look good and display some forms of showmanship while rehearsing with different costumes, which can also affect their everyday dressing and fashion sense on campus. They are easily identified in comparison to other students (The Nation 2014). The university environment, as a terrain for students, is mostly dominated by adolescents and adults, characterised by diverse exuberances, youthful culture and sub-culture. Many students are left to express themselves freely for the first time in their lives. The time spent in university is seen as a time to explore and be explored (Cash, Dawson, Davis, and Bowen, (1989). Thus, instances of students getting carried away with the social life on campus, impressing and expressing of the self through bodily display of beauty and talent emerged. Gradual whiteness of the skin is one of the several ways that dark-skinned students showcase their beauty as well as experimenting with different foreign fashions. One of the fashion senses is the whitening of skin and gradual changes to the physical appearances (The Nation 2014).

Changing the body complexion through skin whitening is perceived as an important sub-cultural element in constructing beauty worldwide, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where the culture of bleaching is erroneously associated with the construct of beauty (Li, Min, Belk, Kimura and Bahl 2008; Naij.com 2016; Yousif, Ahmed, Idris, Elmustafa, and Ahmed; 2014). Many dark male and female youths have been found using skin whitening creams for the purpose of making themselves more attractive in effort to get attention (Naij.com, 2016). Skin lightening creams alter the chemical structure of the skin by inhibiting the synthesis of melanin and are regulated as drugs, not cosmetics, in many countries (Yetunde 2010). There are several studies on the use of bleaching creams among students and African women living in sub-Saharan Africa (see Obuekwe and Ochei, 2004; Yetunde 2010; Yousif, Ahmed, Idris, Elmustafa, and Ahmed 2014). In Nigeria, Yetunde (2010) examined the use of skin lightening creams in similar manner as Yousif, et al. (2014), in Sudan. Both studies focused on the use of whitening creams, awareness and consequences from the epidemiological point of view. Obuekwe and Ochei (2004) not only limited the study of female students to a Nigerian university but were interested in the presence of cancerous chemicals such as glutathione, mercury, tropical corticosteroids and hydroquinone in their soaps and cosmetics. None of these studies interrogated other factors beyond students' self-need for beauty and the retrospective examination of students' complexion over the duration of studies on and off campus. With the increasing job opportunities available in Nollywood and other subsidiaries of the entertainment industry, the transition of theatre art students to the labour market and their body complexion as well their consciousness and engrossment with beauty products have often been overlooked (Obuekwe and Ochei 2004; Yetunde 2014). Notwithstanding the rising popularity of Nollywood has gained enormous attention in research. Of which, several researchers have highlighted the revenue generated annually, the number of films produced, as well as the themes and storylines of Nigerian films (Ebewo 2007; Haynes and Okome 1998; Obayiuwana 2011). However, there is less emphasis on the deviance created directly and indirectly by the film industry on students' bodily image in Nigerian universities through talent hunt exercises, in various forms of recruitment of young students.

Research Methods

This study employed a qualitative research approach, using in-depth semi-structured interviews and observations among a cross section of 34 theatre art students selected from a larger data set on Students body mass index and beauty consciousness among Nigerian theatre art students. The study

was conducted over a four-year period between 2010-2013 at Lagos State University (LASU), Delta State University (DELSU) and University of Benin (UNIBEN), all in South-West Nigeria. Participants' ages ranged between 17 and 25-years. The study utilized the grounded theory approach where research questions emerged from interviews (Wengraf 2004). Students were asked yearly to narrate their life experiences on and off the university environment in respect to their contacts with Nollywood scouts and talent hunters, particularly noting the effect that these significant others have on their self-esteem, body image, construction of beauty and their personality as theatre art students. The narratives were tape recorded annually, while the interviews were being conducted, participants' complexion and Body Mass Index (BMI) were also observed annually, and questions on their dietary behaviours, weight gain and weight loss, fears, worries and factors predisposing their body image consciousness as theatre art students were asked. The interviews were conducted in English with the interjection of Pidgin (loose English with elements of local dialects and slang), which is commonly spoken and understood by all Nigerians irrespective of their sociocultural background. Interviews generally lasted between 40 and 60 minutes, per individual. The data analysis is purely descriptive as a result of the qualitative method used to obtain information. The qualitative data was entered into themes from quotations which represent the recorded explanations supplied by the respondents. Respondents' identities were protected through the use of pseudonyms where necessary.

Empirical Findings and Discussion

Theatre students' encounter with Nollywood personalities and associates on and off the campus was narrated as being facilitated by Nollywood scouts, who regularly attended practical rehearsal and performance sessions, and sometimes in conjunction with lecturers in grading performance exercises on campus. During this time, students are gradually monitored, and first-hand contacts are initiated and sometimes contracts are entered between scouts and students. Students are then informed of specific talent hunt exercises on and off campuses within and outside the geographical locations of their universities. These contacts create the avenue for talent hunters to express comments, criticism and critiques which are not only on rehearsals and performances on campus (often formal), but also on personal attributes of students which are discussed extensively outside the campus. In trying to mentor and assure students of their status, first as theatre art students, and subsequently as future and potential Nollywood and TV stars (celebrities), stories are told of celebrities that have been nurtured and groomed into

stardom. It is from these narratives that students' self-esteem, consciousness and construction of beauty are ignited. The analysis of data was discussed under the major sub-themes of Nollywood talent scouts' influence on theatre arts students' body image, scouts' intrigues on the dynamics of cosmetic usage, bodily and behavioural adjustments of students.

Nollywood Talent Scouts' Influence on Theatre Arts Students' Body Image

In most Nigerian universities the second semester is often a time when social events are regularly held within the campus premises. These events ranged from beauty contest, cooking competitions, music and drama; and other events showcasing the different ethnic and cultural heritage of Nigerian students on campus. These have become an annual celebration where town and gown are freely mixed (The Nation 2014). The media, talent hunters and Nollywood scouts usually recruit during these events as student associations and unions on campuses showcase their talents, brands, traditional attires and peculiarities of their cultures and academic programmes. In similar manner, private individuals and companies also participate in this tradition to organise social programmes and create awareness of their goods and services. Unlike other departments on campus, the theatre department stands out as social activities are not limited to a semester. Events are organised in both the first and second semesters within and outside the university environment. Shows are organised for assessments, travels to locations where movies are being filmed and premiered for practical experiences to be garnered. Talent scouts also organise parallel shows and sponsor several programmes and awards' ceremonies with the motives of scouting for talents. Theatre art students explained how scouts often paraded their departments, and students to feature in movies, pageantries, advertorials and other entertainment and media related programmes outside the university. Some of the scouts capitalised on students' inexperience to exploit their services with little or no remuneration simply because students were often overwhelmed at being selected. Some respondents were, thus, carried away with immediate gratification and talent hunters' slogans such as, 'I will make you a star in no time' and 'the stars must shine depending on your cooperation'. These are key narratives that kept reoccurring in the interview sessions, explaining the some of the reasons for the attractions and competition for scouts. Two respondents interestingly explained:

Since I came in contact with scouts on campus, I have been keeping to their advice, I get regular messages from them on how to carry myself on and of the campus, tips on how to look good always, [and] how to maintain certain

standards as a theatre art student. Often, I am reminded that I am a star in the making. I have been assured that I will meet big time movie producers, directors, actors and actresses and that I will get major roles and go places if I adhere to their advice (Fabian/Male/22years/Year three/UNIBEN).

Similarly Miss Sumbo said:

They keep reminding me that it was not by accident that I am studying theatre art, that the Nollywood is where it happens; that I should maintain a balance and a distinguishing appearance to be seen and shine always like the northern stars. That is why I spend a lot of time and money to wear my make-up and appear gallant on and off the campus (Female/18years/Year one/LASU).

With the increase in age, and years on campus, the natural tendencies for students, like every person, to grow in height and size, and to experience some form of physical and biological changes, the students were expected to also change their social outlook regularly. These changes were discussed as important issues that most scouts often idealised and sexualised in their requirements and presentation of the ideal body image. Generally all scouts were interested on what they considered as ideal in the entertainment market (Attenborough 2011). For skinny and very tall students, they were told to eat more and to perform exercises that would broaden their chests (especially for boys). And, depending on height, some girls were told to maintain either an X or a figure 8 shape depending on what role the scout has for them. By implication, some were advised to either add or lose weight to achieve the needed specification of scouts depending on their interest. According to Adesuwa (Female/22years/UNIBEN), 'I have been meeting my targets by performing exercise and eating the necessary food to move from the X shape to a figure 8 shape' The figure 8 shape, she explained, carries her weight at the high hip, just under the waist, on the bottom, rather than the low hip/thigh area which is where the X shape used to carry. Another respondent, Kunle, explained:

In my first year in school I was naïve, just like every other newly admitted student. But one thing that made me different was my height. I was a 6 footer and very slim. Naturally, I am easily identified. As time went by in my second year after rehearsal, scouts demanded for my contacts. They started taking [an] interest in me. It was at this time [that] I got to know that I was so skinny. I was advised to eat more fatty foods and to engage in exercises that will broaden my chest so that I can participate in roles that will make me more [intimidating] as a bouncer in movies that will require such roles (Male/19years/Year Two/DELSU).

This narrative was born out of a rehearsal and the role Mr. Kunle played in the drama exercise, exhibited in the school theatre. In the drama he played

the role of a security guard to the princess. Further discussion revealed that Mr. Kunle was lambasted by a scout who had been monitoring him for last twelve months, without his knowledge. 'I was scolded and was told I was not bold enough in scaring suitors away from the princess in [the] play'. Thus, he had to succumb to the above advice, which according to him helped him, but not without consequences. Kunle, in his third year on campus noted: 'Now I spend more on feeding. I eat a lot and often become so lazy to concentrate on regular academic and dramatic exercises. It is not only affecting my grades, it is also making my stay on campus very expensive'. For some theatre students, engaging in early morning jogging, press-up and tummy tuck exercises trying to keep fit at all costs, is not a self-imposed decision. Yemi/Female/24years/LASU)stated, 'most especially for higher level students in their third and final year, we easily become worried about the routine recommendation by scouts [to] lose weight'. Students whose bodies were not responding to exercises were gradually introduced to different herbal products, such as Chinese herbs, local gin (*Ogogoro*) slimming tea, and pills to either maintain a certain statistics or to reduce body mass (fat), generally. For Halimat and Abel, (two friends), exercises were not working for them, so in their third year they discovered that they were adding more weight and that interactions and contacts with scouts were gradually reducing. Halimat explained how she became aware and had to comply with the advice given by the scout in order to remain patronised:

I was told my weight was affecting my performances and that I was not as swift as I used to be as a fresher and a second year student. 'The more you grow out of shape, the more we reduce our engagement with you'. 'You just have to keep to the standard' [the scout said]. Though my class teachers have never, ... once, mentioned that to me, the scout said that I should combine exercises with a Chinese herbal drug to enable me [to] lose some weight and to make me smart, if I am to make the exhibition list for a pageant coming up in Port-Harcourt, the following semester. (Female/25years/Year three/UNIBEN).

For Abel (Male/25years/Year three/UNIBEN), it was his protruding tummy that was discussed as being his downfall. He had lost his six-pack and chest. The following conversation ensued between him and his scout.

Scout: Do you know you are one of my best catches on campus?

Abel: Yes Sir.

Scout: you have lost the magic diamond which is the appeal people want to see on stage. Your tummy is protruding, the 'W' and six pack shape has gone. This was what gave you the role on the advertorial if you could remember.

Abel: What do I do now?

Scout: Avoid fatty foods and alcohol. Drink local gin and whiskey. These will burn the fat

Students' narratives showed that scouts and talent hunters' concerns were mainly on their bodily appearance, height, complexion and weight first, before talents and abilities. For another student, Janet, she was often reminded to compare herself with popular Nollywood actresses and to do a self-appraisal to see how beautiful they were, and how the industry in turn has continuously supported and made their career successful. It was in her second year that she was approached by a scout and who told her that the industry was all about being 'bright and beautiful':

Scouts often tell me that I have got the height and that I only need to be bright and look beautiful just like the Anglican hymn says 'all things bright and beautiful, all things small and big but God made them all'... so it is a slogan, that constantly motivates me and my colleagues to look our best on and off the campus (Female/20years/Year two/LASU).

Akpos revealed that scouts were not interested in brilliant and intellectually sound students:

You don't need to be too brilliant or outstanding in your academic work, to be scouted. Nollywood scouts are not looking for first class materials. They believe they can make a star out of any boy or girl. It is not the university degree that makes the star, but scouts do. So appearance is what matters and I have been advised to put up a bright face all the time, because stars must shine. That is why I spend a lot, keeping my sideburns, [and] do jerry curls on my hair in order to always be at my best and be appealing (Male/20years/Year four/UNIBEN).

The unrealistic and unattainable ideal surrounding scouts' portrayal of the image of beauty (what beauty is, what sells? and what is appealing?), pushed many students to work extra hard. Respondents failed to realise that technology, through digital imaging techniques, often portrayed celebrities in ways that were not real. What is particularly troubling about the construction of the digitally altered ideal is that many youths, as well as scouts, who accept and compare themselves to certain characters-cum-images, do not realise the amount of photo shopping that occurred behind the scene (Queen Victoria Women's Centre Trust 2008).

Over two third of the students (22 respondents), noted that scouts were more interested in glamour than talents. Scouts were described as business men and women who were looking for what was attractive to sell. A male respondent noted:

I keep a good look. I carve my sideburns; I imitate some popular American stars. It is all about show business and that is why it is called showbiz. The industry makes stars out of ordinary people. Majority of the scouts will tell

you 'appearance matters first, irrespective of talents'. Talents can be worked upon during rehearsals. Individuals' complexions, sizes and heights are very important to scouts. Light-skinned and tall ladies are often sought after, just like tall, handsome guys with baby face [s]. Short students are often at a disadvantage, except for comic roles (Isah/Male/25years/Year four/DELSU).

On the contrary, Njedeka illustrated that talent, as a requirement, matters to a reasonable extent, only if there are serious deficiencies in height. Describing her height as not one that scouts run after, she said:

All I have is my complexion; I have been told it is my selling point. Thus, I spend a lot to make my skin lighter. My deficiency in height is complemented by my skin. 'The light must shine no matter the situation'. If not my complexion I would have been scouted for roles in scary movies or be at the wrong side of advertorials (Njedeka/Female/22years/Year two/LASU).

Appearances and body image in general are crucial in understanding scouts' expectations (just like the media) as well as what appeals to audiences. This also affects self-esteem and behavioural adjustments to suit expectations. In this study, respondents' self-esteem was affected by scouts' definitions and redefinitions of acceptable body images. Thus, in Halimat and Abel's narratives, low self esteem created a scenario in which they had to give in to scouts' onerous expectations and dictates, in order to keep appearing in shows on and off the campus. Studies have clearly shown that body image plays a strong role in the entertainment industry (Becker, Burwell, Herzog, Hamburg, and Gilman 2002; Richins 1991; Silverstein, Perdue, Peterson, and Kelly 1986; Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, and Tantleff-Dunn 1999). Thompson, et al.,s (1999), study on exacting beauty revealed that body image is central to youths' self-definition, while the role of the media and role models' lifestyles were highlighted as impinging on younger ones belief that appearance is an important basis for self-evaluation and for evaluation by others (Richins 1991; Silverstein et al. 1986).

As a first-year student, I was just natural, from a suburb in Anambra State. I was not used to make up. It all started when a scout told me at a night club to get the pimples and dark spots off my face... so she gave me a lotion and advised that I could as well apply it to the rest of my body. After about two to three weeks, the spots vanished, and people started commending me but not without telling me that I now look lighter than how I was as a newly admitted student (Njedeka/Female/22years/Year two/LASU).

Indeed, perceptions of appearance and self-worth are inextricably linked, such that perceived appearances consistently emerge as the strongest single predictor of self-esteem (Irving 1990). Low self-esteem alongside the stereotypical beliefs around beauty, handsomeness and what is generally appealing brings

about a subjective situation in which scouts' advices were easily taken without much objections. One of these was the introduction of cosmetic and other allied body enhancing beauty products to theatre art students.

Scouts' Intrigues on the Dynamics of Cosmetic Usage

The film industry in Nigeria has seen a number of actors and actresses advertising several cosmetic products, while others have been accused of being heavy users of cosmetic products that have altered their body complexion over time. Names and pictures are displayed on websites showing old and current looks of Nollywood celebrities that have, in one way or another toned, brightened or lightened their skin (Naij.com 2015; Nairaland 2015; Viviangist.com 2015). This was observed as an emerging trend that was also common among theatre art students. The act of skin toning, brightening, lightening, whitening and several other related names are all synonymously used in place of skin bleaching. It is a phenomenon that has been in the Nigerian society, as in many black nations and Africans in the Diaspora for decades (Obuekwe and Ochei 2004; Yetunde 2010; Yousif, Ahmed, Idris, Elmustafa and Ahmed 2014). This has created a huge business for cosmetic industries globally, though literature on the subject tends to be biased towards women as the only culprits. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), 77 per cent of women in Nigeria use skin-lightening products (Apuke 2018; Naij.com 2016). It is no longer an issue among females as it were, as quite a number of female students in tertiary institutions are engaging in the act (Britton 2012; Cash *et.al.* 1989). This is particularly so for female students who become more desperate for roles in media-magazines, TV, films, advertising, and music videos. Studies conducted among students in the performing art departments show that scouts and managers motivate students' use of bleaching products for bodily enhancement (Ebewo 2007; Yetunde 2010; Woman.ng 2015; Ibagere 2015) By so doing, in an industry where self-worth is often based on appearance, and which present a powerful cultural ideal of beauty that is becoming increasingly unattainable (Clay, Vignoles, and Dittmar 2005; Richins 1991; Silverstein, Perdue, Peterson, and Kelly 1986), bodily enhancements are attempted most times without knowing the consequences. For talent hunters, theatre art students are often a target as it is known that they are always eager and sometimes desperate to quickly achieve fame. Thus many become vulnerable not only to exploitation, but to sexual assaults and rape (Dailypost 2016; Woman.ng 2015). Students have been found to be exploited and female students raped by scouts and managers in the same way upcoming and desperate actors and actresses looking for roles to play in the Nigerian movie industry (Dailypost 2016; Woman.ng 2015).

Respondents concurred to the exploitative tendencies of scouts. Halimat and Njedeka were bold enough to narrate their experiences relating to sexual harassment. For Halimat, the incident occurred in a cinema:

I was invited by a scout to watch one an old Cinderella movie with the intension that I will learn and mimic the Cinderella character. To cut a long story short, he was all over me, his hands on my lap and practically fondling me as if we were lovers. I didn't want to embarrass him; I waited patiently after the movie to escape back to the hostel. The luck I had was that it was not in a hotel, it was in a nearby cinema.

Njedeka noted that:

I have been a victim, in more than one occasion with scouts. Majority of female students have had several experiences of sexual harassment and even rape. There is no need to talk much on it, as nobody body will give you a complete narrative. It has become part of the challenges for female aspiring artists to contend with in the industry. This, we have also been taught in the classroom.

From field observations, theatre act students' activities are not regulated in respect with engagement with scouts or going into contractual agreements with agents and scouts. They regularly attend late night and private shows outside the university. While bleaching is seen by the students as more of a feminine idea, male talent hunters were described as also encouraging dark male students to tone their skin, which ultimately led to lightening. Chima explained that he began toning after receiving advice to do so by a scout and from colleagues in the department:

Here, we see that in addition to scouts' influence to use toning and bleaching creams, co-students (especially higher level students) also serve as secondary influences to use these cosmetics. Over the four-year period of this study, it was observed that five of the respondents became lighter. Their knuckles and knees, however, remained dark and were much darker than other parts of their skin. They were also very reluctant to grant interviews when the weather is very hot. For five of the 34 students, (obviously bleaching) it was very obvious that they graduated from toning their skin to some level of bleaching as compared to when they were in their first year. As shown in previous body image and bleaching studies, the researcher also noted that, respondents often resulted to silence and felt guilty when discussing issues pertaining to bleaching (de Sousa 2008; Durosayo, Ajiboye, and Oniye 2012; Swain 2012). Instead, 'toning', and 'the use of cosmetics and creams' was substituted for bleaching to garner a high level of response.

The need to be sought after by scouts, (as younger and newly admitted students are often more sought after), creates a competitive situation whereby older students cling more to scouts' dictates. This has led to some students

becoming anorexic as well as using appetite suppressants to quench hunger, in order to remain slim. Apart from the lower self-esteem linked to alteration and construction of the self and body-image, eating disturbances prospectively predict increases in anxiety and depressive symptoms among youths (Harter 1999; Stice and Bearman 2001). Awareness of scouts demands were linked to eating concerns (bulimic symptoms) and body dissatisfaction among older students in their third and fourth year and this has been attributed to the increasing discrepancy between how they look and how they would like to look (Irving 1990). 'You must not dull yourself' as echoed by Raymond, literally means he should keep shining like a superstar.

One of the easiest ways that theatre art students become vulnerable to scouts in manoeuvring how their appearances should be, is for them to be enticed with bogus promises such as 'there are bigger and better opportunities of becoming an active player in the industry through our services and advices'; Jimmy, a final year Art student noted. Thus, students engage in such behaviours to suit scouts' demands. These perceptions trigger behaviours ranging from simple cosmetic usage, skipping meals in order to control body fat and weight; to complex bodily adjustments which involves the intake of drugs and food supplements. The effect of some of these cosmetics were observed in the final lap of this research on final year students, as many (over half of the respondents) have toned their skin, in an attempt to be relevant and constantly showcase themselves as university celebrities. The idea of showcasing the theatre art students' body as an art for patronage is seen as a market strategy employed by scouts simply as business men and women, with no other intention but to make a profit out of them. In the Nigerian film industry, scouts capitalise on this reality of the available markets and students' vulnerability using the maxim which states that 'what appeals sells' (Becker et al. 2002; Richins, 1991; Silverstein, et al. 1986) to exploit their agencies as students. Halimat, for instance was told that 'You can be short and be famous in the industry. We have the money and we make it happen as scouts'

Behavioural Adjustments, Secrecy and Competition

Exposure to unrealistic media images is one big contextual factor that explains and predicts individuals' perception of aesthetics and, in turn, behavioural adjustments towards one's body image. Many studies often fail to disaggregate 'media images' as concepts in explaining and predicting behaviours towards bodily adjustment (Clay et al. 2005; Fouts, and Burggraf 2000; Groesz, Levine, and Murnen 2002; Halliwell and Dittmar 2004; Harrison 2001). There are other chronic individual variables such as 'the influence of popular

celebrities and role models (Nollywood agents and on air celebrities) and 'self-aspirations' that shape individuals' behaviour in their (re)constructing of their body image. In this study, the media image was emphasised less by students as against the reoccurring narratives which showed the influence that Nollywood talent scouts have on students' disposition towards the (re)making of aesthetics and aspirations. The influence scouts have on students' body image goes a long way in explaining the aura, arousal and implantation of celebrity status mentality on theatre arts' students. My observations showed that in most universities where there is a Faculty of Arts hosting a theatre or dramatic art programme, it was common to see the powerful influence of the media and media personalities acting upon the behavioural disposition of students. One of the distinguishing characteristics is the showmanship displayed by theatre art students. These features explain students' bodily and behavioural adjustments on campus. While boys engage in weight lifting to build muscles and other exercises to reduce belly fat, female students are constantly watching their weight to make their clothes fit better. There were narratives of how chubby and busty students made use of girdles to achieve a figure 8 shape by compressing their upper/central body, and also to reduce and compress the ribs and chest bones in order to allow the buttocks to protrude. This was a practice among chubby students to keep them smart during rehearsal and auditioning, while artificial breasts and buttocks were used by skinny students. These narratives were echoed by female students in their third and fourth year as part of the showmanship in the theatre business.

At these levels we try to impress. We are no longer new to the manipulations of scouts. We know what they want, and we are ready to give them what they want anytime. I was naïve for two years on campus not knowing what scouts actually wanted. My friends later told me they are not interested in scholars of theatre arts, but students with features and futures in the entertainment world. I had to get some artificial fittings for my boobs and buttocks; assorted bags which I put on these days with high heel shoes, and sometimes crazy hair styles, because of my height and skinny frame to get the necessary attention (Nichole/Female/23years/Year four/UNIBEN).

Despite the manoeuvring and adjustment of body shape, there are students who do not really find it interesting. Narratives revealed that apart from the time and money involve, it could also be discomforting.

For Simiat, the use of artificial buttocks is sometimes discomforting as it affects movement and heats up the body. Similarly, tying the girdle during the day or sleeping with it over night to reduce protruding tummy not only heat up the body but means she has to spend more on her body spray to combat the odour from the excessive heat. According to her, it makes her sweat a lot, thus

she is known for her heavy body spray which is a mark of her presence in the department. 'Once my body spray is perceived they know I am around'. Theatre students are attention seekers; they have been found from their narratives to be easily identified through their behaviours on campus. They are very cautious of their movements, their makeup, hairdos, and dressing styles both on and off the campus. For students who have seriously altered their skin, they wear heavy powder all the time during the peak of the hot (dry) seasons usually between the months of November and March; some do wear apparels with long sleeves to cover stretch marks resulting from excessive use of bleaching creams and to avoid hot weather condition and injury-prone environments. Their lifestyles on campus were generally described as expensive:

We spend too much money on ourselves buying clothes, taking care of our skin, applying makeup and trying to be among the hottest students on campus and also to catch the attention of big time scouts. In doing these we also apply our own craftiness the same way as the scouts (Jude/Male/21years/Year four/DELSU).

Apart from being crafty and smart in dressing to appeal, theatre art students were also very secretive in disseminating information about scouts to other students. This was discussed as some of the reasons why there was constant quarrelling and conflicts among theatre arts students. The statements below revealed how students kept information about talent hunts competitions and scouts' activities away from each other in order to reduce competition and avoid displacements:

Everyone wants to be a star and gain recognition first before the other. By so doing, everybody sees the other as a threat and opponent in competition. That is why information about talent hunts are kept secret from others, especially when it is not publicised, in order for the competition to be favourable to the information bearer. When it comes to scouts and Nollywood opportunities, secrecy is like an acceptable behaviour (Jumoke/Female/18years/Year two/ LASU).

We quarrel a lot, as a result of students' double dealing with scouts. Imagine a friend going behind to negotiate with one's scout, that he or she will be better in a role which is being discussed and possibly take lesser amount for the role. Some colleagues even go behind castigating others. We have often witnessed cases of students fighting on campus because of scouts (Okoro/Male/19 years/Year four/DELSU).

Running after scouts was interrogated and issues relating to female students dating scouts for money and roles in advertorials and fashion exhibition emanated. This was one of the ways female students maintained their expensive lifestyles in their quest to financially maintain a celebrity status on campus.

Conclusion

The implication of this study is enormous with regards to the vulnerability of theatre art students who are predisposed and easily influenced by the dictates of Nollywood talent scouts. Students' narratives clearly reveal some of the tactics Nollywood talent scouts embarked upon in capturing their attention, explaining beauty, and in the manipulation of their body image for easy entrance into the Nigerian movie industry. Scouts manipulations expose students to various 'beauty' enhancement products, dietary behaviours, drug use and by implication diverse behavioural adjustments and bodily enhancements procedures are ignited. The consequences of these exposures create a diversionary atmosphere for learning and expensive lifestyles for theatre art students with a lifelong effect beyond their studentship in the university.

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