



Exploring the Conflict between the Desire to Tell a Story and Ethical Representation

—A Case Study of Films “Farming” and “Rise”

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Abstract

Film is a form of art that presents different concepts and perspectives to a wider audience thus can be considered a form of education and impact on shaping opinions amongst viewers. This research paper focuses on the problem of presenting stereotypes, misleading concepts, and unethical representations in film leading to bias and prejudice among audiences. This academic research report examines two case studies of films “Rise” (2022) and “Farming” (2018) showing contrasting representations of Nigerian diasporic experience. Ten Nigerian participants were asked to watch case studies and answer a questionnaire about the representation of Nigerians in the films. The major findings show that subjectivity and a misleading portrayal of people were considered hurtful and unethical, and left viewers angry. Participants did not agree with the representation of their cultural heritage in one film but were proud to see a positive image in another. The outcome of the study proves that filmmakers should balance the ethical representations in the film with the storyline and consider the audiences in the creative process to avoid unethical practices. The study proposes various solutions to the unethical representation of people in cinema based on the interview with a Nigerian PhD Film and Media Studies student, a master class from Aesthetica Short Film Festival, and academic resources. The study is of interest to filmmakers who want to maintain ethical representation in their works.

Subject Areas

Film Studies, Film Ethics, Diaspora Studies, Cultural Studies

Keywords

Diaspora, Nigerian Diaspora, Misrepresentation, Media Bias, Stereotyping

1. Introduction

The conflict between the desire to tell a story and ethical representation is an ongoing matter in the film industry. Therefore, it was chosen for the research topic to address the continuing issue and offer creative solutions. Ethics have numerous aspects, and this research has limitations. This report will focus on the ethics of representation of people by examining the portrayal of Nigerians in films chosen as an objective of this paper.

Firstly, the report will explain the meaning of ethics and representation. Furthermore, this part will address the significance of ethics and why it is crucial to consider it when representing people. All arguments and points within this chapter are from credible scholars with acknowledged experience and specialist knowledge, forming a discussion on the subject. This part of the essay is essential as without full comprehension of the subject. The audience might not find the broader picture of the research topic and its aims.

The following part of the report aims to concisely explore Nigerian diasporic experiences in the films “Farming” and “Rise” as a comparison of two contrasting events. The chapter will analyse the representation of Nigerians in both pieces and compare them to point out the difference between the two Nigerians facing life struggles abroad. The aim of this analysis is to present two distinct portrayals of people coming from a similar cultural background and invite the reader to explore the ethical representation in both films. In addition, the chapter will clarify the reasons behind the film choice for this study.

Moreover, the essay includes a thorough analysis of the academic research within this study used to identify the problem of unethical representation of Nigerian people in films. This chapter involves the anonymous responses of ten participants in this research. After analysing research findings, a conclusion of the primary research is drawn, supported by secondary research.

Reasonably, the next chapter will focus on finding solutions to the problem addressed in the research through primary research. The results found within this research report are from an interview with a specialist in the field, a final-year Nigerian Film PhD student at the University of Sussex, academic research, and additional sources. This chapter will not only propose solutions, but also examine their complexity and implementation possibilities.

The last part of this report will draw upon the aims, objectives, and findings. This chapter addresses the problem, the solutions provided and provides a general conclusion. Finally, there is an acknowledgment of limitations within this research, providing further reading recommendations to discover this research topic in more depth.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Ethics

Sakota and Faller [1] mention that the real problem with ethics is beyond its definition and starts with the interpretation of the term. According to them, the

understanding of ethics can vary on distinct aspects such as cultural and social interests, self-representation, and issues of consent. In their paper, they examine the ethics principles, and the concept of ethics in film. They explore three different ethical approaches of a viewer: routine viewer, customized viewer, and novel viewer. Regardless of the type of viewer the person is, their ethical approach is manipulated by the film practice to subjectively place them in such a viewing position. Sakota and Faller also raise the issue of framing ethics, which is another tool to create an illusion of reality. The subjectivity of ethics found in their research raises a question of how ethical ethics are, considering manipulateness and subjectivity within their implementation.

On the other hand, ethics can be considered a part of political matters shown in the film, which is supported by Lloyd's [2] idea of ethics. This author studies ethics in terms of human vulnerability to violence, considering global events such as the terrorist attacks, thus presenting violence on screen would be seen as unethical, however, the author does not reflect on personalised ethics and morals. Such a contradictory approach to ethics opposed to the one given by Sakota and Faller proves the complexity of the interpretation of ethics and its role in shaping audiences.

Another aspect of ethics in cinema is examined by Stadler [3] who focuses her article on the moral imagination of the viewers. The author explores two conflicting points of the moral imagination, cinema precluding imaginative activity on behalf of the audience resulting in the limitation of their imagination, and cinema's imaginative stimulation leading to viewers emphasising characters who contravene moral, legal, and social values, thus leading to the imitation of wrong behaviours. Stadler agrees with neither of the concepts but mentions them to justify the creation of a Code of Practice in the two biggest film industries: the American Motion Picture Production Code, and India's Central Board of Film Certification. The principle underpinning the former establishment was that "No picture will be produced which will lower the moral standards of those who see it" and the latter was that "Film does not deprave the morality of the audience."

The necessity of codes of practice for the filmmaking industry derived from opposing opinions on ethics, allowing ethical representation in films. While the code should prevent filmmakers from presenting unethical events, the question of what is ethical remains an open debate leading to the production of ethically questionable films.

2.2. Representation

This research focuses on the representation of Nigerians specifically. Nevertheless, the aim of this study is to address the problem of misrepresentation and unethical representation of people in films in general. There are several forms in which people might be misrepresented in movies concerning, for instance, religion, culture, nationality, ethnic background, social issues, and others.

King [4] argues that negative or inaccurate racial stereotypes result in misrepresent-

tation. The author believes that the rise of diversity in media calls for an examination of stereotypes and reasons audiences should be aware of them and care about the representation of minorities. While this argument cannot be overlooked, it is crucial to understand the bigger picture of representation and ask not only how audiences but also the subjects reflect on these inaccurate portrayals, which King omits in his study.

On the other hand, Martins and Harrison [5] focus their research on why the accurate representation of minorities is significant as opposed to its origins. The authors found that:

Frequent exposure to stereotypical images that portray Blacks as unprofessional and criminal may lead viewers to believe that these are true characteristics of Blacks in the real world.

It addresses the problem of individual's belief and connection between reality and fiction. This issue shall be raised with significance as the audiences' perception of representation on the screen can impact how they view people off the screen. In addition, filmmakers cannot rely on a capability to distinguish between fictional characters and the world versus reality as the representations on the screen are authentic.

Interestingly, King and Chernin [6] raise the question of whether stereotypes can be positive or have an explicitly negative meaning. The writers suggest that stereotypes can attain a positive effect if used in the comedy genre. According to Chernin's study, stereotypically represented people in "Rush Hour 2" did not take any offence in their portrayal, focusing on the positive aspects of their representation in the film. This finding is intriguing as one can question whether a misrepresentation is acceptable and ethical if the subject misrepresented agrees with such portrayal. The study raises a debate about the boundaries of misrepresentation and those who dictate them.

Naturally, people tend to think of misrepresentation as an act of a foreigner, a stranger to the culture, or a person who does not have the right specialist background and experience to present a given community of people. While many Western films showing diverse cultures relate to the above, misrepresentation can happen inside the cultural environment. This research explores the representation of the Nigerian diaspora. However, for the purpose of proving the point of inside culture misrepresentation, the work of Senegalese film director Ousmane Sembène will be exemplified. This director is known for his films about politics in Senegal. According to Opondo [7], the films directed by Sembène are not the true image of reality:

The crisis of truth that his cinema engages in politicizes and interrogates everyday encounters and identities in Africa. Even where the narrative is familiar, Sembène's cinema as part of modern political cinema (where the people are missing) constantly stages encounters with silenced or trivialized stories, thus presenting a different problem for thought and truth.

Conversely, Murphy [8] believes that Sembène's films are not propaganda and show accurate and relevant social agendas by bringing up "Xala" and its importance in presenting the country's social issues:

It presents an extremely complex vision of Senegalese society, addressing questions of gender as well as social, cultural, economic and political factors. The film is not a simplistic work of propaganda: it is deeply concerned with the rituals and symbols of Senegalese society.

The above arguments raised by scholars coming from different backgrounds are valid points contributing to this conversation and prove that the debate within ethics and representation is ongoing. Therefore, it is hard to establish boundaries within ethics as each person has different morals forming contrastive opinions. After reviewing the above works, there is a gap in the research of ethics and representation in the film context that does not address the complexity of one's identity, which will be further explored in this paper.

3. Methods and Methodologies

3.1. Case Studies

This research paper combines primary and secondary sources to address the ethical problems of misrepresentation of people, particularly Nigerians. The methodology used is academic research. This chapter will examine the case studies chosen for the primary research. The Nollywood cinema [9] consists of numerous movies describing the black diasporic experience, which is deeply rooted in their culture:

Nollywood—the spontaneous, indigenous, independent Nigerian video-film production—and similar models (e.g. in Ghana) are part of cinematographic metaphor and rebellion. Made predominantly for domestic audiences, Nollywood targets the Nigerian diaspora and addresses universal themes.

According to United Nations Data [10], the migrant population of Nigeria was just over 211.4 million which equals nearly 3% of the world population. While less than one percent of the overall Nigerian population may seem insignificant, over 1.3 million people from Nigeria live abroad, having a powerful impact on Nollywood cinema.

This study focuses on the representation of the Nigerian diaspora as such films have growing popularity amongst audiences both in Nigeria and abroad [11]. There are plenty of diaspora films presenting individual stories of people who left their homes in search of something else, the stories that, according to Krings [12], end with either one of these scenarios:

(...) the protagonists are suitably chastened if their strength has expressed itself in unprincipled ways, or they are allowed to go home if life abroad has roughed them up too badly, or they settle into a successful life abroad if they pass their tests.

This simplified idea of the diasporic experience does not give justice to the complexity of obstacles immigrants face abroad. Films chosen for this study argue with Krings's straightforward idea of migration in cinema.

The works present two complex and contrastive experiences of Nigerian families. Both films are based on true stories and show families who relocated to European countries. The choice of movies was driven by the need to prove the key concern of this study, considering ethics and representation in film. Whilst both films are a story of Nigerians struggling abroad, the image of a Nigerian person and the problems they face being an outsider in a foreign land is drastically different.

The first film chosen for this study titled "Farming" from 2018 is a British piece directed by Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje. The director comes from Nigeria and tells his autobiography through this work. This film is a director's debut and received average reviews with a 6.1 out of 10 IMDB rating. The story is based on a common social practice in Great Britain between the 1960s and 1980s that involved Nigerian families "farming out" their children to white families for fostering.

The film starts with a young Nigerian boy brought by his parents to a white British family living in a terraced house on the outskirts of London. After that, the audience does not see much of his parents on the screen. After several years, they came to take him back to Nigeria. Faced with the brutality of local rituals and cultural differences, the child is unable to adapt to the new environment and is given back to his foster family in England. Being raised by a foreign family from the dregs of society in a home with many foster African children, the boy had grown to hate his race. After being abused by a white skin-head gang, the boy decided to join them. When he realises he is being used and not treated as equal amongst other gang members, the man leaves the gang and transforms into a new man with the desire to study, which later earns him a university degree.

The problem with the film is not the story, but the subjectivity and brutality of the picture. While the director wanted to tell his story through the medium of film, he did not consider the audiences that would view his work. The brutal images shown in the film, for instance, the act of trying to scrub the skin colour off, the degradation of a human being to a dog and a slave, or the use of expressions such as "wooga wooga land" are harmful and unethical. There is a collective responsibility of people involved in the making of the movie to stay ethical and, as a principle of ethics, not harm. The film can harm the viewers who identify as Nigerians and provoke audiences to have wrong views on these members of the society.

In Vourlias's [13] article the film is presented as a history lesson, which gives the reader a false assumption that the story is based on facts. However, the story is based on an individual's experience and his recollection of the past. Furthermore, the article mentions the director's intentions for making the film: "(...) the cathartic need to expunge this experience that I endured as a child. This project

was born out of a need for me to be able to sleep at night.”

The quote implies director’s unawareness or misunderstanding of the importance of consideration of other people within the project and shows the selfishness of wanting to tell a story without giving it a second thought. What is more, the author adds:

I’m hoping that what this film does is really create an opportunity for us as a people, but also as a nation, to re-evaluate its relationship with its black immigrant population.

While the pure intentions of trying to make people think about the relationship between immigrants and non-immigrants in the UK are visible in this explanation, the film can stimulate opposite action and unpleasant feelings with its brutal and subjective images. Since the director had 16 years to create this piece [14] more consideration could have been given to the creative process.

The second film, “Rise”, directed by Nigerian director Akin Omotoso, tells the story of a Nigerian family living in Greece. The film received positive reviews scoring 7 out of 10 on the IMDB portal. The movie starts with a Nigerian couple leaving the country and moving to Greece in hope for a better future, leaving their baby son behind as he was too young for the journey. The parents of five struggle daily to provide for their children, and the strict citizenship system makes it difficult to obtain permanent residency to stay in the country legally. The family sells souvenirs to tourists in Athens to make enough money for rent. They live in paradox of having to obtain payroll job to receive permanent residency and not being able to receive residency without having a legal job first. Their sons show interest in basketball and immediately find their natural talent. One of the national coaches notices a young boy’s talent and wants him to play for NBA in the United States. The family faces obstacles in fulfilling their son’s dream as the questionable residence status is a problem. In the end, they overcome the issues with the coach’s help, and the boy gets drafted to NBA, which helps him move to America with his family and reunite with a brother from Nigeria.

This representation of a Nigerian family is a story that many immigrant families face abroad. The movie is constructed in an objective and ethical way as it could as well be a story of any other non-Nigerian and non-black family struggling to live in a foreign country. There are scenes that present the family problems, such as sudden home invasion by immigration service, the problem with obtaining legal residence permit, and the struggles of becoming a professional basketball player without permanent residency regardless of being born in Greece. While the events shown in the film are common for immigrants, all of them are portrayed in an ethical way while keeping the message of the story untouched.

After comparison of these two films, it becomes apparent that there are diverse ways in which a director can show a story and manipulate audiences. The films mentioned above are directed by Nigerians, tell a story of a Nigerian diaspora, yet the differences in narrative are transparent. The first film may be considered highly unethical and excessively subjective, whilst the other movie is less biased.

Filmmaking is not only an act of entertaining the audience but also representing values, behaviours, cultures, people, religions, and other meaningful elements of life, therefore it is crucial to “(...) have a thorough understanding of the stories and people and time they (film-makers) are trying to represent on screen” [15].

A vast majority of international audiences receive information on Nigerian culture through Nollywood cinema, which makes truth representation in films particularly necessary. In his article exploring Nollywood and systematics reviews, Endong [16] focuses on the impact of a relationship between the Nigerian film industry and foreign media on shaping outsiders’ views on Nigerian culture:

(...) Nollywood films as a phenomenon which simply continues, corroborates or intensifies foreign media misrepresentations or negative portrayals of Nigeria.

Therefore, it is understandable that more research papers and examinations are needed about ethical representation in films to inform filmmakers about good filmmaking practices and avoid stimulating biased and negative opinions among audiences.

3.2. Study

The research within this study involved ten participants identifying as Nigerians who experienced diaspora. The study aims to find how Nigerian people respond to different representation of their identity in the films chosen for the purpose of this research. The findings would inform filmmakers about the ethics of representation in film.

The ten participants come from various parts of Nigeria and share an experience of immigrating to a foreign country makes them suitable for taking part in the study. They were asked to watch the films and answer a questionnaire regarding mentioned works. The questions were structured to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. The participants signed a consent form before participating in the research to understand that the films shown might be unethical and uncomfortable to watch. After collecting the responses from all participants, there was a thorough analysis of their views to draw an argument within the discussion of ethics and representation of Nigerians diasporic experiences in films.

4. Analysis of Findings

After collecting the responses, it became clear that most participants shared similar feelings and views on both films. When asked about the view on the representation of Nigerians in “Rise,” three of them stated the lack of cultural representation, which suggests they focused on the collective representation of Nigerians having a joint culture defining their identity. One of the participants said, “It’s ok but lacks cultural information” with the other one adding “I think that the representation of Nigerians in this film is ok, but it doesn’t show much of our culture, just the aspects of living abroad.”

This approach suggests that some participants watched the film expecting to see Nigerian culture. The sense of community plays a more important role to these participants than an individual story. Thus, the common misconception about cultural identity and the lack of consideration or awareness of factors indicating the shift in identity can be noticed. Amiot [17] explores the impact of migration on the feeling of belonging and identity as an unavoidable integration of cultural identity with a new environment. According to her analysis, emigrants do not lose their cultural identity but integrate into the social changes, thus, shaping a brand-new self-identity. However, the concept presented by Amiot may be complex to understand for those identifying with culture when looking at a story of another individual from the same country. The participants identify as Nigerians and see the story in the film as that of another Nigerian person, expecting to share the same or similar culture. Therefore, such an approach is subjective, and the participants might have not understood the complexity of identity and foreign culture perhaps due to a deep cultural belonging. The question asked about the representation of Nigerians, which some understood as the representation of culture because of their belief in a correlative link between those.

Other participants agreed that the representation of Nigerians in “Rise” was positive with some also pointing out the aspects of real-life struggles faced by families living abroad. Some of the answers include:

It is a true representation of how Nigerians try to survive, leaving their home and in the process, sacrificing the things and people they love for a better life. I think it's good, it shows the usual struggles of families abroad. I think it is a good representation, I liked it.

This approach shows a difference in the interpretation of representation, acknowledging the experience rather than the culture. The participants focused on the representation of the life of Nigerians, understanding their daily problems. The responses show that viewers see identity from an individual angle. Moreover, the participants favoured the representation of Nigerians in “Rise” because it showed them in a positive light, presenting a story of a talented basketball player who overcomes obstacles and achieves great success. There is a link between success in sport and national pride that leaves people feeling happy and proud of their country. Such a concept is examined in more detail by Haut [18] who explores the dynamic between sport, the audiences, and identity. Naturally, the participants responded positively to the representation of Nigerians in “Rise.”

On the contrary, the opinion about the representation of Nigerians in “Farming” was negative. Most of the viewers drew a conclusion that the film is not a representation of Nigerians. One of them claimed it is unique and unrelatable:

There were some scenes that were hard to watch, and I find it hard to judge the representation as this is a very unique case and I don't think many Nigerians can even relate to this. In terms of representation, this is not a representation of Nigerians.

Another person added that the story is bizarre:

This representation seems very individual and bizarre, I don't think this story is any representation of Nigerians.

One participant held back from giving an opinion, stating it was not representing them in any way:

It's quite extraordinary, I can't really say what I think of it, I don't want to say anything bad about it because it is not my story, but it is definitely not a representation of us.

Following such responses, it is noticeable that participants do not identify with the experiences shown in the film and do not accept it as a representation of Nigerians. According to the respondents, a representation of Nigerians can be shown through images they relate to. Since the film presents an individual and unique story, the viewers reject it as a portrayal of their nation. Interestingly, the director claims 'farming' was a common practice, but none of the participants had heard of it prior to the study. Kurtiş [19] examines the link between collective memory and collective identity that shapes the national and individual identity of people. According to his findings, there are tendencies to silence historical incidents that show a nation from a negative angle and remember the ones that present power and success. Perhaps the participants chose to distance themselves from a story shown in "Farming" because it presents a negative practice of Nigerian families in the past.

When asked about the feelings that emerged during watching the films, the participants answered in short. Those watching "Rise" felt proud, good, and happy. Contrarily, "Farming" left people feeling angry, hurt, uncomfortable, and confused.

The question arising from the findings is whom the participants identify as Nigerian and what contributes to their representation. Examining the responses, most participants consider "Rise" a representation of Nigerians even though it is an individual story of a Greece-born Nigerian NBA player. However, the participants do not share the same view on "Farming," claiming it is an individual story that they do not relate to, denying it a representation of Nigerians. Thus, it is interesting that a story presenting a common practice of "farming" seems to be invalid, but the story of an NBA global star is perceived in a positive light regardless of very few people relating to it.

Nevertheless, after a careful examination of the responses, a conclusion can be drawn that the film "Rise" sends a positive message and inspires people, leaving participants feeling good and proud of their own nation. Opposing, the film "Farming" is not considered a truthful representation of Nigerians with participants claiming it is harmful and wrong, and some finding it unnecessary. This study has concluded the importance of audience consideration and the problem of misrepresentation in films. Most participants felt hurt after watching "Farming" which is unacceptable under the good practice rules established in the Codes

of Practices and Regulations overlooking the film industry. The following chapter will draw upon solutions to the identified problem.

5. Reflective Evaluation

This part of the research will evaluate problems arising from the findings of this study and propose solutions as well as provide a reflective statement to understand the limitations of this paper and the purpose of the research.

5.1. Solutions

When representing a group of people, it is essential to consider their identity. Nationality at birth does not define identity. The concept of racial change is explored by Spickard [20] who mentions the complexity of race and identity, analysing the reasons for shapeshifters¹ reforming their identities. According to his findings, most of these people do not simply choose to identify as somebody else than formerly known, but the external circumstances bring them to such a decision.

Considering the shape-shifting approach, one should ask who the films are portraying. Is “Rise” a story about Nigerians abroad, or is it about the Greeks? Following the same pattern, is “Farming” representing Nigerians or British people rejected from society? It is vital to understand the identity of people represented in film and make reasonable adjustments that will make audiences aware of who the story portrays to present an accurate image of an individual or a society.

Another valid point within this discussion is whether the film represents race or culture. While many people associate one with another, there is a tremendous difference between both terms. Harris [21] explores the above concepts in terms of black visual culture and points:

It is not enough to refer to black visual culture as that produced by the African diaspora, nor am I comfortable with the conflation of race into culture found in some discourses of “blackness.” The former begs for authenticity, while ignoring how one is interpellated as authentic. The latter, the conflation of race into culture, idealizes expressivity as style, erasing the material conditions of the formation of expression.

Assuming Harris’s view is correct, a filmmaker should know which one the film represents. To further support the difference between race and culture, it is advisable to examine their definitions in a Cambridge dictionary.

After a thorough review of academic journals, it is understood why ethics and representation are a subject of an ever-going debate between filmmakers. With so many aspects of the representation, it is complex to establish common ground in the ethical portrayal of people. There are many factors to consider when representing a subject such as a message, audience feelings, and morals. A film idea should not be dismissed based on the ethical problems behind it, but relevant

¹**shapeshifter**—a person able to change identity at will, followed by changes in the circumstances and/or the environment.

solutions need to be introduced.

One of the easiest ways to avoid bad practices is altering the unethical scenes in the film or removing them altogether. If a given part is crucial to the plot and adds an important element to the construction of the film, it is acceptable to keep it, provided audiences are aware of it before watching. A trigger warning explaining the unethical parts should be displayed before the film starts, allowing participants to remove themselves from the situation if they do not wish to view such a movie.

Whilst the trigger warning seems like an easy escape, it is best if the person responsible for the making of the movie tries to avoid bad practices at all costs. Nicolas Raffin [22] mentioned during his master class “What is ethical cinema?” at an Aesthetica Short Film Festival 2022 held in York (United Kingdom) that there are other forms of ethical consideration when making a film. According to him “The filmmaker is not making a film, the people are” which he understands literally and proposes to involve the subject in the process of making. Raffin brings up the Dutch film “Stones Have Laws” as an example of such an ethical approach where people represented in the film helped write a script. Unfortunately, such a practice is questionable as “Farming” was written and directed by the same person represented in the film, therefore, leaving no objectivity in the ethical judgement. Henceforth, it is advisable to search for alternative solutions within the code of practice to sustain good filmmaking practices.

After interviewing Tosin Remin Oguntuase [23], a Nigerian student in his final year of PhD in Film and Media Studies at the University of Sussex, an alternative approach was mentioned. According to Tosin, in the case of “Farming”, the film would have been ethical if the story was presented as fictional due to the lack of supporting evidence proving it factual. He also mentions the lack of resources to validate the ballpark number of “farmed out” Nigerians mentioned at the beginning of the film. When asked about the solutions, Tosin said:

I have never heard before of Nigerians being farmed out, left with a foster family, and never cared about by parents. I feel it’s so untrue, if it is true, I think we should be able to see some data about it, there would have been data about it. If you mention tens of thousands of Nigerians, we should know where you got this number from. You can’t put your own story in a collective way that will make people think others had similar experiences, because you don’t know if they did, and you don’t present any facts. You should state it is a fictional story if you are not able to provide facts and data to back it up.

According to this statement, another solution could be a clear indication that the story is fictional rather than based on facts and mentioning the number of “farmed out” Nigerian children between the 1960s and 1980s should be omitted altogether.

5.2. Conclusions

This research paper aimed to examine the study involving ten Nigerian

participants to address the misrepresentation of people in film and unethical portrayal on screen, focusing on the Nigerian diaspora. After the analysis of findings, it is noticeable that the problem of unethical representation of people affects the audiences negatively and adds to the image crisis of Nigeria. The participants were not fond of the portrayal of Nigerians presented in “Farming” regardless of the movie having been written and directed by a Nigerian filmmaker.

The report includes various factors considered when creating a film such as ethical regulations explained in the second chapter, the subject’s identity, the purpose of the story, the subject, and audience reactions. A filmmaker should follow good filmmaking practices and ensure that the images on the screen are ethical and appropriate without harming society.

This paper suggests solutions to the identified problem of unethical representation of people on the screen, proposing a trigger warning so that the audience can make an informed decision on watching the film. Another idea is to alter the unethical scenes in the film or remove them, when possible, to avoid criticism and breaking the ethics rules. Nicolas Raffin, a Film Programme Manager, offers an innovative idea of including the subject of the film in the process of making. Such a solution can be used in certain films, for instance, documentaries, but could compromise the authenticity and subjectivity of others. Alternatively, a final-year PhD Film and Media student, Tosin Remi Oguntuase, proposes a simplified solution of changing the story from based on truth to fiction, which can prevent the audience’s negative perceptions.

The findings of this study have informed my practice in terms of the representation of people on screen in an ethical way, which is necessary knowledge for a director. This research also provides a better understanding of human identity, making it easier to work with actors and subjects in the films confidently, whilst understanding their personalities and the stories they wish to tell through moving images. Film practitioners interested in presenting cultures and identity issues on screen, like me, will benefit from this research by learning more about good practices to implement within their work. Thorough research on the ethics and representation in film has given me a comprehension of the difficulty in portraying others and their stories on the screen, which I hope to benefit from when creating my work in the film industry.

If given another chance and more time, I would have contacted industry professionals and tried to interview them about the representation and ethics in film. In the future, I would also like to interview Nigerian directors to find out their opinion about the representation of Nigerians in both films to understand it from a director’s point of view. If I had the resources to finance thorough research, I would like to visit Nigeria and its different regions to see how people live there, what are their daily struggles as well as daily tasks, and see how that is different from one region to another. This would enable me to comprehend the differences in cultural belonging felt by Nigerians and why I received various answers to my questionnaire. I also wish I found more participants for this study as the more

opinions on the subject the more objective results of the research.

Nevertheless, this study has been tremendously helpful, and I have improved my research skills significantly by looking at peer-reviewed academic sources and getting to know more academic journals. I also improved my communication skills by reaching out to people and finding participants for this research. Apart from that, I learned new things about the Nigerian diaspora, Nigerian culture, and the representation and ethics in film, hoping that this research can also educate other aspiring filmmakers.

To conclude, the research explores the misrepresentation and unethical representations of people. The film is a source and the future of education, so it is vital to create a truthful and accurate representation on screen, not to misinform people. This research aims to inform filmmakers about the problem of misrepresentation in film to educate them and avoid such wrong practices in the future.

This study has evident limits within its reach, having a small group of participants. It is recommended to read "Introduction to Film Studies" by Jill Nelmes and "Beyond Representation" by Geraldine Harris to learn more about the film industry and representation and look for additional resources.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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