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# KNOWLEDGE AND COMPLIANCE TO 'RATING' AND 'PARENTAL GUIDANCE SPECIFICATIONS' IN TELEVISION AND FILM VIEWERSHIP IN NIGERIA

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**Abstract**
*Television and film have become very central to family entertainment and leisure in Nigeria. However, just as they entertain, they also have very strong potential to damage. Unregulated film and television contents can be injurious to the family in particular and society in general. This study examined parental awareness and implementation of film Rating and Parental Guidance Specifications in film and Cable TV. Using the survey approach of the quantitative research method, the researchers interrogated 126 parents living in Awka. Findings show that there is a high awareness and implementation of Rating and Parental Guidance Specifications in film and cable televisions in Awka. The researchers concluded that increased awareness campaigns will further increase media literacy among parents and children in the area.*

**Key Words**: Knowledge, Compliance, Rating, Parental Guiadance

## INTRODUCTION

Television and film have become a major source of entertainment for many families in Nigeria. Starting from colonial times, television has played a major role in social engineering and entertainment in the country (Iyorza, 2018). Thus, television programs and films are used as relaxation content for families and many of these programs are designed with age specifications in mind to ensure that they do not become injurious to the psychological development of children.

With the evolution of cable technology that has brought global television stations to the comfort of many family homes in Nigeria, television has become central to the family experience. Films, musicals, comedies, sports and other entertainment programs have stations specifically dedicated to their audience. Thus, the cable system has even made television more reachable and its contents widely accessible to many families in Nigeria.

However, these programs even though largely appealing, may not be suitable for everyone's consumption. This is because some of the programs are designed for adult consumption and as such can be injurious to developing minds. The idea of video censorship stems from the overwhelming need to scope contents and to protect children from undue exposure to violence, sexually explicit scenes and verbal language that may be inimical to their psychological growth (Kajo & Anzaku, 2019). This is why television, though very impactful for child learning can also wield very negative influence on children by impacting negatively on their emotional development (Cantor & Mares, 2001). Due to the fragile nature of children in their developing ages, some of the television content is not suitable for the consumption of children at certain ages. In effect, a regulatory system was put in place to

*knowledge and compliance to 'rating' and 'parental guidance…* ensure that parents maintain control over media content that children are exposed to. It is this system of control that is referred to as censorship.

To ensure more effective censorship implementation, a feature was developed by cable owners to give parents control over their children's exposure to television content. It is this control that is known as the Parental Guidance feature in television and film viewership.

Rating on the other hand stems from the need to categorize films according to the age of its target audience. The rating system specifically outlines films made for everybody's view and movies made for the exclusive consumption of adults based on their contents. Thus, rating specifies the age bracket that every film is targeted at. While adults are at leisure to enjoy films in every category, children below the age of 17 are carefully excluded from certain content which are categorized as adult content. These contents may contain explicit sexual or romantic scenes that have the potential to sexually arouse the audience (Mubeen & Ashraf, 2022). The National Film and Video Censors Board, the body charged with the responsibility of regulating video content in Nigeria however has the scope a little more expanded. Accordingly, contents rated '18' according to them may contain "explicit violence, frequent coarse language, horror and simulated sexual scenes" (NFVCB, 2024).

However, even though these features exist and are readily available for parents to implement, it appears that children still have undue access to programs that are explicitly made for adult consumption. According to Mrs Aderonke Oyelakin in a 2022 workshop organized by the Nigeria Broadcasting Commission, "Our children and youths are being exposed to things beyond their

capacity" (Echonews, 2022). Theodora Etim also berates the excessive exposure of children to inappropriate Nollywood content as a major challenge facing Nigeria (Etim, 2023). The implication is that there is still a glaring gap in censorship regulation and implementation. There is a need therefore to factor out this gap as a major step towards finding a more effective solution to implementing parental control in television and film viewership. This study is a social inquiry into the knowledge and compliance with rating and parental guidance specifications in Television and film viewership among parents in Nigeria. The study is designed to ascertain the level of awareness of the parental guidance features among parents. Also, the study needs to inquire into the extent of its implementation by parents in Nigeria.

**Film and Video Censorship in Nigeria**

Censorship is the overall action of determining what is 'suitable' and removing that which is deemed unfit or unsuitable for public consumption. It involves the prescriptive functions of removing clips or scenes considered obscene and disruptive of social sanity and cohesion. The action of film and video censorship is instituted to protect vulnerable members of society (Omoera, 2008). Nollywood, the film industry of Nigeria came into existence in the early '90s with Kenneth *Nnebue's Living in Bondage* (1992) as its generally accepted foundation film. The early days of Nollywood had witnessed lots of rituals, armed robbery, sex work and violence-themed films. Because the new industry was an allcomers affair (Ajibade & Williams, 2012), there was little or no concern about the thematic focus of the films and how they could affect society. As a result of the 'inchoate' nature of the new industry and the barrage of the perceived obscenities that

*knowledge and compliance to 'rating' and 'parental guidance…* confronted the new Nigerian screen, there was a public outcry for some form of regulation to protect public morality (Ugor, 2007). As a result of this, the Nigerian Film and Video Censor Board (NFVCB) was born and tasked with the regulatory function of censoring film and video content in Nigeria before they are introduced to the public.

The Nigerian Film and Video Censors Board is tasked with the responsibility of regulating film and video content in Nigeria. As part of its reference, the NFVCB is tasked with monitoring and controlling the distribution, exhibition and marketing of film and video contents in Nigeria. Their responsibility encompasses giving approval as well as denying approval for films with contents considered socially unfit. According to Ikechukwu Obiaya, the body has the mandate to deny approvals not just to morally unfit films, but also to films 'that are considered undesirable in the public interest or that are likely to incite or encourage public disorder" (Obiaya, 2015). Thus, at the heart of the responsibilities of the NFVCB is to "protect national culture, peace and security, protect children and young persons from harm and prevent access by children to materials which are offensive" (NFVCB, 2023). This is mostly achieved through a censorship process known as classification.

**Film/Video Classification**

According to the NFVCB Act Part v, article 17 number 1, "no person shall exhibit a film or video work unless he is the holder of a license granted by the Board under this Act". The implication is that every film to be exhibited in the Nigerian media space must go through the censorship process of the NFVCB. The censorship and classification committee is expected to preview the film and

classify based on "drug use, horror, language, nudity, ritual, sex, sexual violence, theme, tribalism and racism, violence, or any content which could disrupt the peaceful state of the nation" (NFVCB, 2023). These films are classified and rated into any of the following classifications:

i. **"G" classification:** This rating is given to films that are considered safe for consumption by every person. The "G" classification indicates that a film given this rating has been previewed by the censorship board and approved for general consumption. The implication is that everyone including infants is free to watch films in this classification and that it has been classified as safe for this viewing purpose.

ii. **"PG" classification:** This rating is given to films that have themes or contents that may not be suitable for all children. The PG stands for parental guidance. Films with this rating require the guidance of parents to be exhibited to children. The implication is that the decision to exhibit it to children lies specifically with their parents or guardians who supposedly stand the better chance of knowing what is suitable for their children and may not trigger or affect them negatively.

iii. **The "12" classification:** This rating is given to films with contents or themes considered appropriate for persons who have attained 12 years of age. The implication is that films rated '12' can be seen by people who are 12 years and above but are not meant for any

child below the age of 12. Accordingly, "no one younger than 12 may rent or buy a "12" rated film" (NFVCB, 2023).

iv. **The "12A" classification:** This is a sub-classification of the "12" rating. This rating category specifies that no child younger than 12 years of age is allowed to see a 12rated film in a cinema unless accompanied by an adult. This rating slightly allows children younger than 12 to see '12' rated films but strictly under the guidance of an adult.

v. **The "15" classification:** A film classified '15' is considered appropriate and suitable for persons who have attained the age of 15 and above. This classification category precludes individuals who are below the age of 15. As such, "No one younger than 15 may see a "15" rated film in a cinema, rent or buy such a video. It is an offence to exhibit a "15" film to a person younger than 15" (NFVCB, 2023).

vi. **The "18" classification:** This classification is given to films that are rated for viewers who have attained the age of 18. Films rated 18 normally contain themes and ideas that are considered unsuitable for viewers below the age of 18. These films may contain explicit sexual content, curse or vulgar language, horror, excessive display of violence and other contents that may be injurious to developing minds. According to the NFVCB, "It is an

offence to exhibit an "18" film to a person younger than 18" (NFVCB, 2023).

**vii.** The "RE" classification: This classification category is given to films that are not suitable for persons under the age of 18 but may not be commonly exhibited like other films under the 18 classifications. 'RE' rated films are to be exhibited only in "specially licensed premises for a specialized audience. The film may contain frequent use of disturbing content" (NFVCB, 2023). Films in this category are specially controlled to ensure that it does not go outside the width of their target and approved audience.

**Literature Review**

Quite a several researches have been conducted on film and video censorship in Nigeria. Thomas Kajo, & Zainab Ankazu for example have studied the performances of the NFVCB in Nigeria and concluded that the NFVCB do not efficiently monitor film production and circulation in the country (Kajo & Ankazu, 2019). Going beyond mere monitoring, Duro Oni explores the complexities of NFVCB's duty to regulate Nollywood films made outside Nigeria for Nigeria consumption. He concludes that beyond the excitement of grandeur that comes with such films, NFVCB must concentrate its regulatory action on disapproving content that may impact badly on Nigeria's national interests (Oni, 2021). Film-makers however still do not abide by codes of conduct established by the NFVCB itself, and the lack of political

will has made the board loose with its regulatory duties of ensuring proper ethics in film (Enyeazu & Oshionebo, 2023). However, the evolution of hybrid distribution on virtual platforms has even posed a problem to NFVCB as many films on these platforms are neither censored nor classified (Lateef, 2018). In effect, even though the NFVCB was primarily tasked with protecting and shielding the weak members of society from having access to sensitive content, its operations have been largely ineffective (Akorga, Albert, & Ayodele, 2021). Of all these works, Theodora Etim's thesis on parents' perception of the Nigerian Video-film rating is the most related to my research. However, while her work queries the extent of implementation of the rating system at home, my research inquiries into the extent of knowledge and awareness of film rating and classification and its implementation amongst parents in Nigeria using Awka as the study area.

**Methodology:**

**Research Questions**

i. What percentage of Parents Know about film ratings and Parental Guidance Specifications in films in Awka? ii. What is the degree of implementation of film ratings amongst parents living in Awka? iii. What percentage of parents living in Awka know about the parental guidance specifications in cable TV? iv. What's the degree of implementation of the "parental guidance specification" in films and cable TV amongst parents living in Awka?

**Sample Demography**

The Research sampled Nigerian parents who are above the age of 18. These adults were selected from Awka, the capital of Anambra State. One hundred and fifty-one respondents were sampled to determine knowledge and compliance to 'rating' and 'parental guidance specifications' in television and film viewership in the area. However, of the 151 questionnaires distributed for the survey, the researchers were able to retrieve 126 from the respondents.

**Research Design**

The research is designed to give a quantitative idea of the level of awareness and implementation of film rating and parental guidance implementations in film and cable TV viewership in Awka, the capital of Anambra State.

**Study Area**

The study was carried out in the major clusters in Awka: Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Ifite, Okponu and Iyiagu. Awka was chosen because of its metropolitan nature defying the vestiges of class and other variables like religion. The researcher intended to understand the extent of awareness amongst parents living in the area.

**Presentation and Analysis of Data Table 1: Demographic Data**

| Variables | Item | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sex | Male | 40 | 31.7% |
| | Female | 80 | 63.5% |
| | Undecided | 06 | 4.8% |
| | **Total** | **126** | **100%** |
| | | | |
| Marital Status | Married | 119 | 92.9% |
| | Single | 09 | 7.1% |
| | | | |
| Age of Respondent | 18 – 30 | 12 | 9.8% |
| | 31 – 40 | 64 | 52% |
| | 41 – 50 | 38 | 30.9% |
| | Above 50 | 8 | 6.5% |
| | Non-Responsive | 1 | .8% |
| | | | |
| | Primary School Education | 6 | 4.8% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Level of Education | SSCE | 4 | 4.0% |
| | OND | 29 | 23.4 |
| | BSC/HND | 59 | 47.6% |
| | PostGraduate Degree | 25 | 20.2% |

Table 1 shows that a total of 126 respondents were surveyed. Out of the 126 respondents, the sex variables show that 40 people making up 31.7 per cent of the respondent population are male, while 80 people making up 63.5 per cent of the respondent population are females. However, 6 people making up 4.8% of the total respondent population were undecided about their gender. The marital status variables show that 119 people making up 92.9 percent of the total respondent population are married while 9 people making up 7.1 per cent of the total respondent population are single.

More so, the age variables show that 12 people making up 9.8 per cent of the respondent population are between the ages of 18 – and 30 while 64 people making up 52 per cent of the respondent population are between the ages of 31 – 40. More so, 38 people making up 30.9 per cent of the respondent population fall between the ages of 41 – 50 while 8 people making up 6.5 per cent of the respondent population are 51 years of age and above. However, 1 person making up 0.8 per cent of the respondent population was undecided about his/her age.

**Research Question 1: What percentage of Parents Know about "Rating" and the "Parental Guidance Specifications" in film and cable TV?**

**Table 2: Parents' Awareness of age "Rating" in films**

| Response | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 107 | 85.6 |
| No | 18 | 14.4 |
| Total | 125 | 100 |

**Table 3: Parents' Awareness of Parental Guidance Specifications**

| Response | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 113 | 91.1 |
| No | 11 | 8.9 |
| Total | 124 | 100 |

**Discussion of Findings**

The figures in Table 2 show respondents' awareness of age rating in films. Out of the 125 parents who participated in this particular survey, 107 making up 85.6 percent of the total respondent population affirmed that they are aware of rating and age classification in films. However, 18 parents making up 14.4 percent of the total respondent population are unaware of rating and age classification in films. The implication is that the majority of parents living in Awka, the study area are aware of film rating and age classification in film viewership. However, there is still a little percentage of people living in this location that neither know nor understand film rating and classification. More so, following the result of the findings, table 3 shows parents' awareness of the parental guidance specifications in film viewership. The figures in Table 3 show that 113 parents making up 91.1 percent of the total respondent population are aware of parental guidance specifications in films while 11 parents making up 8.9 percent of the respondent population are unaware of the parental guidance specifications.

This data set implies that most parents living in Awka, the study area know about the parental guidance specification in film viewership. However, the data set also shows that there are still several parents who are still ignorant of the parental guidance specifications, though this group of parents are in a serious minority.

**Research Question 2: What is the degree of implementation of "rating" and Parental Guidance Specification in films?**

**Table 3: Parents who insist on watching films based on age specifications**

| Response | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| **Yes** | **103** | **81.7** |
| **No** | **23** | **18.3** |
| **Total** | **126** | **100** |

**Table 4: Frequency of denying children access to films because of age**

| Response | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| **Very Often** | **29** | **23.0** |
| **Often** | **38** | **30.2** |
| **Rarely** | **53** | **42.1** |
| **Never** | **6** | **4.8** |
| **Total** | **126** | **100** |

**Discussion of Findings**

The figures in Table 3 show the statistical information on the number of parents who insist on allowing their children access to films based on age specifications. Results from the survey

contained in Table 3 show that 103 parents making up 81.7 per cent of the respondent population implement film rating and specifications according to age in their homes while 23 parents making up 18.3 per cent of the respondent population do not bother with rating or age specifications in film in their homes. This statistical information implies that there is a very high implementation of the rating and age specifications in film viewership amongst parents in the study area.

Table 4 on the other hand shows the frequency of implementation of rating and parental guidance specifications. Figures in Table 4 show that 29 parents making up 23 per cent of the respondent population frequently insist on their children watching films and programs at home based on rating and age specifications while 38 parents making up 30.2 per cent of the respondent population often insist on allowing their children watch films based on rating and age specifications. However, the data set also shows that while 53 parents making up 42.2 per cent of the study population rarely implement rating and age specifications in film viewership in their homes, 6 parents making up 4.8 per cent of the respondent population have never implemented rating or age speculations in their homes. The implication is that there is that while a little more than half of the parents in Awka implement film rating specifications in their homes, a little below half of the parents in Awka even though they know about rating and parental guidance specifications rarely implement it in their homes.

**Research Question 3: What percentage of parents know about the parental guidance specifications in cable TV?**

**Table 5: knowledge of the Parental Guidance measures in cable TV**

| Response | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| **Yes** | **95** | **75.4** |
| **No** | **30** | **23.4** |
| **Total** | **125** | **100** |

Figures in Table 5 show parents' awareness of the parental guidance measures in cable TVs. From the data set, while 95 parents making up 75.4 per cent of the study population know about the parental guidance measures, 30 parents making up 23.4 per cent of the respondent population do not know about the existence of such measures in cable TVs. The implication is that most parents in Awka know about the parental guidance measures put in place in cable TVs to grant parents control over what their children can access on cable TVs in their homes.

**Research Question 4: How frequently do parents exercise the parental guidance control feature in cable TV?**

**Table 6: Frequency of implementation of the Parental Guidance Specifications on Cable TV**

| **Response** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
|---|---|---|
| Very Often | 15 | 14.0 |
| Often | 49 | 45.8 |
| Rarely | 20 | 18.7 |
| Never | 23 | 21.5 |
| Total | 126 | 100 |

The figures in Table 6 provide answers to research question 4. The figures show that 15 parents making up 14 per cent of the total respondent population very often implement the parental guidance features on cable TV while 49 persons making up 45.8 per cent of the respondent population often implement the parental guidance features. More so, while 20 persons making up 18.7 per cent of the study population rarely implement the parental guidance features, 23 persons making up 21.5 per cent of the total respondent population have never implemented it. The implication is that there is a high implementation of the parental guidance feature in cable TVs in most families in Awka. While this may not account for parents who implement it very often, it accounts for parents who often than not, enforce the use of the

*knowledge and compliance to 'rating' and 'parental guidance…* feature to screen the contents their children have access to on their cable televisions at home.

## Conclusion

Censorship is imperative in media management. What is seen or what is allowed to be seen plays a critical role in social engineering. The formative years are very important, especially for children who can easily be affected by what they see. Film censorship therefore plays a critical role in the development of children. This research set out to determine the extent of awareness of the Nigerian film classification system amongst parents in Awka. Beyond this, it also set out to determine the extent of its implementation amongst parents living in Awka. The result from the data analysis has proven that most parents in Awka are well aware of the rating system and also implement the parental guidance specification in both films and cable TV viewership in their homes. There is also a tiny fraction of these parents who are still ignorant of film ratings and specifications in the study area. There is therefore the extra need to get these parents well informed on film classifications with regards to rating.

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