



Female Undergraduates' Perception of Feminist Depictions in the Woman King Film

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analyzed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

This study sets out to ascertain the opinions of female undergraduates on portrayals of feminism contained in the movie *The Woman King* (2022). The study used focus group discussion to elicit data from female undergraduates in Anambra State, Nigeria, in order to determine the inherent feminist themes in the selected movie and ascertain how they perceive them. Three universities were randomly selected from the nine universities in the state to represent the three forms of university ownership in Nigeria, which are federal, state and private universities. twelve focus group discussants were purposively selected from each university based on their availability and willingness to participate in the exercise. Analysis of data was done and presented thematically. Results showed the various themes female undergraduates identified from the selected film and female empowerment through leadership was most striking among them all. Their views about the feminist representations are those of inspiration and thought-provocation. The study recommends that film makers should be more diverse in creating feminism perspectives to provide a more

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comprehensive representation of feminism ideals and experiences and give a deeper exploration of feminism struggles within historical contexts that would offer a richer understanding of the challenges faced by the female folks.

Keywords: *Depictions; feminism; female undergraduates; film; perception; movie.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Film as a medium of communication has been recognized by film scholars to be a mirror that reflects the society. Like every other medium of communication, its illustrations of ideas, certain people, and a given phenomenon go a long way to determine how the world perceives them. Film as a mass medium known for its entertaining nature, is also very relevant in informing and educating its audience (Onyejelem et al, 2021). Film has been mirroring the society by reflecting the activities of human being as well as socio-cultural patterns and various problems faced by man. It has been used as a tool to bring to bear lots of societal challenges and setting agenda for the populace to discuss. It is truly an agent of social and behavioural change (Obiora, 2022). Film does not only play a role in the entertainment, education and socialization of citizens in a country, but also helps in the formation of ideas, attitudes as well as the representation of ideologies (Obiora & Adikuru, 2024; Obiora & Uche, 2024a; Obiora & Uche, 2021).

Film is an art, a language, a medium for entertainment, education, information, inspiration, and so much more. Scholars (Obiora & Adikuru, 2024; Obiora & Uche, 2024b; Onyejelem et al., 2023; Nnabuike et al., 2023; Obiora & Uche, 2021; Obiora & Odoh, 2020; Ojiakor & Obiora, 2019) have noted that a film can contain ideologies, empathy, misconceptions, beliefs and stereotypes which can be uncovered with critical eyes. These scholars have argued independently that how a given phenomenon, ideas, people, objects, events are characterized in films influences the manner at which film audiences see them in real life. This means, that the way feminism has been presented in *The Woman King* movie might have shaped the way female undergraduates perceive feminism

Feminism is the ideology that all genders should have equality in all aspects of life; social, economic and political (Adikuru & Nwammuo, 2022). Female gender has been restricted to engage only on domestic aspect of human

endeavours, but the male is allowed to have other public activities. Women have been denied lots of rights; from owning a property, to having education, have certain jobs or rise to certain positions in their career paths or participate in public activities like politics (Adikuru, 2022). Some married women have been denied the right to exercise control over their own children except their husbands permit them. Some societies till date, still compel their women to dress, act, and speak in certain manner. Feminism rose to fight against these inequalities and ensures that both men and women are given equal opportunities to strive in society as much as either has the potential and willpower to do so.

Although, feminism has been perceived with varieties of dimensions, including different movements with opposing aims and objectives; like eradicating gender discrimination and stereotype, and trying by all means to achieve equality of gender in culture, law, behaviour and every given opportunity (Varial, 2023). Kate Millet's view that women's oppression was culturally and socially construed and not biological. On the other hand, Judith Butler argued about the difference in gender and sex as she elaborated that sex is biological and gender is socially mad.. In spite of these arguments, one of the most striking problems that feminism aims to rectify is the popular gender inequality inherent in all societies and countries. This inequality is prevalent in African societies and Nigerian society is not left out (Obiora & Nwafor, 2022). This inequality manifests in forms like unequal pay, limited access to education, unequal employment opportunities, and restricted roles and expectations based on gender. Feminism also aims to curtail all forms of violence against women, which include but not limited to domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and honour killings (Adikuru, 2022). Addressing these issues requires societal awareness, legal reforms, and support for survivors, which the vehicles of mass media like films (*The Woman King*) have major role to play.

The Woman King film tells the story of the Agojie, an all-female troop of warriors of the real-life

West African Dahomey kingdom, today's Republic of Benin. It looks into how bold women who are fearless warriors navigate through the prevalent and long-lasting problem of unequal gender rights. The movie seems to be based on the inspiration of seeing women reach great heights of their endeavours and being equally led by women to achieve success in spite of inequalities they had to suffer, like not been allowed to marry or bear children because they are warriors and thus belong to the king. On the other hand, the male warriors were allowed to do to do same. Here lies the problem, inequality presentations; why are the women not allowed to marry or have children like their warring male folks? How do they navigate around their emotional feelings of loving someone? Why do they have to give this much up just to be a warrior?

The foregoing may be perceived worrisome for younger women and girls like female undergraduates in Anambra State, Nigeria. The manner at which the producer of *The Woman King* film portrays the narratives of these Agojie may influence the way female undergraduates perceive women and their ordeals as they navigate towards their life goals. Hence, this study is set out to ascertain various feminist themes illustrated in *The Woman King* movie; determine the views of female undergraduates on the feminist images in the film; and examine factors that influenced the perception of female undergraduates.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Feminism

Feminism can be seen as a movement that has the interest of pursuing equality for women in social, cultural, economic and political environment. One of the objectives of feminism is to protect those who are stereotyped because of their gender status. Varrial (2023) opines that issues feminism seek to address include; equality in employment and wages; freedom to own property irrespective of gender; right to quality education by all and sundry; autonomy of one's body; as well as marital, parental and legal rights for women and girls. In other words, feminism seeks to ensure the need for women and girls to have equal opportunities with men and boys in all areas of life engagements. This invariably implies that feminism is out to challenge and pull down the existing systems of inequality and stereotyping raised by disparity in

gender as it recognizes that all human beings must be treated with equal respect and dignity.

In contemporary society, men have been seen in a way as the dominant force in making the major decisions in political, economic, social and cultural sectors. Lewis (2021) noted that the patristical structure of most societies is due to colonization and imperialism by Europeans. Hence, feminism focuses on the philosophy that women's population is about half of the global population, so to achieve a social advancement, there is imperative need to involve women equally with men (Adikuru & Nwammuo, 2022).

Furthermore, the difference in treatment of gender can be traced to the socio-cultural roles given to women. As Amobi (2023) explained that the society's definition of being a man or woman is demonstrated by the roles played by both men and women in a given society. Generally, women have been tagged weak while men are seen as strong. This is even expressed in phrases like 'why are you crying like a woman?' Men are not expected to show emotions of weakness or expressed themselves in too many words as women are those ascribed with such features. Amobi (2013, p. 14) stated that the way women are seen as thus, "women are classified as weak, inferior and should remain in the background, while men are classified as strong, dominant, the better gender group and conquerors". The way the media also describes the gender roles may either reinforce the ideology and assumptions that women are lesser creatures than men or may alleviate the assumptions, (Obiora & Nwafor, 2022). Therefore, this work aims to enquire into themes of how feminism was presented in *The Woman King* movie and explore how female undergraduates perceive the images.

2.2 Review of Empirical Studies

Research shows media to be one of the many influences on how people, ideologies, phenomenon are seen or perceived, (Obiora & Uche, 2024a; Obiora & Uche, 2024b; Obiora & Uche, 2021; Obiora & Odoh, 2020; Allan & Coltrane, 2020). The media is the most pervasive way images and messages are communicated to people (Obiora, 2022), and as an agent of socialization and information, the media play a key role in the disseminating processes of communication to ensure that society is not only informed, but that it is maintained. With the prevalence of media channels especially film and

social media, society is bound to be impacted with what they obtain from the media, (Uwem, 2023; Obiora & Chukwuemeka, 2023). Hence, people's perspectives are influenced by what they consistently consumed from the media.

Wilk (2024) investigated the representations of women in 2018 American most grossed films; comparatively looking at film directions by men and women as to ascertain the influence of gender roles in film illustrations. The study was anchored on critical mass and critical actor theories to examine the impact of women who are film makers on the portrayals of female cast and crew members. Results showed that movies directed by women show more percentages of female characterization and female crew involvement in major roles but had significant difference in budgeting and grossing when it is compared with that of the male directors.

Fedorova (2023) examined the stereotypical representation of women in the Hollywood film industry and noted that the film industry generally represents women through a patriarchal lens, as women are portrayed to socio-cultural roles of wives, lovers, and mothers. Also, more value is added to woman dignity while they play these roles rather than being described as independent and intelligent. Moreover, women in the film industry are presented as charming objects, made to look appealing to men and for entertainment. However, the researcher noted that the film industry has started making a paradigm shift, thanks to feminist movements that challenge gender stereotypes representations in films.

In a study on the representation of women in movies, Okunna (2020) found that women are often criticized for their inability to bear a child in Nollywood movies. This, in support of Swift's (2013) stance indicates that when women are valued based on their fertility in movies, it cultivates the perception that in reality, women are essentially childbearing machines and a failure in this capacity, ultimately calls for abusive and contemptuous treatments.

Gundersen and Kunst (2019) established that female feminist are often times referred to as being masculine and the male feminists are stereotyped as being feminine in Norway; a country that has been termed the most gender-egalitarian country of the world. They conducted four studies where they used a data-driven reverse-correlation technique to test how feminist

women and men are visually portrayed. Results pointed towards the idea that people have asymmetrically gendered visual representations of feminist women and men. Feminist women are visually represented as more masculine whereas the opposite is true for feminist men.

Cash et al. (1997) examined 122 college women to ascertain multiple parameters of body image and different facets of gender attitudes and feminist identity development. Results revealed minimal relationships between body-image attitudes and either feminist identity or adherence to traditional gender beliefs at individual/stereotypic or societal levels. On the other hand, traditional gender attitudes at the level of male-female social interactions were associated with stronger and more dysfunctional investments in cultural and personal appearance standards.

The current study on female undergraduates' perception of feminism portrayed in *The Woman King* movie diverges from the existing body of empirical studies as it focuses on a specific academic and cultural demographic within Nigerian context and delved in examining only one film; *The Woman King*, how feminism characterizations are presented and how female undergraduates perceived these images.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is hinged on the Reception Theory of the media which emerged from literary studies through the works of Hans-Robert Jauss in 1960s. It focuses on how the audience of media interpret and make meaning of media messages (film potrayals). It is also known as Audience Reception Theory, (Asemah et al., 2017). It dwells on the ideology that media content is dynamic and not fixed as the audience of such media content interpret based on their social, cultural and personal experiences. Reception theory opines that audience go through three stages when they are trying to make meaning out of media messages (Media Theory, 2023). These stages include the dominant stage where the audience shares the same meaning of the messages with the producer of the messages because they share the same social and cultural background, hence their interpretation of media messages aligns with that of the producer. Then, the second stage which is called the negotiated; this stage happens when the audience interpret media message partly different from the message producer due to difference in their

socio-cultural background. Though this stage may still incorporate partly acceptance of what the message producer has. Here, some audience may accept while some may not accept. Then the last stage, which is the oppositional, here the audience outrightly rejects the intended meaning the message producer sends out and interpret the message in a way that is opposing the intended message of the producer. This theory is related to this study as the female undergraduates may interpret the feminist illustrations based on their social and cultural background. Their interpretation of feminist depictions may be in tandem with the intended message of the film producer or may outrightly be different from it as the producer of *The Woman King* film is an American that has different social and cultural background with the female students in Anambra State who belong to the West African part of the globe.

4. METHODOLOGY

Focus Group Discussion was used in this study as research design for examining the perception of female undergraduates in Anambra State, Nigeria. Three universities were purposively selected to represent federal, state and private universities and these three universities include: Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka; Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam; and Madonna University, Okija. There were three focus group discussions, one held in each school with twelve students making up each group. The selection of the female students was based on availability and willingness to be exposed to the movie as well as partake in the focus group discussion. A discussion guide was used to moderate the discussions and thematic analysis was used to identify and analyze patterns and themes within the data collected during the discussions.

4.1 Data Analysis

One of the feminist themes respondents identified is the empowerment of women through warring prowess; the ability to fight to death defending what one believes and loyal to. The Agojie warriors, as portrayed in the film, embody a sense of physical strength, the ability to remain strong and steadfast on the battle field typically reserved for men in historical and cinematic contexts. One of the discussants noted thus:

Throughout the movie, starting from the first scene where the Agojie went to fight the

farmers of Mahi village, to their invasion of Oye empire, and the last battle to set the Agojies held captives by Oba and the slavers at the port of Quidah; the Agojie fought with their lives and last breadth. To me, this is dedication to a cause you believe in, fight for it no matter what it will cost you, so far you are sure it is a just and worthy cause. Did you remember when Nawii reminded Izogie about the law? She said something like "We will not cut up our throats, fear not, face it head-on, relentlessly we will fight". She actually repeated it twice and made Izogie to repeat it to enhance believability.

Another theme related to feminism is the theme of leadership. As all-female war troop, women are in charge of training and making decisions of who, what and how to get victory at war. They were not left to sing and serenade the men of war, rather they broke the glass ceiling and remain what can be referred to as today's board of directors. This theme of female empowerment through leadership challenges traditional gender norms and presents women as capable leaders in both battle and governance. A discussant expressed that:

You can see that the women are the ones training each other, they did not go to get men to teach them how to fight. Look at Izogie for instance, the teachings and training she gave the new intakes that included Nawii. The Agojie army general, Namisca, Zombe and Izogie were all part of the king's cabinet; those who make decisions about the Dahomey kingdom. We saw the way Namisca was greatly favoured in the sight of the king as she made suggestions about ending slave trade. Also, when Oba, the army general for Oyo empire came for the king's tribute, Namisca was seen choosing the warriors who would go.

Another key theme identified by female students is the struggle for equality. The characters in the film fight not only for their survival but also for their right to be recognized as Agojie. This theme resonates deeply with a respondent, who see it as a reflection of their own aspirations for gender equality in contemporary society. A discussant observed thus:

For Nawii and few other girls, they aspired to belong to Agojie and would not relent to be regarded as one and treated equally as one. Even when it cost Nawii pains as she jumped

over the built pinnacle instead of climbing it. That's extra effort she made there.

The film also portrays the theme of solidarity among women, highlighting how collective strength and support among female characters are crucial in overcoming adversities. This theme reflects the importance of unity and mutual support in feminist movements, as acknowledged by the students.

Furthermore, the images of women challenging societal norms and traditional roles is a central feminist theme in the movie. The film illustrates how the characters defy conventional expectations and carve out spaces for themselves in roles traditionally dominated by men. This is evident in the words of a discussant:

Nawii had to disobey her father by disagreeing to get married to suitors that have come for her hand in marriage. The last one wanted her as a subject who would work rather than being a wife. Nawii aspired to be an Agojie not a worker under a man's roof in the name of marriage. She preferred to be left single. Even when the suitor abused her in the presence of her father by hitting her. I gave it Nawii there for fighting back by pushing the man away not minding the size or societal status; that push made him leave immediately. Nawii stated emphatically that "I will not marry a man who beats me." This shows how women need to rise up for themselves, it means we do not need to wait to be rescued rather, we make that push and find our peace.

Another discussant pointed out the reverse of roles evident in conventional society where the men go to war and the women welcome them from war with songs and dances to serenade them, she said:

When the Agofies returned from war, they are celebrated like the great and true warriors that they represent like the male warriors when they return from war. There are jublations, songs and dancing. Even when they walk within the villages they are not looked at by both men and women. Just like the way African revere the masquerades.

This challenge to normative gender roles aligns with the feminist ideals of breaking down barriers and expanding the opportunities available to women. Overall, the portrayal of these feminist

themes in "The Woman King" aligns with the students' understanding of feminism as a movement that seeks to empower women, challenge gender norms, and promote equality.

The female undergraduates in Anambra State generally view the portrayal of feminism in *The Woman King* as both inspiring and thought-provoking because the representations have opened their eyes to see women who give in all they are and have to fight for Dahomey kingdom. That is, they can be part of feminism movement in a patriarchy world where terminists are seen as those who hate men.. Many respondents expressed admiration for the film's portrayal of strong, capable female characters who defy traditional gender roles and assert their autonomy.

The representation of the Agojie warriors as fierce and skilled fighters who hold significant power in their society resonates with the students' views on the importance of representation in media. They appreciate how the film challenges stereotypical images of women and presents them in positions of authority and respect.

The students also noted that the film provides an in-depth portrayal of feminism, acknowledging the complexities of female empowerment within a historical context. They see the film as a representation of feminism ideals that goes beyond mere surface-level empowerment and delves into the deeper struggles and triumphs of women asserting their place in a patriarchal society. The emphasis on themes such as leadership, solidarity, and breaking societal norms aligns with what they have learnt about feminism as a movement that addresses various aspects of gender inequality.

However, some students raised concerns about the film's historical accuracy and its potential for perpetuating certain stereotypes. They discussed how the film's dramatic elements might overshadow the historical realities of the Agojie warriors, potentially leading to misconceptions about their true role and experiences. A discussant mentioned thus:

I have my reservations about the accuracy of what history the movie is telling. If this story dated back as to 1873, I am then concerned about some images like costumes. Look at the Agojie's clothing for instance, do we wear knickers in Africa? The fabrics too. If I can

observe these two, then I begin to wonder whether the entire storyline actually gives the correct narrative.

Despite this concern, the overall consensus among the female students is that the film offers a compelling and impactful portrayal of feminism they have ever learnt and that is both relevant and empowering.

Female students in Anambra state stated the following as factors that influenced the perception of feminism as framed in *The Woman King* film: First is the film's portrayal of strong female characters that resonates with the students' own experiences and aspirations. Many respondents identified with the characters' struggles and triumphs, finding inspiration in their portrayal of female empowerment and leadership. This personal connection to the film's themes plays a significant role in shaping their perceptions. One of the female students narrated thus:

I feel whatever pain these women like Nanisca and Nawii passed through as a daughter to a single mother who never met or knew her father. The discrimination from supposed family members who would remind you at any given opportunity that you never belonged to the family. What about my mother? She has faced lots of rejections and missed opportunities while she was pregnant with me as a teenager. I keep telling myself that I will do whatever it may warrant to not allow even my worst enemy to experience such pain of isolation, rejection and stigmatization. I feel if feminism is well embraced my mother and I would not experience these pains.

Another discussant noted that:

With the Agojie warriors, especially Nawii, her experiences in the movie has opened my mind to actually make decisions about my life and stand by it. No matter the threat that may come in the guise of poverty or discouragement, I should remain fervent to my decision and see it come true. I also aspire to be loyal and be there for those who I called family and friends and look out for them even in adversity. Nawii's loyalty to her friend Fumbe is worth emulating.

Another influencing factor is the cultural and educational background of the students. The

emphasis on gender equality and feminism ideals in their academic studies and societal discussions contributes to their understanding and interpretation of the film. The students' exposure to feminist theory and gender studies in their curriculum allows them to critically engage with the film's portrayal of feminism and assess its relevance to contemporary issues. A discussant noted that: *"What I have learnt from the school of Gender Studies has really played out here."*

The film's historical and cultural context also plays a role in shaping the students' perceptions. The illustrations of the Agojie warriors in a historical setting adds depth to the feminist themes and provides a broader context for understanding the characters' experiences. The students' awareness of historical and cultural narratives influences their interpretation of the film and its portrayal of feminist ideals. Finally, the influence of peer discussions and media reviews contributes to the students' perceptions. Conversations with fellow students and exposure to critical reviews of the film help shape their views and provide a platform for evaluating the film's portrayal of feminism. These factors collectively contribute to the students' overall perception of "The Woman King" and its representation of feminist themes.

5. DISCUSSION

The analysis of the data reveals that there are some significant feminist themes that resonate deeply with the female undergraduates in Anambra State. One of the most notable findings is the theme of female empowerment through leadership and warring prowess. The Agojie warriors, described as strong, autonomous figures, challenge traditional gender norms by occupying roles typically reserved for men. This aligns with the scholars' idea that film does not only play a role in the education and entertainment of her audience, but helps in the formation of ideas, attitudes as well as the representation of ideologies (Obiora & Adikuru, 2024; Obiora & Uche, 2024; Nnabuiife et al., 2023; Onyejelem et al., 2023; Obiora & Uche, 2021). The Agojie warriors' image do not only challenge historical gender norms but also contributes to a broader understanding of female strength and capability. This portrayal serves as a counter-narrative to the stereotypical representations of women in media like the works of Jimi et al. (2022) and Federova (2023), thus fostering a more nuanced and empowering image of female leadership.

The film also portrays the Agojie warriors' struggle for recognition and equal status, reflecting a critical aspect of feminist discourse. In this same vein, Lewis (2023) discussed how the world is striving, including media portrayals, seek to address gender inequality and challenge stereotypes. Portrayals in *The Woman King* film resonates with these global efforts by presenting women as active agents in their own empowerment, rather than passive recipients of male validation. This image underscores the importance of portraying women as equal and competent, which is crucial in challenging entrenched gender biases. Another significant theme is solidarity among women. The film emphasizes the collective strength and support of female characters, aligning with feminist ideals of mutual aid and unity. As Okunna (2020) noted, media often perpetuates stereotypes that reinforce gender inequality. *The Woman King* counters this by illustrating how solidarity among women can be a powerful force in overcoming adversity. This theme highlights the importance of community and collective action in feminism movements, offering a positive portrayal of women's cooperation and mutual support.

Also, the film challenges traditional societal norms by depicting women in roles traditionally occupied by men. This defiance of gender norms aligns with feminist goals of breaking barriers and expanding opportunities for women. As Amobi (2023) discussed, media portrayals often reflect and reinforce cultural stereotypes. By presenting women as warriors and leaders, depictions in *The Woman King* disrupts these stereotypes and promotes a more progressive view of female roles.

Moreover, female undergraduates in Anambra State view the film's portrayal of feminism as both inspiring and thought-provoking because they learnt to be consistent in loyalty and never to deviate from desired and set goals. The portrayal of the Agojie warriors as strong and capable characters like Nawii and Namisca, resonates with their perspectives on gender equality, where women are given opportunities like the men to be what they aspire to be. This conforms with Varrial (2023), who noted that what feminism seeks to address is equality for men and women in all ramifications and standard without an iota of discrimination and stereotype against women and girls.

The female students appreciate how the film presents women in positions of authority and

respect, offering a compelling representation of feminist ideals as evident with the presence of Izogie, Namisca and Zombe during King Ghezo's decision making meetings. This conforms with the studies of Obiora and Adikuru, 2024; Obiora and Uche, 2024; Obiora and Uche, 2021; Obiora and Odoh, 2020; Kurfi and Dahiru, 2020; Ojiakor and Obiora, 2019 that established that the way people, ideas and objects are portrayed in films affects the way viewers perceive the people, ideas and objects in real life. This means, that the way women has been presented in *The Woman King* movie might have shaped the way female undergraduates perceive women.

However, some students have expressed concerns about the film's historical accuracy and potential for perpetuating stereotypes. These concerns reflect the need for a more nuanced understanding of feminism within historical context as Swift (2015) stated that media representations can sometimes present misconceptions and reinforce stereotypes. The students' critiques highlight the importance of balancing inspirational portrayals with accurate historical representations. This critical perspective aligns with the need for media to provide a comprehensive and accurate portrayal of historical and feminist narratives. The students' opinions also emphasize the importance of representation in media. As Uwem (2022) noted, global efforts to address gender inequality include improving representation and challenging stereotypes. The film's portrayal of the Agojie warriors as powerful and independent figures supports these global efforts by presenting women in a positive and empowering light. The students' appreciation for this representation reflects the broader impact of media portrayals on perceptions of gender roles and equality.

Several factors influence the perception of female undergraduates about feminist characterizations in *The Woman King*. The film's portrayal of strong female characters and feminist themes resonates with the students' personal experiences and aspirations as some of the female undergraduates have experienced struggles caused by societal discrimination and are inspired to achieve great heights no matter what society throws at them. This connection aligns with reception theory, where audience interpretations, perceptions and attitudes about the media content received is based on their existing social, educational, cultural experiences. The students' identification

with the characters' struggles and triumphs highlights the film's relevance to their own experiences and perspectives on gender equality. The cultural and educational background of the students also plays a significant role in shaping their perceptions. Also, exposure to feminist theory and gender studies in their academic curriculum allows the students to critically engage with the film's portrayal of feminism. This critical engagement reflects the influence of media literacy on viewers' interpretations of feminist narratives as illustrated in reception theory. As Allan and Coltrane (2020) discussed, media plays a key role in shaping public discourse and perceptions, and educational background can enhance viewers' ability to critically analyze media content. This contextual understanding aligns with Okunna's (2020) emphasis on the need for accurate and nuanced media portrayals. The students' awareness of historical and cultural narratives influences their interpretation of the film and its feminist themes. Peer discussions and media reviews further shape the students' perceptions. Conversations with fellow students and exposure to critical reviews provide a platform for evaluating the film's portrayal of feminism. This social and media context reflects the broader influence of media and peer discourse on viewers' perceptions. As Uwem (2023) noted, media and social interactions play a significant role in shaping public opinion and understanding.

6. CONCLUSION

The Woman King film significantly influences female students' perceptions of feminism by showcasing empowering images of women in leadership and combat roles. This portrayal aligns with feminist ideals and challenges traditional gender norms. The film's depiction of female solidarity and defiance of stereotypes contributes to a broader understanding of feminist principles. However, concerns about historical accuracy and potential stereotypes indicate a need for more nuanced and accurate portrayals in media. The students' critiques highlight the importance of balancing inspirational narratives with a clear representation of historical and cultural contexts. This approach will provide a more comprehensive view of feminist themes and enhance media's role in promoting gender equality. Based on the findings the researchers recommend that:

- ❖ Film maker should ensure that future production should contain portrayals that will enhance historical accuracy and more informed depictions of feminist themes.
- ❖ Film producers should include diverse feminist perspectives to provide a more comprehensive representation of feminism ideals and experiences and give a deeper exploration of feminist struggles within historical contexts that would offer a richer understanding of the challenges faced by women.
- ❖ Filmmakers should endeavour to involve those whose history are being told; in research, plot building, performance and setting. Also, varieties of notions from the different quarters of such history should be considered to enable the audience experience diversified perspective to the history.
- ❖ Women and girls should endeavour to get more engaged with media contents that will enrich and support avenues for them to navigate through any struggles that may be facing them.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author hereby declares that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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