

PORTRAYAL OF FEMALE VICTIMS OF GENDER-BASED CRIMES IN SELECTED YORÙBÁ FILMS (*KÁFIRÁNTÀN* AND *VICTIM*)

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Abstract

*The portrayal of female victims of gender-based crimes in Yorùbá films reflects a deliberate characterization style shaped by producers' ideological, cultural, and narrative priorities. This study examines how producers construct female victimhood through recurring tropes such as vulnerability, moral dualism, silence, and eventual resilience. Film producers utilize characterization techniques such as symbolic costuming, emotive dialogue, and situational framing to evoke empathy and moral reflection from the audience. Victims are frequently positioned within domestic or intimate spaces, emphasizing the pervasiveness of gender-based crimes in private spheres. The characterization style thus serves as both a mirror of societal attitudes and a potential tool for advocacy against gender-based crime. Two films - *Káfirántàn* (2020) and *Victims* (2015) - were purposively selected because of their central focus on gender-based crimes and their rich portrayal of female victimhood within Yorùbá society. The films provide a basis for comparative analysis through their differing characterization styles, patterns of character development, and plot constructs. As representations of traditional and contemporary Yorùbá cinematic practices, they reflect socio-cultural realities surrounding gender relations and demonstrate the evolving portrayal of female victims. Using victimology theory, the analysis reveals how narrative techniques and characterization are employed to depict women as victims of gender-based crimes and to highlight the social circumstances that contribute to their victimization. The paper recommends that film producers should produce films that promote good virtues, inculcate good characters, and discourage gender-based crime commission, particularly among the youth. The film producers, while mirroring the societal challenges, especially gender-based crimes, should educate the people on how to avoid situations that can lead one to be a victim for preventive purposes.*

Keywords: Gender-based crimes, Victimology theory, Crime victims, Yorùbá crime Films.

INTRODUCTION

Yorùbá films, as a significant strand of the Nigerian film industry, have long served as a

cultural medium through which social realities, moral values, and gender relations are constructed and contested. Within this cinematic tradition, the portrayal of female

victims of gender-based crimes has emerged as a recurring thematic concern, reflecting both entrenched patriarchal norms and evolving societal attitudes. Films such as *Káfirántàn* and *Victims* provide audiovisual theatrical narratives through which producers articulate the experiences of women exposed to various forms of violent crimes, including rape, battery, domestic abuse, emotional exploitation, and assaults.

Central to these portrayals is the style of the producers, which shapes how female victim status is constructed, developed, and interpreted. Yorùbá film producers often adopt a melodramatic style, characterized by emotional expression, moral polarization, and clear distinctions between victims and perpetrators. This stylistic approach is not merely aesthetic but ideological, as it frames female suffering in ways that elicit sympathy while reinforcing cultural expectations of endurance, silence, and resilience. In some cases, however, contemporary producers depart from purely traditional frameworks by incorporating more critical and realist styles that question the gender-based crime targeting females as victims.

Closely linked to production style is the issue of character development, particularly in the construction of female victims. In many Yorùbá films, female characters are developed through a trajectory that begins with innocence or vulnerability, progresses through stages of victimization, and culminates in either tragic resignation or moral vindication. In *Káfirántàn*, for instance, the female protagonist's identity is shaped by both cultural beliefs and oppression, positioning her as a victim. By contrast, *Victims* present a more socially grounded character whose victimhood is tied to economic hardship and patriarchal dominance. These variations demonstrate how producers use character development to reflect different dimensions of

female victimhood, ranging from passive suffering to active resistance and endurance.

The role of the producer extends beyond narrative construction to the orchestration of cinematic elements that influence audience perception. Producers determine the thematic focus, casting, visual tone, and ideological direction of the film. Their choices often reveal underlying assumptions about gender roles and acceptable forms of female behavior. In traditional narratives, producers may emphasize moral lessons that implicitly justify or normalize women's suffering, while in more progressive works, they highlight injustice and advocate for social change (Ọláyíwọlá, 2025).

Another crucial element in the portrayal of female victims of gender-based crime is dialogue, which serves as a vehicle for expressing gender power relations, cultural norms, and emotional states. In Yorùbá films, dialogue is often rich in proverbs, idiomatic expressions, and culturally embedded language, which adds depth to character interactions. Female victims are frequently given dialogue that reflects submission, fear, or internalized oppression, particularly in scenes of confrontation or abuse. However, shifts in dialogue patterns - such as assertive speech or verbal resistance - can signal moments of transformation and empowerment. Thus, dialogue not only advances the plot but also reveals the psychological and social positioning of female characters within patriarchal structures (Uchendu, 2023).

Equally important is the plot structure, which organizes the narrative in ways that shape the representation of gender-based violence. Yorùbá films typically follow a linear structure with clear exposition, conflict, climax, and resolution. Within this framework, female victimhood is often introduced early in the narrative, developed through escalating tension, and resolved through either justice,

reconciliation, or tragedy. In some cases, the resolution reinforces traditional values by rewarding endurance and patience, while in others, it challenges those norms by exposing the consequences of systemic oppression. The plot structure, therefore, plays a critical role in determining whether a film reinforces or critiques existing gender ideologies (Olayinka, 2021).

In summation, the interplay between producers' styles, character development, dialogue, and plot structuring reveals the complexity of portraying female victims in Yorùbá films. These elements do not operate in isolation; rather, they collectively shape how audiences understand and respond to gender-based crimes. By examining these dimensions in selected films, this study seeks to uncover the ideological underpinnings of female victimhood and analyze the extent to which Yorùbá cinema functions as a tool for cultural reinforcement or social transformation. These elements collectively shape audience perception and contribute to ongoing debates about the role of cinema in either perpetuating or challenging gender-based violence in contemporary Nigerian society.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the increasing visibility of gender-based violence in Yorùbá films, the portrayal of female victims remains deeply problematic and often contradictory. On one hand, these films bring critical attention to gender issues such as domestic abuse, sexual violence, and emotional exploitation. On the other hand, the characterization styles adopted by producers frequently reinforce the very patriarchal norms that sustain such gender crimes (Adéyemí, 2022; Babagun, 2021).

In many cases, producers employ melodramatic techniques that emphasize suffering and endurance rather than resistance or empowerment. This raises questions about whether such portrayals genuinely challenge

gender-based crimes or inadvertently support them (Ògúnléyè, 2020).

Female characters are frequently defined by their experiences of abuse, with little attention given to their autonomy, decision-making capacity, or socio-political context. This narrow representation undermines the potential of film as a medium for progressive gender discourse (Ekwuazi, 2019).

Additionally, there is a lack of critical focus on the role of producers in shaping these representations. While existing studies have examined themes of gender and crime in Nigerian cinema, insufficient attention has been paid to how producers' stylistic and ideological choices influence the construction of female victimhood, particularly within the Yorùbá film tradition.

Therefore, the central problem this study addresses is the issue between the portrayal or representation and the reality of crime victimhood. This raises some fundamental questions: to what extent do the selected film producers use characterization and plot structures to challenge or interrogate gender-based violence, and to what extent do they perpetuate existing patriarchal norms? By focusing on selected films, *Káfirántàn* and *Victims*, this study seeks to critically examine these issues and contribute to ongoing scholarly discussions on gender, media, and cultural representation or portrayal in Nigeria.

The Main Objective of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to critically examine the portrayal of female victims of gender-based crimes in Yorùbá films, with particular focus on the character development and narrative constructs in *Kafirantan* and *Victims*. The study seeks to determine how these cinematic elements portray and shape audience understanding of female victimhood.

The Specific Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Examine the characterization styles adopted by producers in portraying female victims of gender-based crimes in selected Yorùbá films;
2. Analyze the development of female victimhood and victimization experiences using victimology theory; and
3. Identify the plot constructs, themes, and patterns through which female victimhood is represented.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The representation of female victims of gender-based violence in Yorùbá films has attracted growing scholarly attention within film studies, gender studies, and African media criticism. Yorùbá-language cinema, as a major strand of Nollywood, operates not only as entertainment but also as a cultural medium through which dominant social ideologies – particularly those relating to gender relations, patriarchy, and victimhood – are produced and circulated. Recent studies indicate that these films both reproduce and, in some instances, challenge prevailing constructions of women as either vulnerable victims or moral agents within gender contexts of violence (Adédèjì- Ọlónà, 2026; Adébáyò, 2025).

The depiction of gender-based crimes in films is inherently ideological, shaping audience perceptions of women's roles and social positioning. Feminist media scholarship maintains that cinematic narratives frequently reinforce patriarchal values by portraying women as passive recipients of abuse, including domestic violence, sexual coercion, emotional manipulation, and economic dependence (Ọláýíwọlá, 2025; Alola and Alola, 2020). In Yorùbá cinema, such portrayals are often embedded within a tradition of moral storytelling, where female suffering and experiences are used to communicate lessons

about obedience, marriage, and cultural expectations.

Gender-based crimes encompass physical, sexual, psychological, and economic harm rooted in gender inequality. Within film, it is constructed through narrative framing, character development, and victim representation. Nigerian media and film studies demonstrate that such portrayals often reflect broader patriarchal norms in which male dominance is considered, and female vulnerability is emphasized (Ahoo et al., 2025). Gendered crime against women is frequently framed as a consequence of moral failure or social disobedience, a pattern consistent with feminist critical discourse analysis, which argues that representation sustains gender hierarchies (Ìbítóyè and Abarólàrin-Ègbébiólá, 2025).

Feminist film theory provides a central framework for examining these dynamics by conceptualizing cinema as a field where gender roles are constructed and reinforced. Research shows that Nigerian films commonly depict women as subordinate, emotionally fragile, and dependent, thereby legitimizing male authority (Alola and Alola, 2020). This aligns with the notion of male assumptions, which positions women as objects of visual and narrative control. Although female victimhood in Yorùbá films is often heightened to reinforce moral expectations, recent scholarship points to a gradual shift towards more objective portrayals of women as survivors and agents of resistance against gender-based crimes (Adédèjì- Ọlónà, 2026).

Yorùbá cinema remains closely tied to cultural traditions that emphasize women's domestic roles, particularly as wives and mothers. While contemporary influences have introduced some changes, many films continue to portray women as victims of domestic abuse, criminal indulgence, sexual violence, and marital oppression. Domestic violence is frequently

justified and defended through narratives that valorize endurance and silence, whereas sexual violence is at times sensationalized rather than critically interrogated (Obiora and Uche, 2024). Representations of economic and emotional abuse further reinforce women's dependency and constrained agency (Alola and Alola, 2020).

Victim-blaming also persists as a recurring narrative feature. Women subjected to violence are often portrayed as contributing to their own victimization through perceived moral failings such as disobedience or ambition. Such framing shifts responsibility away from perpetrators and reinforces victims (Ìbítóyè and Abarólárin-Egbébiólá, 2025). Nevertheless, recent studies suggest a gradual movement towards more balanced representations, with increasing attention to women's victimhood between 2013 and 2023 (Emwinromwankhoe, 2025; Adédèjì-Ọlónà, 2026). Despite this development, stereotypical portrayals remain widespread. Hence, there is a need to address the issues of female victims of crime from the perspective of victimology theory.

Within this context, victimology theory provides a useful extension to existing feminist approaches. Originating in criminology, victimology examines victims' experiences and the wider social conditions that shape victimization (Karmen, 2016; Daigle, 2018). Its critical strand is particularly relevant to media and film analysis, as it interrogates how gender power relations, gender inequality, and cultural norms influence representations of female victims (Walklate, 2018).

Applied to Yorùbá films, victimology highlights how female victimhood is constructed and represented through recurring narrative patterns, including the framing of women as inherently vulnerable, the subtle attribution of blame, and the limited depiction of effective institutional responses. These

elements reflect broader social structures and contribute to the justification and normalization of gender-based crimes. The concept of the "ideal victim" further clarifies why women who conform to cultural expectations attract sympathy, while those who deviate are more likely to be marginalized or blamed as victims of gender-based crime.

The integration of victimology with gender-based film theory offers a more comprehensive analytical framework. While gender theory interrogates visual representation and gender ideology, victimology explains how certain forms of victimhood are legitimized or dismissed. They reveal how Yorùbá films construct selective sympathy, reinforce patriarchal definitions of innocence and guilt, and shape audience interpretations of gender-based crime against womenfolk.

In Yorùbá films, female victimhood commonly follows three narrative patterns: the ideal victim, who conforms to social expectations and elicits sympathy; the blameworthy victim, whose deviation from norms invites implicit judgement and rebuke; and the silent victim, who endures violence without meaningful intervention and support. These patterns demonstrate that victimhood is not simply depicted but systematically structured through cultural and ideological processes.

In summation, the literature indicates that incorporating victimology into the study of Yorùbá films shifts the focus from individual experiences to the structural dynamics of violence. It exposes cultural biases in representation, strengthens feminist critique, and underscores the role of film in either sustaining or challenging gender inequality. This combined approach provides a solid foundation for analyzing how female victimhood is constructed within Yorùbá cinema. A synthesis and critical analysis of the reviewed literature shows a gap. The reviewed literature failed to mention and provide

information on female victims of gender-based crime, particularly in the selected films – *Káfirántàn* and *Victim*. This is the gap this study attempts to fill.

Theoretical framework

The theory adopted in this study is victimology as propounded by Benjamin Mendelson (1869-1937). Models of this theory include victim precipitation, lifestyle exposure, deviant place, and routine activities, which are components of Mendelson's victimology theory.

Victimology simply implies the study of the relationship between the offender and the assaulted and interaction before, during, and after the commission of the particular crime. Kostić (2010), one of the proponents of Mendelson's victimology theory, asserts that victimology is primarily concerned with the subjective perception of the commission of crime, such as rape, and the effects on the victim against whom the crime has been committed. The theory emphasizes that victimization of persons and violations of inalienable human rights are involved. Some of the proponents of the theory include Wafgang, Dussich, Schneider, and Bart; all of whom unanimously opine that victims of crimes should not be seen merely as passive recipients of greed or anger in the wrong place at the wrong time but rather as crime victims are to be seen as individuals who due to some circumstances have been unjustly wronged and liable to remedies both from the justice administration sector of the society and the society at large.

Since the focus of this study is the portrayal of female victims of gender crime in selected Yorùbá films, we assert that the victimology theory is germane. Four theories have been developed by Von Hentig, Wethuan, and Meddelsohn. The four sub-variants of victimology theory are: (i) radical theory; (ii) situation-oriented theory; (iii) feminist

victimology theory; and (iv) critical victimology theory. Out of these four models of the theory of victimology, the situation-oriented theory of victimology is chosen for the analysis of this work, as it consists of four distinct elements, namely: (i) the victim precipitation model; (ii) the lifestyle model; (iii) the deviant place model; and (iv) the routine activities model. Victim precipitation theory argues that there are victims who actually initiated the confrontation that led to their injuries and/or death. It may be that the victims themselves may actually initiate either passively or actively. During passive precipitation, the victim unconsciously exhibits behaviours or characteristics that instigate or encourage the attack. Active precipitation is the opposite of the aforementioned described under this theory: victimization through the threatening or provocative actions of the victims, such as nude dressing and consent of intimacy. The lifestyle exposure model argues that certain lifestyles increase one's exposure to criminal offences and increase or, at times, reduce the risk of victimization. Increased risks may involve associating with other young men and going to public places late at night, while reduced risk could be associated with staying home at night, living in a rural area, being married and staying at home, and earning more money (Kostic, 2010).

The Deviant Place Model states that greater exposure to dangerous places makes an individual more likely to become the victim of crime. According to this, the victims do not influence the crime by actively or passively encouraging it, but rather are victimized as a result of being in "bad" or crime-prone areas. A deviant lifestyle, such as alcoholism, drug consumption or drug abuse, prostitution, homosexuality, and going to nightclubs, evokes a particularly high risk of victimization.

The Routine Activities Model argues that victimization is dependent on the routine activities of people's daily lives. Three

elements are essential for victimization, namely the availability of suitable targets, the absence of capable guardians, and the presence of motivated offenders. It places primary emphasis on situational elements such as the opportunity to commit a crime, lack of informal control by potential victims, and their personal environment (Kostic, 2010).

When applied to film, victimology provides a framework for understanding how victimhood is constructed rather than merely represented. In Yorùbá cinema, portrayals of female victims of gender-based crime are shaped by narrative decisions that reflect broader social norms. Women are frequently depicted as inherently vulnerable due to gender roles, economic dependence, or marital status. At the same time, responsibility for crimes is often subtly shifted onto victims through moral judgment, while weak or absent institutional responses reinforce the normalization of victimization.

This framework is especially relevant to Yorùbá films, which are grounded in moral and cultural storytelling traditions. Drawing on the concept of the “ideal victim” (Christie, 1986), women who conform to expectations of obedience and moral propriety are more likely to receive sympathy, whereas those who challenge such norms are portrayed as less deserving of protection. Gender-based crime is therefore individualized and moralized rather than situated within broader patriarchal structures.

To deepen this analysis, victimology is related and associated with feminist film theory, which examines how gender is visually and narratively constructed. While feminist theory highlights the positioning of women as objects of suffering or desire, victimology explains how certain forms of victimhood are legitimized or dismissed. These perspectives reveal how Yorùbá films construct and present selective sympathy, reinforce gender

hierarchies, and shape audience perceptions of innocence and blame of the victims.

Within this framework, female victimhood in Yorùbá films can be understood through recurring narrative patterns. Some characters are presented as ideal victims whose conformity to cultural expectations renders their suffering justifiably acceptable and deserving of empathy. Others are framed as blameworthy victims when they challenge social norms, reflecting implicit victim-blaming. A third pattern is the silent victim, in which women endure violence without meaningful intervention, regarding it as normal suffering she has to endure in patriarchal society.

The integration of victimology into the study of Yorùbá films thus shifts attention from individual experiences to the propriety of gender-based crime. It highlights how cultural narratives shape perceptions of victims and underscores the role of film in exposing and addressing gender inequality and gender-based crimes against women. This framework offers a comprehensive basis for analyzing how representations of female victimhood are constructed and sustained within Nigerian cinema.

SYNOPSIS OF THE TWO SELECTED FILMS

The two selected Yorùbá films for this study are *Káfirántàn* (2012) by Wálé Ilebiyí and *Victim* (2015) by Lancelot Imasuen.

Synopsis of *Káfirántàn*

“*Káfirántàn*”, the protagonist of this film, is a young, brilliant lady with splendid academic achievements. Her life experienced a turnaround when her mother, Mrs. Maxwell, could not make it to her award ceremony at school and sent her boyfriend to stand in for her. Mrs. Maxwell's boyfriend, a medical doctor by profession, called Dr. Ben, goes to pick up

Káfirántàn at her school, and the young girl has to sleep till the next day at his house since her mother has travelled for a business meeting. During Káfirántàn's stay in Dr. Ben's house, she gets all sorts of sexual advances from him, but she refuses and tries to escape, and fails because all doors have been locked. She finds a cupboard where she hides in a cupboard to escape. While hiding, she calls for assistance, but could not get urgent assistance, so she again calls the customer care service of her phone network, Allwell Telecommunications.

The call receiver is Mrs. Leslie, who has also been a rape victim when she was young, by her stepfather, who threatens to kill her if she divulges the secret of their sexual affairs. After being raped several times, she takes the law into her own hands and kills her stepfather. However, her mother (Leslie), in an attempt to prevent her daughter from facing the wrath of the law, lies to the police that she murdered him while raping her daughter.

Káfirántàn, also known as Kaffy, tells Leslie about her situation of being on the verge of getting raped, but Maxwell breaks down into an emotional outburst instead of calling for immediate help for Káfirántàn. By the time she eventually recovers from her emotional breakdown, Ben has already found and raped Káfirántàn. She (Leslie), however, still calls Káfirántàn, seeks her location, and goes to meet her. When Leslie got to Ben's house, he was already asleep, so she sneaked in. Not long after Leslie comes to rescue Kaffy, Ben wakes and approaches Káfirántàn to rape her again. In a series of events in which they try to escape from Ben's house, Kaffy stabbed Dr. Ben with scissors and died from the injury.

Believing that Dr Ben has died, Leslie calls the police and falsely accuses herself of killing Ben in self-defence. Both Kaffy and Leslie are arrested by the police, with Ben's Dad insisting that the killer of her child must be jailed. Ben's

Dad has secretly taken Ben to another hospital where he is treated, and is even on the verge of sending Ben abroad to escape rape charges. He (Ben's Dad) also arranges false witnesses to testify to the promiscuity of the innocent Káfirántàn to serve as evidence that his son was not responsible for raping her. However, the police investigations reveal the truth of the case and discover Ben's dad's game. The police discovered the long-buried fact that he was also once a killer. Káfirántàn and Leslie are eventually vindicated, and Ben, his dad, and his accomplices in crime are charged in court and convicted.

Victim

Yeni is the protagonist of the film. She has been exposed to a hard life from her childhood. Her father used to be a violent person who beat his wife- Yeni's mother – repeatedly at will over the most trivial of issues. In one of the beatings, Yeni's mother is eventually beaten to death in her presence. But she is sternly warned by her father not to divulge the secret. Unable to keep the secret of her mother's death at the hands of her father, Yeni goes to her uncle to divulge the secret to him. Her uncle in turn tells Yeni's father what Yeni has revealed to him, against Yeni's strong appeal not to. For divulging the secret, she is expelled from home and becomes a homeless wanderer. She meets Big Mamà, who tells her the story about why she is homeless. Big Mamà takes her to her house, and they start living together. After some time, Big Mamà takes Yeni to Dr. Kókò, who runs an illegal baby factory. Yeni is forced to sleep with three or more men daily by Dr. Kókò. In the process, she (Yeni) gives birth to three children, all of whom are sold off by Dr. Kókò as soon as they are born. Yeni later escapes from Dr. Kókò's captivity and yet becomes a wanderer again. In the process, she gets repeatedly raped by many men, who pretend to help her. She later kills two such men in self-defense and

becomes a criminal on the wanted list of the Police.

Yeni consequently becomes a full-fledged prostitute to earn a living. While operating as a prostitute, she meets Déolú, who takes her to his house for a night out. Déolú falls in love with Yeni and proposes marriage to her. Yeni, after a while, agrees to Déolú's marriage proposal, so they start living together after Déolú takes her to see his parents. Déolú sets Yeni up in a business and hires a housemaid, Ìbílólá to help her do home chores, but Ìbílólá's mother is scheming for Ìbílólá to become Déolú's wife. With a charm she receives from her mother, Ìbílólá tries to hypnotize Déolú into having sex with her. She undresses herself and goes to sleep beside Déolú. Yeni enters unannounced and furiously kills Déolú and gets arrested by the police for her homicide and former crimes, including the murder of Déolú. She is also held accountable for the accident Ìbílólá has while trying to flee from her.

All efforts made by the police interrogators to extract statements from her proved fruitless. She acts and speaks most of the time incoherently. With the intervention of Barrister Christine, who is a human rights activist, Yeni opens up, telling Barrister Christine the entire story of her life. It is Yeni's revelation that leads to the arrest of Dr. Kókò and his accomplices in crime, including Big Mamà. Dr. Kókò is tried in court and sentenced to one hundred and four years' imprisonment.

The Plot constructs of the selected films of *Káfirántàn* and the *Victim*

The Plot Construct of *Káfirántàn*

The plot construct of *Káfirántàn* is rather complex. The stories told start from the middle, where Leslie reveals how she was raped as a teenager, with the result that her life takes a negative twist. This scene is followed by the scenario of Dr. Ben trying to rape *Káfirántàn*, with *Káfirántàn* calling Leslie on the phone for

assistance. Next to that, *Káfirántàn* is seen being interrogated by the police for the alleged murder of Dr. Ben. This scene is then intruded upon by the scenario of *Káfirántàn* weeping profusely for having been raped by Dr. Ben and Leslie arriving in the house of Dr. Ben belatedly. Next to that, Chief Adébáre is seen scheming to fly Dr. Ben out of the country and to ensure that *Káfirántàn* is convicted by the court for the murder of the same Dr. Ben.

Finally, Dr. Ben's father, Chief Adébáre's, treachery is discovered by the police, and he is promptly arrested. It is further discovered that he has been on the wanted list of the police for a long time. Mrs. Maxwell, *Káfirántàn*'s mother, then reveals how she solicited the assistance of Dr. Ben, her boyfriend, to help her pick *Káfirántàn* from her school because she is too busy with her work to do that by herself.

The Plot Construct of *Victim*

The plot construct of the victim is similarly a complex one. The film starts from the middle, where Yeni stabs a man to death, in consequence of which policemen are drafted to the scene because the slain man is a policeman. This is followed by the scenario of Yeni and Big Mama conversing, with Big Mama leading Yeni to her house with a promise to comfortably accommodate her. Next, Yeni is projected soliciting for men as a prostitute by the roadside, and she is picked up by Déolú, who takes her to his house and proposes marriage to her. The scenario of Yeni's captivity in a baby factory cum hospital being run by Dr. Koko, with some other young girls intruding on this. This is then followed by Yeni's arrest and interrogation, which finally leads to the introduction of the audience to Yeni's family problem. The constant scuffle between her parent is projected to culminate in the death of Yeni's mother. From the above analysis, it is obvious that the arrangement of the scenes featured in the film is not

chronological, thereby making its plot construct complex.

Analysis of Portrayal of Female Victims of Gender-based Crimes and Crime Victims in the Selected Films

The films *Victim* and *Káfirántàn* offer compelling portrayals of female victims of crimes, particularly rape, battery, and murder, within a Yoruba cultural context. To address the need for a stronger integration of victimology theory, this analysis applies four key models of victimology theory with emphasis on situation-oriented theory, comprising four models, namely: precipitation, routine, lifestyles, deviant behaviour frameworks, positivist victimology, critical victimology, and victim precipitation theory, to examine how these films depict female victims and the crimes committed against them. By connecting these portrayals to real-world issues of gender-based violence in Nigeria, the analysis highlights the films' role in reflecting societal challenges and advocating for change. These models provide a framework for analyzing the portrayal of female victims in the selected films and their broader societal implications.

In *Victim*, Yèni is portrayed as a victim of serial rape and the illegal sale of her newborn babies. Her mother is a victim of battery and murder, and Yèni becomes a secondary victim of her mother's death at the hands of her father, which leaves her homeless. Later, Yèni accidentally kills Déolú, the only man she has affection for, positioning her as both a victim and a perpetrator of murder. Yèni's vulnerability aligns with the precipitation model of victimology and the situational-oriented model. As a young, female, and economically disadvantaged individual, she is a prime target for predatory crimes like rape. Her homelessness after her mother's death places her in a high-risk environment, making her susceptible to exploitation by Dr. Koko and Big Mama, who force her into a "baby factory"

where she is raped daily by multiple men. The film illustrates the long-term effects of such victimization, as Yèni becomes socially withdrawn and emotionally traumatized, struggling to connect with others even after her arrest. This reflects the precipitation model as a passive victim of rape. It emphasizes how personal and situational factors contribute to victimization risk.

The film critiques societal failures in protecting vulnerable women, aligning with critical victimology. Yèni's exploitation by Dr. Koko and Big Mama highlights how economic inequality and gender-based power dynamics facilitate victimization. Big Mama's role as an accessory to the crimes underscores how individuals within society can perpetuate harm against marginalized groups. Furthermore, Yèni's arrest and incarceration after killing Déolú reflect how victims can be re-victimized by the criminal justice system, which often fails to recognize their trauma or provide support. This conforms with critical victimology's concept of the "hierarchy of victimization," where women and the poor are less likely to receive justice or societal acknowledgment.

While Yèni's actions do not actively precipitate her victimization, her circumstances, being homeless and vulnerable, place her in a situation where exploitation is likely. This aligns with passive victim precipitation, where a victim's environment increases his/her risk. However, the analysis avoids victim-blaming by emphasizing societal neglect and lack of support systems as key contributors to her vulnerability.

The film's portrayal of rape and its consequences mirrors real-world issues in Nigeria, where gender-based violence is pervasive. According to the CLEEN Foundation, 1 in every 3 respondents identified as a victim of domestic violence, with rates increasing from 21 percent in 2011 to 30

percent in 2013 (Wikipedia, 2013). Cultural norms in some Nigerian communities, including Yorùbá ones, sometimes tolerate violence against women as a form of discipline, exacerbating victimization. "Victim" thus serves as a critique of these societal attitudes and structures.

In *Káfirántàn*, Káfirántàn and her mother, Mrs. Leslie, are both victims of rape. Mrs. Leslie kills her stepfather after his rape attempts during her teenage years, and Káfirántàn stabs Dr. Ben to death after he raped her. Mrs. Leslie is also portrayed as a liar and murderer, as she helps her daughter avoid prosecution. Káfirántàn's and Mrs. Leslie's experiences highlight how gender and age increase victimization risk. As a teenager, Káfirántàn is particularly vulnerable to sexual violence, especially when left in the care of Dr. Ben, whom her mother trusts. Mrs. Leslie's past as a rape victim illustrates the intergenerational nature of victimization, where past trauma influences future actions. The film's depiction of Káfirántàn's emotional despair, contemplating suicide after her rape, underscores the profound psychological impact of victimization, aligning with positivist victimology's focus on victim characteristics and consequences.

The film critiques societal trust in authority figures like Dr. Ben, who betrays Mrs. Leslie's trust by raping her daughter. This reflects situation-oriented victimology's emphasis on how societal norms and power dynamics facilitate victimization. Mrs. Leslie's decision to trust Dr. Ben, while well-intentioned, places Káfirántàn in a vulnerable position, highlighting how societal expectations can lead to harm. The portrayal of Mrs. Leslie as a "liar and murderer" for protecting her daughter reflects societal judgment of victims who resist or retaliate, further marginalizing them. This aligns with the routine activities model's

critique of institutional biases and societal attitudes towards victims.

Mrs. Leslie's trust in Dr. Ben can be seen as a form of passive victim precipitation, as it creates a situation where Káfirántàn's victimization becomes possible. However, this is framed as a critique of societal structures that place undue trust in personal and authority figures, not as blame on Mrs. Leslie. Káfirántàn's act of stabbing Dr. Ben can be viewed as active resistance, challenging the notion that victims are passive and highlighting their agency in seeking justice.

It is noteworthy that gender crime, particularly rape in Nigeria, has assumed a worrisome dimension; so also is the crime of accessory to the fact of crime (rape), both before and after the commission of rape and other sundry crimes normally targeted at women. A curious study of the selected film reviews that their plot constructs are straightforward, relative in particular to the depiction of the female victim of crime and the nature of crimes committed against them. The crime of rape, which is a predatory crime commonly targeted at vulnerable girls and/or women, resonates profoundly in the selected films. For example, in *Káfirántàn*, the protagonist of the film, Káfirántàn or Kafty, is portrayed as a victim of rape in the film. She was raped by Dr. Ben, in whose care her mother entrusted her while travelling. Also, Mrs. Leslie, who comes to assist Káfirántàn to escape from the house of Dr. Ben, is revealed in the film as having fallen victim to the crime of rape at the hands of her stepfather during her teenage years.

In *Victim*, Yeni is portrayed as a victim of a series of gender crimes of rape experienced at the hands of a series of men. She is forced into sex slavery in the phantom hospital of Dr. Koko, with many other young girls. There, she and her co-captives are daily raped by between four and five men. Consequently, Yeni gives

birth to three children, all of whom are sold off by her captor - Dr. Kókó - before they are one week old. Yèni's co-captives also undergo a similar experience.

The victimology theory, which is adopted in this paper, recognizes rape as a predatory personal offence that should at all times command both the interest and proactive action of both the justice administration sector and society at large. This is what Thompson (2007) affirms, agreeing that victimology as a theory is always to be seen as investigative to the extent that all aspects of crimes and the persons against whom crime has been committed are properly scrutinized for proper dispensation of justice. The influence of this is that victims of crimes should at all times be liable to remedies, particularly from the justice administration sector of society. In other words, no individual who is unjustly wronged through any particular crime committed against him is left at the mercy of his offender, and no criminal who has committed a crime against another person escapes appropriate justice for his crime.

It is the contention of this paper that films represent one of the vehicles through which the portrayal of crimes, particularly predatory crimes against females, and the profile characteristics of possible offenders can be portrayed comprehensibly to members of society. This, to a considerable extent, will help to arouse the interest of the appropriate segment of society on the likely impact of such crimes both on the individuals, recipients, and the psyche of society, with a view to developing an acceptable framework to curtail or eradicate such crimes from society.

On characterization style in the selected films, any curious watcher of the film can easily discern that the characters used in the film aptly matched their role allotment in terms of age, costume, mode of dressing, and demeanour.

This shows that one of the chief motivations of the films is likely to bring to fore the fact that young and vulnerable girls are more susceptible to becoming victims of rape than their older counterparts, and also that likely offenders are usually younger men with an affinity for endearment to/or are close acquaintances of the potential victims.

The two selected films succinctly capture the impact of the crime of rape on the victims, which includes emotional trauma likely to culminate in solitariness, as is the case with Yèni in *Victim*; the loss of morals, as is the case with Káfirántàn in the film *Káfirántàn*.

The film's themes resonate with Nigeria's high rates of gender-based violence. Human Rights Watch notes pervasive violence against women, including rape in internally displaced persons' camps and by police, despite the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act of 2015 (Human Rights Watch, 2019). Cultural beliefs that normalize violence against women as discipline further exacerbate these issues, particularly in some Yorùbá communities (PMC, 2023). "Káfirántàn" thus reflects these societal challenges and critiques the lack of justice for victims.

FINDINGS

Characterization, Development, and Female Victimhood

The study finds that both *Káfirántàn* and *Victim* portray females as the primary victims of gender-based crimes. The producers employ characterization techniques that emphasize vulnerability, innocence, emotional suffering, and psychological trauma, thereby eliciting audience sympathy for the victims. In *Káfirántàn*, the protagonist is largely defined by her victimization and is portrayed as an innocent young girl whose vulnerability exposes her to sexual violence. In *Victim*, however, Yèni's characterization extends beyond victimhood to include resilience and

survival despite repeated experiences of abuse. The findings further show that female victimhood is represented as a developmental process that begins with victimization and progresses through emotional trauma, social isolation, and lasting psychological consequences.

Victimization Experiences and Victimology

The study finds that the female characters experience multiple forms of victimization, including rape, domestic violence, murder, sexual exploitation, and emotional abuse. These experiences are shaped by social and situational factors such as poverty, homelessness, abuse of trust, and unequal gender relations. Victimology theory provides an effective framework for understanding the circumstances surrounding the victimization of the female characters. The experiences of *Yeni* and *Káfirántàn* particularly support the assumptions of the situation-oriented and victim precipitation models, which explain how vulnerable circumstances increase the likelihood of victimization without attributing blame to victims.

Themes, Plot Constructs, and Patterns of Representation

The study finds that rape is the dominant gender-based crime represented in the selected films. Other recurring themes include exploitation, abuse of trust, trauma, justice, survival, and resistance. Through their narrative structures, the films depict victimization as a complex social problem rather than an isolated event. The plot constructs employed by the producers allow audiences to witness both the immediate and long-term consequences of gender-based crimes on female victims. Consequently, the films present female victimhood as a reflection of broader societal realities and challenges confronting women within the Yorùbá/Nigerian socio-cultural environment.

DISCUSSION

The portrayal of female victims in *Káfirántàn* and *Victim* demonstrates the centrality of gender-based violence in Yorùbá cinematic narratives. The selected films present victimization as a social reality that disproportionately affects women and girls, thereby reflecting prevailing concerns about gender relations and the unequal distribution of power within society. Through their representations of rape, exploitation, and abuse, the films draw attention to the vulnerability of female characters and the challenges they encounter in seeking safety, justice, and social acceptance.

The portrayal of victimhood in the selected films also reveals varying approaches to the representation of female experiences. While *Káfirántàn* largely presents victimhood through emotional suffering and dependence, *Victim* offers a more layered depiction by illustrating the capacity of victims to endure, adapt, and resist oppressive circumstances. This difference suggests an evolving tendency in Yorùbá cinema towards more complex representations of female characters rather than limiting them solely to passive victims.

The application of victimology theory further illuminates the circumstances surrounding victimization in the selected films. The experiences of the female characters demonstrate that victimization often occurs within environments characterized by social vulnerability, inadequate protection, and unequal power relations. Consequently, the films underscore the importance of examining not only the criminal acts themselves but also the broader conditions that make victimization possible.

In addition, the recurring themes identified in the study indicate that the selected films function beyond entertainment. By depicting the emotional and social consequences of

gender-based crimes, the films contribute to public discourse on violence against women and encourage greater awareness of the need for prevention, protection, and justice. Their narratives therefore serve as cultural interventions that expose societal problems while stimulating reflection on possible responses to them.

Summary of the Findings

The findings from this study can be summarized as follows:

1. Both *Káfirántàn* and *Victim* portray females as the primary victims of gender-based crimes, particularly rape, domestic violence, exploitation, and emotional abuse within the Yorùbá socio-cultural environment.
2. The characterization styles employed in the selected films emphasize vulnerability, innocence, emotional suffering, psychological trauma, and resilience, thereby portraying female victims in ways that create awareness of the realities of gender-based violence.
3. Female victimhood in the selected films is represented as a developmental process shaped by experiences of victimization, trauma, social marginalization, and emotional distress, which often result in long-term psychological and social consequences.
4. The victimization of female characters is influenced by social and situational factors such as poverty, homelessness, abuse of trust, inadequate protection, and unequal gender relations, thereby supporting the assumptions of victimology theory regarding vulnerability and victimization.
5. The dominant themes and patterns of representation in the selected films include rape, exploitation, abuse of trust, trauma, survival, resistance, and justice, while the plot constructs and narrative structures employed by the producers highlight the

realities and consequences of gender-based violence against women and girls.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study concludes that the selected films present female victimization as a significant social issue rooted in unequal gender relations and reinforced by circumstances that expose women and girls to abuse and exploitation.

The study further establishes that Yorùbá filmmakers employ characterization and narrative techniques to communicate the experiences and consequences of victimization. Through these portrayals, the films reveal the emotional, psychological, and social effects of gender-based crimes while highlighting the realities confronting female victims within the broader society.

Although both films foreground female suffering, they differ in their treatment of victimhood. *Káfirántàn* reflects a more traditional representation centred on vulnerability and endurance, whereas *Victim* advances a more contemporary portrayal that incorporates resilience, survival, and resistance. This suggests a gradual shift in Yorùbá cinema towards more nuanced and multidimensional representations of female victims.

Ultimately, the study concludes that the selected films are not merely artistic productions but important cultural texts that document, interrogate, and challenge gender-based violence. By bringing these issues to public attention, they contribute to ongoing conversations about the protection of women and girls and the need for a more responsive social and justice system.

Recommendations

1. Film producers should gear up efforts at producing films that will aid the inculcation of good virtues and the discouragement of crime commission and criminal tendencies, particularly among the youth.
2. Films that will encourage scholarly research: scholars must engage more actively in research on the portrayal of violence against girls and women in media, advocating for proactive solutions.
3. Films should foster community Engagement as platforms for community dialogue, educating the public on victim rights and prevention strategies for gender - based violence.

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Filmography

- (1) *Victims*, dir. Lancelot Oduwa (2015).
- (2) *Káfirántàn*, dir. Allwell Adémólá (2020).