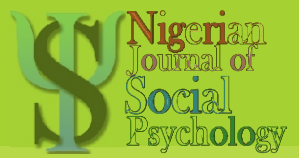


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# IMPACT OF IGBO FILMS IN PROMOTING IGBO CULTURE IN THE NIGERIAN SOCIETY: A STUDY OF ABAKALIKI METROPOLIS

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## Abstract

*Film is one of the channels of mass communication which has grown over the years. It started as cinema and later grew into home video which many Nigerians patronise today. Films has been used to promote socioeconomic development. It has also been used to promote culture. This study examined the roles of Igbo films in promoting Igbo culture. Three specific objectives and three corresponding research questions guided the study. The cultivation theory and cultural norms theories were used and discussions were made based on people's views on how film has fared so far. The descriptive survey research design was adopted using the tool of questionnaire to gather data for the study. According to National Population Census projected population of 2016, Abakaliki metropolis urban has a population of 555,500. Using the Survey monkey online sample size calculator 384 sample size was arrived at. Instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. Data collected were analysed using mean, and Conclusions were drawn from the discussions, it was observed that the film had not done too well in promoting Igbo cultural heritage. The paper also indicated that Igbo culture is not often projected positively. Some recommendations were given among which is for the film sensors commission to scrutinise what the public watch and that film contents should reflect our culture.*

**Keywords:** *Nollywood, Igbo films, culture, tradition*

## Introduction

Nigeria is a multinational, multicultural and multi-religious nation inhabited by more than 250 ethnic groups speaking 500 distinct languages, all identifying with a wide variety of cultures (Federal Ministry of Arts and Culture, 2023). The three largest ethnic groups in Nigeria are the Hausa in the north, Yoruba in the west, and Igbo in the east, together constituting over 60% of the total population. The official language is English which is the language of the colonial masters. English language is chosen to facilitate linguistic unity at the national level. The Nigeria's constitution ensures de jure freedom of religion, and it is home to some of the world's largest Muslim and Christian populations (Nwigbo, 2019). Nigeria is divided roughly in half between Muslims, who live mostly in the northern part of the country, and Christians, who live mostly in the south; indigenous religions such as those native to the Igbo and Yoruba ethnicities as well as other minority ethnic groups still exists.

Apart from religion, every ethnic group in Nigeria has its own peculiar culture that keeps them. Every culture in Nigeria carries with it a modus operandi which makes them distinct from others. Although some cultures are related to one another. (Effiong, 2017). These cultures are exhibited through religious practices, dressing pattern, festivities, marriages and its ceremonies, family structure, politics, feeding pattern (food) among others. These cultural practices and social structures are often exhibited in the home movies produced in Nigeria.

Home movies are motion pictures and film projected in rapid succession onto a screen by means of light. According to Urban (2015) home movies refer to an electronic motion pictures and sounds of human and non-humans for entertainment, relaxation and learning. Okoh (2019) also indicated that the movie industry provides a means of entertainment for the people in the society. The intention of home movie production includes not only for entertainment but also indoctrination and enlightenment for the members of the society. Aniago, et.al (2020) explained that “watching film agitates the imaginations, ideologies, and inclinations of the consumers”. Important features of the film industry include that it promote the well-being of humanity, make relaxation more enjoying, promote learning and promotes the cultural practices of the people.

The rise of the Nollywood industry in the 1990s has led to exhibition, demystification and exposition of some indigenous cultural values of the people in Nigeria. Nollywood refers to the popular professional Nigerian home video dramas or movies, either in local languages or in English but set in the Nigeri-dan societies. These home videos are source of entertainment and widely consumed both in Nigeria and abroad. Many of these home movies produce in Nigeria exemplifies the cultural heritage of different ethnic groups especially the Igbos as many of the movies boards on kingship (traditional politics), marriage, folklores, justice system and local technologies (Azubuike, 2019). Some of these movies have acquired great commercial success. Films like *Egg of Life*, *Igodo*, *Ukwa*, *Akidi*, *Rattle snake* and others have remained evergreen in the memory of those who saw these movies more than two decades ago. In line with the above, Ebeh (2024) opined that a number of films relate stories firmly rooted in villages and set in the distant past, with all the paraphernalia of tradition: traditional architecture, attire and body adornment, traditional music and group dancing, festivals, daily occupations and leisure activities (farming, local wars, moonlight plays, music, wrestling, storytelling, traditional medicine and divining) have helped to demystify Igbo traditions to the wider world.

The perceived aim of these Igbo films according to Nwigbo (2023) is to help viewers re-discover their history and take pride in their traditions, and they usually present an upbeat, very positive picture of the past. Other films seek to feed into current debates on more controversial aspects of Igbo culture such as polygamy, widowhood practices or the osu system (Enwerem, 2019). In line with this, Ejike (2019) reported that these movies which were set in old Igbo societies for example were very successful in illustrating the values and superstitions of the ancient societies. From seeing these movies, one got to know that virtues like bravery, hard work, honesty, and so on were extolled among Ndi Igbo; One got to know that some of the atrocities heavily frowned at by Ndi Igbo were regarded as abominations capable of evoking the wrath of the gods: in situations where one claimed to be innocent of a crime which one had committed, the person was required to swear before the deity in a shrine. One got to learn (or at least hope) that nemesis always caught up with the wicked, and that the gods were always keen to administer justice in the land (Azubuike, 2023).

Also, these films enforced the importance of masculinity and femininity, and the need to balance strength with tenderness. Most Igbo films have shown that the Igbo people lived in an egalitarian society and are republican in nature who existed without a central government.

(Afigbo, 1994; Basden, 2000; Isichei 1998). This complex system of government was without a central head and fostered a communal sense of mutual connectivity among the Igbo. It was this web of complexity that made it difficult to invade the communities because there were no central rallying points that exposed them to vulnerability.

Given the above instances of what the movie is capable of, it becomes rather surprising that no society would like to fail in capitalizing on it for social transformation. However, despite all these movies with varied themes in Igbo films over the years, it is yet unknown whether they are promoting Igbo culture or not. This is as a result of controversies among scholars on the effects of Igbo films on Igbo culture. It is based on this that the study examines the impact of Igbo films on the promotion of Igbo culture.

### **Statement of the Problems**

Nollywood filmmakers are wonderful entertainers. They have told great and amazingly inspiring stories, through their movies, for decades. Film production in developed nations has gone digital, and the old way of producing movies is gradually dying. The Nigerian movie industry, popularly referred to as 'Nollywood', is yet to come to terms with this, despite being ranked as the third highest growing movie maker in the world, behind 'Hollywood' in the United States of America and 'Bollywood' in India.

However, despite the importance of Nollywood movies especially, those with Igbo language and setting, in the cultural promotion and development, Igbo films have been criticized for both being antithetical to Igbo culture and values as well as being archaic. This might not be true as other scholars have noted its benefits in promoting Igbo cultural heritage. There has been dearth of knowledge in this regard. It is based on this that the study examines the impact of Igbo films in promoting Igbo culture in Nigeria.

### **Objectives of the study**

The general purpose of this study is to examine the impact of Igbo films in promoting Igbo culture in Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to;

1. Examine the impact of Igbo films with abomination themes on the promotion of morality in the Igbo society
2. Find out the impact of Igbo films with the themes of hard work on the promotion of skill development and hard work among Igbo youths
3. Ascertain the impact of Igbo films with the themes of kingship and political system in the promotion of egalitarian society in the Igbo society

### **Research Question**

The following research questions guided the study

1. What are the impact of Igbo films with abomination themes on the promotion of morality in the Igbo society
2. What are the impact of Igbo films with the themes of hard work on the promotion of skill development and hard work among Igbo youths
3. What are the impact of Igbo films with the themes of kingship and political system in the promotion of egalitarian society in the Igbo society

## Review of related literature

### An Overview of the Nollywood Industry and Theoretical Considerations

Onuzulike (2008) states that the history of the Nigerian film industry can be traced to the pre-independence era. The first film was screened at Glover Memorial Hall Lagos in August 1903. These movies were documentaries with political inclinations by the colonialists. He asserts that Nollywood production of movies skyrocketed from late 1992 after the production of Ken Nnebue's movie *Living in Bondage* which sold over 750,000 copies, thus leading to mass production of inferior movies. Onuzulike associates the brand name of Nollywood with being an imitation of America's *Hollywood* and India's *Bollywood*. His argument on the poor quality of movies is also stressed by Madichie(2010) who defines the Nollywood industry as having poor acting and directing, as well as poor sound quality. He adds that lack of creativity has led to the loss of interest by the target audience. Asogwa, Onoja, and Unekwu (2015) are of the view that the influx of Western ideas and cultures makes the movies appear unoriginal starting from the brand name of Nollywood which holds no significant meaning. They also exemplified some Nollywood movies that are a rip-off of Hollywood. In their words, "*Save the Last Dance* and *Cinderella* whose titles and content were retained by Nollywood in their versions; whereas, the American's *Two Can Play the Game* was translated and converted by Nollywood into *Break Up*" (98-104).

Thus, Asogwa, Onoja, and Unekwu (2015) agree that the cultural values of the people are reflected in epic movies, but the filmmakers only focus on the negative aspects of the people's customs. They believe that by continuously portraying Epic movies in that light, the global audience tends to view the culture of the people in that light. Similarly, Ojukwu and Ezenandu (2012) support the statement by Asogwa et.al (2015) on the aspects of culture represented on screen. They agree that many of the movies produced by Nollywood emphasize negative worldviews inherent in Nigerian culture. He adds that the industry instead of engaging in the imagery of these customs, blows it out of proportion and hardly explores or unveils the uniqueness of the Igbo society in terms of hard work, business enterprise, and resilience among other attributes of the Igbo people. This abysmal observation led Giwa (2014) to contend that, the contents of Nollywood have intensified and attributes characterization in Nollywood movies to the Western influence on the person which is not typical to the Africans. However, the author believes that the reason for the Western influence is to make an impression around the world and that this has brought exposure of Nollywood to the global world (2014). The author agrees that the Nollywood movies are rich in their message and one can draw knowledge from the valuable stories.

In retrospect, the assertion of the valuable message is not reflected in Igbo themes because of the disparity that lies in these movies and the cultural values they misrepresent. The author fails to point out the valuable messages that many of the movies convey to their audience, from the Igbo language which is non-existent in Igbo-themed movies to the stereotype of occultic and diabolic men which the movies erroneously portray. Nollywood sends these messages not only to their local audience but to those in the global world. These messages are assimilated by non-Nigerians as the real Nigerian culture. One of the authors recollects an embarrassing situation she encountered in 2017 in Nairobi, Kenya where people who knew she was from Nigeria, kept questioning her about witchcraft, and money rituals among other vices that depict the Igbo traditional religion as evil.

Eze-Orji (2016) also writes on the "Misrepresentation and Bastardisation of the Igbo Culture" where he posits that Nollywood movies are merely recycling of overused concepts that give a certain stereotype to the cultural identity of the Igbo people and thus derides the custom of the

people. To further support his assertion, he pinpoints the people involved with the production of movies, from the scriptwriters, and producers to the marketers of these movies as being responsible for the misrepresentation of culture. In addition, he believes that the people to be blamed majorly for the bastardisation are the distributors as they give the instructions not only to the directors but the producers, scriptwriters, and actors alike. For this author, the misrepresentation of Nollywood lies in the promotion of unethical behaviours and immorality in the movies for the sake of garnering profit.

To this end, the above analysis ascribes to George Gerbner's Cultivation Theory propounded in 1960. This socio-cultural theory examines the role of audio-visual content in shaping viewer's perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and values among others (Gerber & Gross, 1976). The main proposition of the theory is that the more time people spend watching the television (movies), the more likely they are to believe that social realities align with the presupposed realities on the screen. As Shrum (2017) avers, the primary hypothesis of cultivation theory is that the more people watch audio-visual content, the more they will come to adopt its underlying messages. That is they are likely to hold beliefs that are consistent with the world as it is portrayed on audio-visual content. Thus, the portrayal of Igbo cultural values as evil, witchcraft-ridden, money rituals are in the main a negation of the resilience and hard-working majority who are excelling all over the world. Again, it has negatively impacted the psyche of Igbo urban dwellers who believe their uncles and aunts in the villages are evil men and women destroying the destinies of their relations. This consumption of negativity has destroyed the Igbo communal living in contemporary times. The researchers have outlined the ways by which Nollywood does not represent the cultural heritage of the Igbo but they did not draw a parallel to that which the Nollywood industry portrays as African culture and the intrinsic culture of the people, in this context, the Igbo culture. Therefore, now that the problems of Nollywood have been identified, and the reason for the limitations outlined, it remains to be seen what can be done to bridge the failures of the industry in the depiction of the cultural values of the society and make the industry to be in a better shape than what is symbolised onscreen. Before that, it is necessary to gain an insight into other countries' film industry for a better understanding of the issues involved.

### **An Overview of Relevant Film Industries**

Other movie industries in the world such as Hollywood for America, Bollywood for India, and Hallyuwood for South Korea, have amassed a great viewership not only within their country but in the global space. It is important to examine the various industries to have an insight into the factors that enabled them to become well recognised in the wider world while retaining their authenticity. For Hallyuwood, the industry had come a long way since the split between North Korea and South Korea. Yecies and Shim (2011) noted that North Korea censored movies heavily before release as far back as 1979. It was not until 1996 under first Korea's civilian president, Kim Young Sam that movie censorship was declared illegal. Thus, the aftermath saw the emergence of major filmmakers in the industry. The success of the movie Industry of the Koreans is attributed to Governmental policies favouring the movie industry, the audience preference for local movies authentic to their culture, and the offering of a range of dynamic genres that dazzles the audience by the filmmakers. The industry does that by blending genres and collaborating with international production companies to share the Korean story. Supported by Kim (2011) who attributes the influence of the government in aiding the industry to the success of Hallyuwood, he identifies that the government introduced a screen quota whereby movie industries must allot certain times for Korean movies to be aired and the government also subsidised the costs of the re-editing and adding subtitles to films for export and marketing which made the movies acceptable in the foreign markets. In

addition, Miroudot (2019) asserts that the success of the Korean film industry is the investment of money as budget and as such, the best acts, stunts, special effects, and cinematography are produced to appeal to the audience. In that way, there is a hybridisation of the local Korean culture and foreign culture in a way that remains genuinely Korean. Also, he examines the high contribution which the Hallyuwood movie industry has on the country's GDP. The industry has a 38 dollars per capita turnover, which places it at the fourth-highest income in the global industry, only behind the US, the UK, and France. He notes that Korea has a box office similar to that of the UK's and France's about US\$ 1.5 billion in 2016. This is opposed to Nigeria's Nollywood which though it ranks as one of the biggest producers of movies, contributes only 1.42% to the country's GDP (Omanufeme, 2016).

For the Bollywood Industry, its rise to stardom was not without help. Hafeez and Ara (2016) surmised that the industry got some benefits from their government for the production of their movies during its early beginnings. Their picture houses enjoy tax benefits, the government not only established a production company for filmmaking, but they gave monetary assistance to promising filmmakers to churn out movies. This was after they calculated the commercial value of Indian movies as far back as 1960. As a result of these, Indian filmmakers continued producing movies promoting Indian culture which would later influence the global sphere, particularly on the musical incorporations in movies. As with the Korean movie industry, Bollywood productions are exorbitant finances that are hugely invested in making movies that would be blockbusters with special effects and technologies promoting more appeal to the international audience.

Other movie industries such as Kazakhstan use the cinema as a medium of representing their society on-screen. Dinara, et.al (2020) reveal how important the director, Darezen Omirbaev is in addressing the political and social issues of Kazakhstan. The director portrays a reflection of the structure of Kazakhstan society through the internal conflict of his movies—*Heroes*, thus providing a more in-depth look at the movie and society. As the authors rightly declare, Cinema connects the world more than the media. Thus, serving as a bridge between government policies and how they relate to society. In the Nigeria situation, the government is not actively involved in the movie industry, neither are there subsidies tendered to Nollywood filmmakers. However, that is not enough reason for movies, specifically many Igbo-themed movies to misrepresent Igbo cultural values. Kannywood, the film industry of the Hausa people of Nigeria, is known to accurately portray their cultural values, although they are not without challenges. Ibrahim (2019) notes that although Kannywood started before Nollywood, its presence in contemporary times is not well-known. The industry is influenced by Bollywood in style but their language remains the Hausa language. He attributes the unpopularity of the Kannywood industry to the harsh censorship by the Sharia law prevalent in the North, while also noting that many of their movies are poorly scripted and many of their subtitles are known to be shoddy. However, the biggest competition remains Nollywood. As with Nollywood on Igbo Culture, the Yoruba segment of the movie industry portrays the values of the Yoruba people in light of "adulteration, distortion and exaggeration of the Yoruba history and culture for commercial purposes" (Sesan, 2013:10). However, in the case of the Yoruba culture, the misrepresentation in culture is not as well-pronounced as with the case of Igbo culture in the movies which faces a huge degradation and mutilation. On this note, this paper examines the various forms in which Nollywood grossly misrepresents the culture and values of the Igbo people.

### **Misrepresentation of Igbo Culture through Language**

One of the core identities of the culture of any society is the language. Wardaugh (as cited in Toni-Duruaku & Chukwu, 2012:121) opined that "language forms part of the culture of a

people and it is also through the language that culture and the collective consciousness of the people receive expression". It is expected that Igbo language should be accurately captured in Igbo-themed movies, most especially in the epic movies which are supposed to represent the core cultural values of the Igbo people. Alas, that is not so in the epic movies representing the Igbo indigenous society of the Pre-Colonial period. Several epic Nollywood movies use the English language medium as a means of communication, with many of the actors expressing themselves in foreign accents. Notable epic movies such as *Egg of Life*, *Ijele*, *Ojukwu*, *Igodo*, among other movies where the language communicated by the actors in the English language, with Igbo language emerging in only incantations and for emphasis. This phenomenon is prevalent in many movies that are allegedly set in Pre-colonial times when the Igbos had no access to the English language. It is startling that the above is what is presented as motion pictures, and thus clearly negates the essence of the movie since it is assumed to be Igbo culture-inclined.

One might argue that the usage of the English language is for a wider audience. However, there are viable options that can be adopted by the industry such as the use of subtitles in the movies, just like other cultures use their indigenous language in the portrayal of their movies. The Bollywood industry which has garnered mass recognition in the global sphere makes use of the indigenous languages of the Indian people, with subtitles provided for the audience that do not understand the language. The same goes for the Korean movie industry which has garnered a huge fan base in Nigeria. Hollywood movies are not exempted either as there is a disparity in the accents and vocabulary as obsolete English words are opted for in Epic Hollywood movies than the usage of English in their contemporary movies.

UNESCO has estimated that the Igbo Language might become extinct by 2050 and with how the entertainment industry continues to push the English language agenda, it could be possible. The majority of Igbo speakers find it extremely difficult to speak the language strictly in their usage. There is no better means of subconscious inclination to a language save for the entertainment industry; most especially since the language is neither the Lingua Franca nor is it a compulsory subject for students. This alienation by the speakers is intensified by what the industry portrays on-screen. Because these Nollywood movies serve as a means of entertainment for the average Igbo family, it would have been a huge factor in the education and promotion of the Igbo language to the audience, especially in this age when the Igbo language has become an endangered language. As such, these movies should have been a means of indoctrination to the people. Regrettably, many Nollywood movies do not present such and thus invariably aid in the endangerment and possible extinction of the Igbo language.

### **Igbo Monarchical Misrepresentation in Nollywood Films**

The monarchy is not a true picture of the pre-colonial Igbo communal life and the placement of monarchy as having unchecked power gives a wrong message about the pre-colonial customs of the Igbo people to the audience. The Nollywood representation of Igbo people spans from ostentatious lifestyle by the Kings which was never in reality with the Igbo people. For one, except for a couple of Igbo rulers such as the Obi of Onitsha, the Arochukwu people, the Igbo society was a large communal society where the age-grades and council of elders decided what should or should not happen in the society. Nollywood makes a mockery of that by providing scenarios whereby the kings in the pre-colonial society cloak themselves with beads and adornments which are alien to the Igbo society.

Some of these home videos have titles indicating kingships such as *Restless King*, *The King's Happiness*, *Dangerous King*, and *The King's Planet* among others. The kings are depicted as



having lavish and numerous guards following them to and fro the palace, whereas the princesses are seen with troops of guards while they parade around the palace with numerous maidens spraying petals of flowers on the ground that they step on. At times, these guards are seen with machetes which they use against people who are not deferential to the royal families and their cohorts. The above is far from what was obtainable in the native Igbo cultural society. The Igbo pre-colonial society was highly Republican. It is the closest to a democratic society in pre-colonial Nigeria with different groups having specific roles assigned to them. The hierarchy includes The Council of Elders, Chief Priests, Traditional Medicine Men, the Male Kindred called 'Umunna' and the Female Kindreds called 'Umuada.' They had the age-grade which served as the army while the Masquerades acted as the police. None of the groups was inferior to the other and they acted in tandem with the other.

Ohadike (1994) summarises it thus, in Igbo society, the age groups assigned special duties and responsibilities to the age-grades in terms of seniority. While the middle-aged age groups which consisted of men between 16 to about 40 years, functioned as the executive arm of government, the senior male groups, those between the ages of 40 and above, were responsible for judicial matters. The age-group system provided respect. Juniors deferred to the seniors and the groups acted together, and the friendships they cultivated in childhood remained intact through life.

The highest title in the Igbo society then was the *Ozo*, and the titled men were greeted with salutations such as *Igwe* and *Ogbuefi* meaning “His Highness” and “one who slaughters bulls” respectively. The eldest chief presides over meetings but does not act unless a consensus is reached by the council. However, they were stripped of their power and subordinated to the Warrant Chiefs appointed by the British officials (Ohadike, 1994). The absence of kingship in Igbo society was one of the reasons the Igbo were in opposition to the Warrant Chief system. For instance, the people of Afikpo began the opposition to the Afikpo Warrant Chiefs by evading taxes by running to the hilltops and taking refuge in bushes. The Warrant Chief System then became targets by the irate women because they were regarded as perpetrators of injustice and were lackeys of the colonial government. Their protests would later escalate to the Women’s War of 1929 which would later collapse the Warrant Chief system and the introduction of Native Authorities (Enwo-Irem, 2018).

### **Misrepresentation of Igbo Religion in Nollywood Movies**

The Igbo indigenous society is highly religious due to their belief in the gods and spirits. They believe in the existence of both benevolent and malevolent spirits and thus shroud themselves with charms to ward off evil and malevolent spirits. The traditional worldview of the Igbo people is what Nwoye (2011), referred to “as being anthropocentric which means that the activities of the spirits are seen as meaningful as far as they relate to human life. As such, they engage in divinations and rituals to protect themselves by pledging allegiance to these spirits”. Nollywood movies indoctrinated the idea that all gods are evil and the need to destroy them by an all-powerful God, in this case, the Christian God is used as the solution to the afflictions of society. Therefore, the only time they are represented in movies is when they are inflicting pain on the people. For instance, in the movie *Narrow Escape*, an elder warns the protagonist that the other missionaries who have been sent to the villages were killed by the gods. The twist that always appears in Nollywood movies is one in which some items are destroyed or cut down to ward off the spirits invariably ending their sufferings and thus, converting the villagers to Christianity. The drivers of the Christian faith have destroyed Igbo cultural heritage as a fetish while the movies further brainwashed the people into believing that their ancestors were evil people who worshipped evil gods. The Igbo people have an affinity for other societal gods as part of their cultural heritage. Zeus, Hades of the Greeks, Vishnu and

Krishna of the Indians, and Horus and Oris of the Egyptians are not perceived as threatening or evil to the Igbo people whereas gods like *Amadiḡha* and *Ekwensu* that are culturally the same as Zeus and Hades make Igbo people petrified of identifying with it.

In addition to the Nollywood influence on religion, as Nigeria is a highly religious and superstitious country, people believe that the cultural aspect of gods' worship is barbaric and so it is discarded. They attribute the misfortune they experience as being a result of ancestral curses whose forebears were heathen and fetish. Hence, images of these gods are destroyed when they could have been preserved as archaeological artifacts that should be kept in museums to promote tourism in the country. People go to the extent of travelling to their indigenous villages for spiritual deliverance to burn these artifacts and cut down trees believed to be evil in contradistinction to upholding a better environment through planting more trees and maintaining decent housing facilities.

Nollywood movies such as *Festivals of Fire* portrayed the missionaries as being persecuted by the Igbo people, whereas, in reality, the Igbo people were one of the first ethnic groups that welcomed the missionaries with open arms. In the civilizing mission of 1841, the CMS visited the palace of the Aboh monarch. One of the missionaries, Simon Jonas who had previously been sold into slavery, came back with the missionaries and acted as the interpreter between the missionaries and the Aboh monarch, Obi Ossai also spent weeks in Aboh preaching to the children that flocked around him (Okonkwo, 2018). The only known persecution that the missionaries experienced was malaria which caused the demise of 54 Europeans (Okonkwo, 2018). The subsequent civilizing mission of 1857 Niger Civilizing Mission was also a success because of the "reciprocity they preached on the relationship between them and God" (Nwoye, 2011). However, Nollywood fails to display the above in their movies.

### **Igbo Values in Contemporary-Themed Movies**

Contemporary Nollywood movies are not left out and contemporary in this context refers to Igbo-themed movies set in modern times. The movie, *All for Nothing* tells the story of two brothers, John and Albert who were unable to support their family. They beseeched help from people, and thus when it had hung on their necks, they decided to resort to rituals, using their children as a quick money scheme to earn money. The theme in the above movie can be traced back to the premiere of *Living in Bondage* in 1992 which starred Kenneth Okonkwo as Andy Okeke, who used his wife *Merit* for rituals to get money. The stereotype thus became associated with the Igbo of those whose wealth is gotten from rituals and the idea that the wealthy do not get their wealth from legal means but through occult sacrifices and rituals. Some of the movies with such themes include *Blood Money* (1997), *Billionaire's Club* (2004), and *Occultic Battle* (2005), among others. Many subsequent Igbo movies follow the same trend in the cultural stereotype of the Igbo, as being power-hungry. Eze-Orji (2016) summarizes it with the statement, "The themes and sub-themes of *Living in Bondage* have been so much recycled that people now see ritual, bloodletting, and occultism as part of Igbo lifestyle, thereby misrepresenting the Igbo cultural matrix". Movies like this are majorly home videos that the average Nigerian watches for entertainment and education. Thus, many subconsciously imbibe the characteristics of the characters portrayed, which in turn reflects in the lifestyle found in contemporary society. Thus, projecting the observation of Gerber and Gross, (1976) that the more time people spend watching the television (movies), the more likely they are to believe that social realities align with the presupposed realities on the screen.

These filmmakers shed the wrong light on Igbo cultural values. In the olden days, the vices of money rituals and being power-hungry were not found among the Igbo people. They made

use of folklore, idioms, fables, and proverbs to teach moral lessons, thus laziness is highly discouraged. These stories have indoctrinated children from childhood to have good virtues and behaviours. This is surmised by Nwoye (2011) in the statement:

The moral heroes of the Igbo are picked from the animal world. These include the tortoise that is admired for its capacity to deploy its creative ingenuity in the direction of finding solutions to the problems of the living. For the Igbo, these qualities reflect an imaginative deployment of intelligence and well-being. Similarly, the Igbo believe that although the world is often hostile and difficult to live in like the ram each should endeavour to learn the virtue of endurance in facing the obstacle of the human experience.

As opposed to the depiction of Igbo men in Nollywood movies as being only after wealth and going to great lengths to amass wealth, including sacrificing their children, mothers, and wives, the Igbo cultural values place more prominence on children and women than material property thus they name their children *Nwabugwu* (child is honour), *Nwadiuto* (child is sweet), *Nwakaego* (child is greater than wealth), *Nwamaka* (child is good), *Nwabueze* (child is king), *Nneamaka* (mother is good), *Nnediogo* (mother is graceful) and *Nwanyibuife* (the woman is something), among others. In Igbo tradition, it is believed that children are the parents' greatest achievement and are also their insurance in their old age. The children, especially the first sons and daughters have a priority in looking after their parents, thus the populous Igbo name, *Nwakaego*, meaning "Child is more precious than money" (Nwoye, 2011).

Furthermore, contemporary Nollywood movies depict a comparison between the village setting and the city which is portrayed to be a place that flows with goodness and wealth, while the villages are made out to be full of evil actions and backwardness. As such, the message such themes send to the audience is one in which the Igbo villages are places of stagnancy to be abandoned. In an article in *Punch Newspapers*, the writer puts it thus:

Anytime a Nigerian movie focuses on an Igbo village as well as the city, there are some constant narratives, the village is the home of poverty while the city is a place of wealth and a good life. The village is the home of witches and wizards while the city is the home of good men and women. The traditional religion in the city is good and always overcomes the darkness in the village. The village is a lawless society that overcomes the darkness in the village. The village is a lawless society where one man can seize the property of anybody, especially widows with nobody stopping him except by divine intervention, while the city is a land of order (Onwuka, 2017).

The bane of the points explained above is an improper indoctrination of the viewers of the movies, especially the younger generation. Today, the above is the impression of many young Igbo boys and girls who are always afraid of their kith and kin in the village. There is always an imaginary uncle lurking somewhere in the village to kill through charms or impede people's progress. The result is constant rural-urban migration where people not only run away from lack of facilities and opportunities in the villages but rather from village uncles who are ever ready to harm innocent nephews, nieces, and prospering kith and kin. For the contemporary movies that give an inept perfection of the cities, the youngsters who readily relocate to the cities to make it would discover that the movies are not reality and may end up venturing into vices and ritualistic tendencies.

The depictions of the villagers as evil people deter the younger generation from associating with villagers and relatives who they believe are idol worshippers, evil and malicious people. The destruction of the traditional gods and monuments eradicates the antiquities of the Igbo people that should be kept for posterity and the non-portrayal of movies in the Igbo language

encourages the extinction of the language. As Aniago et.al (2020) rightly put it, a filmmaker can be an opinion moulder, a manipulator of emotions, and a conjurer of ideas. Thus, they sway the thoughts and perceptions of the viewers, oftentimes, negatively. Nollywood movies with such themes give a distorted view of the customs of the people, even to those in the diaspora. The representation has effects on the perception of the practices denoted in these movies and it is a total misrepresentation of the practices which are the fundamental cultural practices of the Igbo people. In the case of Nollywood, the regurgitating of stories is frequent, and this not only reinforces but encourages the same stereotypes of which a particular culture is known, thereby making the movies cringe-worthy and monotonous which in turn reflects on the industry as being bland, mediocre and thus, a negation of the Igbo culture and values.

In the opinion of Ezeugwu (2020), recent studies have shown that the representation of women in Nollywood films has remained stereotypical and tends to cast their image in the mould of weaklings and very dependent species, who are often left at the mercy of men. Adding to this, (Ukata, 2010) states that despite the fame of the Nigerian film industry, both locally and internationally, some critics still see it as a poor imitation of the real thing. The films also have significant influences on the way others see us. Nigerian films more or less, do not seem to be aware of the shifting parody in women's discourse. Adeseke (2015), while toeing the same line, states that some Nigerian home videos' portrayal of our cultural ethos and women are inappropriate, misleading, and therefore unacceptable.

## **Film and Culture**

Over the years, the medium of film has come to be closely associated with the culture industry. In Nigeria, such a role for the film industry is still evolving although certain factors are altering the profile of what could be regarded as the country's culture, while the film industry itself is undergoing a crucial transition from analogue to digitization. In the views of Mgbejume, (2019), the immense potential of film was recognized even during the colonial times. The Federal Information apparatus earlier acknowledged film as the most effectivemedium for internal and external publicity.

Before a handful of indigenous film makers in the late 1970s took up the challenge to fill the void in local participation in the film business, the market was dominated by films from China, India, Hong Kong and England and America. This was evident in the number of Chinese and Indian films that dominated our television screens. The Anglo-American films offered a variety which included cowboy, horror, war and adventure films, among others. (Adesanya, 1984). This was evident especially at weekends when these foreign films were shown on Nigerian television. Bruce Lee was one of the most popular Chinese film then.

There was a strong competition between these films and the success and growing popularity of Indian romance and Kung Fu films with segments of the Nigerian audience, gave rise to the gains of this period. However, the Anglo-American film marketers, apart from having the advantage of the English language, regularly screened their films free of charge, using mobile cinema units in different parts of the country. Marketers of Chinese and Indian films somehow restricted their activities to movie theatres in the towns.

Since most of the films screened in the country were imported from various sources, the only areas that could have been controlled by Nigerians were the distribution and exhibition of films. These were however, firmly in the hands of Indians and Lebanese who managed to hold on to ownership of movie theatres and the distribution of films at that time. Each television station broadcasting in Nigeria has a mandatory 40% local programming requirement, which is reduced to 20% for pay-TV (Cable/MMDS and satellite) retransmission stations. However,

producers are not about to champion the cause of cultural purity since the elements of local cultures are daily refined by influences which dictate the mainstreaming of values to fit global prescriptions. Popular culture projection appears to be a fixation for these producers who continue to be propelled by the profit motive. Packaging of films for export is also influencing the force to satisfy criteria rooted in Western commercial standards in the scripting, characterisation and production of films.

Local cultures in their original form have therefore become secondary considerations in film content. Local cultures are, of course, in transition all over the world. Globalisation is setting the pace in the interaction of cultures with the consequence that local cultures are weighed down. The lasting contribution of video films to Nigerian society will depend on how the movie industry responds to the challenge to stay profitable without compromising the rich cultural heritage of our country Nigeria and the unity that binds us together.

According to Arulogun (1979) film is a powerful tool for the transmission of cultural values. He identified four main areas where film could further the cause of cultural identity.

1. As a propaganda tool. Film remains a vehicle employed by governments and others interested in the art of subtle diplomacy. Because of its popularity as an entertainment medium, it easily becomes a means of relaying and reinforcing information meant to promote a certain reality.
2. Film also plays the role of stereotype: helping to shape perspectives on a people's culture. The impressions which viewers develop about a people and their cultural values are greatly influenced by film portrayals.
3. Film as an educational medium: film covers issues in the school curricula or things about their country of origin which tell viewers about different countries and peoples.
4. Film also plays a role in promoting commerce. Where this character of film has developed, it is a major source of foreign exchange.

As Opubor and Nwuneli (1979) noted, "film exposes Nigerians and outsiders to 'the diverse (and) rich cultural heritage' of the country.

As for Opubor and Nwuneli film is expected to expose its viewers both within and without to the rich culture of its country.

Okoye, (2013) states that: It is almost certain that the video culture will create Nigerians who will completely repudiate their cultural heritage, thereby complicating further the problem of national development. If we look at what our films present to us today, Okoye will not be far from the truth. There is indeed a complication of national development. As Adeiza (1995) noted, most film makers turned to video as a survival option. She added that: Adeiza agrees that film can contribute immensely to the challenges of our rich cultural heritage and concludes that: While it may be safe to classify video films produced by private producers for the mass market as commerce driven, the levels of experimentation with popular themes also vary. There are some which also try to promote values of a better society and responsible citizenship. Films by Mount Zion Faith Ministries led by Mike Bamiloye are, for instance, devoted to promoting the Gospel using common themes like the eternal battle between the forces of good and evil.

In these films, evil is consistently portrayed as unprofitable and dangerous. Such films apart from promoting our cultural heritage have also imparted positively on the lives of viewers especially deviating their minds from evil to doing good.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study is hinged on cultivation theory and cultural norms theory

### **Cultivation theory**

As cited in Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso (2008), Cultivation theory was propounded by George Gabner, L. Gross, M. Morgan, and N. Singorielli in 1976. The theory is based on the assumption that:

- Cultivation analysis basically means that heavy television viewers will cultivate the perception of reality portrayed by the television.
- People predict their judgments about their actions in the world on the cultivated reality provided by television.
- Television major cultural function is to stabilise social patterns; it is a medium of socialisation and acculturation.

Cultivation theory suggests that communication, especially television, cultivates certain beliefs about reality that are held in common by mass communication consumers.

**Cultural Norms theory:** As cited in Okenwa (2000:22), the cultural norms theory postulates that the mass media through selective presentations and emphasis of certain themes create impressions among the audiences that common cultural norms concerning the emphasised topics are structured or defined in specific ways.

According to the theory, the media can:

- Potentially influence behaviour by reinforcing existing norms
- Create new norms
- Modify existing norms.

Okenwa (2000) asserts that, the media can be adequately utilised for the transmission of culture both internally and externally. According to Folarin (1998) The theory charged that, through selective presentation and tendentious emphasis on certain themes, the mass media created the impression among their audience that such themes were part of the culture or clearly defined cultural norms of society. As a result, impressionable members of the public tend to pattern their behaviour along the line of such media presentations.

### **Methodology**

The descriptive survey research design was adopted using the tool of questionnaire to gather data for the study. According to National Population Census projected population of 2016, Abakaliki metropolis urban has a population of 555,500. Using the Survey monkey online sample size calculator 384 sample size was arrived at. Copies of questionnaire were distributed to residents of Abakaliki metropolis in Ebonyi State using the multistage sampling technique. In the first stage, Abakaliki metropolis which is in cluster is already divided into three namely, Abakaliki metropolis North, Abakaliki metropolis West and Abakaliki metropolis Municipal. In the second stage two communities from each ward were purposively selected because they are within the reach of most of the broadcast media in Abakaliki metropolis and the level of literacy of people were likely high. The communities selected were Nkaliki, Abofia, Onuebonyi, and Agbapa, respectively. In stage three, having six communities the researchers distributed the questionnaire proportionately to the communities selected; that is  $384/6 = 64$ . Then, in stage four, the researcher gave 64 copies of the questionnaire to respondents in these communities purposively. Data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation. Therefore, mean score less than 2.5 stands for

rejection, while mean score from 2.5 and above stands for acceptance. T-test was used in testing the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significant.

Research Question 1: What are the impact of Igbo films with abomination themes on the promotion of morality in the Igbo society?

**Table 1: mean rating of the impact of Igbo films with abomination themes on the promotion of morality in the Igbo society**

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Igbo films on incest indicates that it is an abomination in Igbo culture	2.86	0.84	Accepted
2.	Igbo films on religious practices promotes the religiosity of Igbo people	2.72	0.80	Accepted
3.	Igbo films with infidelity promotes trust in marriage in Igbo culture	2.75	0.68	Accepted
4.	Igbo films always shows that it pays to always be truthful	2.66	0.75	Accepted
5.	Igbo films usually shows that poisoning of kinsmen is an abomination	2.70	0.85	Accepted
6.	Igbo films usually promote communal living	2.78	0.89	Accepted
7.	Igbo films usually show that betrayal of brothers is an abomination	2.91	0.74	Accepted
8.	Igbo films usually show that stealing is an abomination	2.69	0.88	Accepted
9.	Igbo films usually shows that it pays to be hardworking	2.79	0.74	Accepted
10.	Igbo films usually shows that chastity before marriage is accepted	2.29	0.80	Rejected
	<b>Grand mean</b>	<b>2.76</b>	<b>0.74</b>	<b>Accepted</b>

Results from table 1 shows the mean rating of the impact of Igbo films with abomination themes on the promotion of morality in the Igbo society. Result from the table showed that all the items were accepted by the respondents. This means that Igbos hold morality at the higher esteem. This is evidently shown in the mean scores of the items which were above 2.5 the criterion for acceptance.

Research Question 2: What are the impact of Igbo films with the themes of hard work on the promotion of skill development and hard work among Igbo youths

**Table 2: Mean rating of impact of Igbo films with the themes of hard work on the promotion of skill development and hard work among Igbo youths**

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
11	Afam efuna (an Igbo film) shows the apprenticeship system of Igbo economics	2.76	0.84	Accepted
12	Igbo films usually show successive planning in Igbo business	2.78	0.86	Accepted
13	The lions heart shows Igbo's approach to business	3.01	0.75	Accepted
14	Igbos hate laziness	2.88	0.73	Accepted
15	Hard work is extolled in Igbo culture	2.78	0.89	Accepted
16	Igbo films usually show stewardship among Igbo business owners	2.90	0.76	Accepted

Result from the table showed the mean rating of the impact of Igbo films with the themes of hard work on the promotion of skill development and hard work among Igbo youths. The result indicated that all the items were accepted by the respondents as the impact of Igbo films with the themes of hard work on the promotion of skill development and hard work among Igbo youths. This is evidently shown in the mean scores of the items which were above 2.5 the benchmark for acceptance.

Research question 3: What are the impact of Igbo films with the themes of kingship and political system in the promotion of egalitarian society in the Igbo society

**Table 3: Mean rating of impact of Igbo films with the themes of kingship and political system in the promotion of egalitarian society in the Igbo society**

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
17	Igbo films show the importance of kinsmen in social decision making	3.08	0.80	Accepted
18	Igbo films always show the functions of married women in the Igbo political system	2.94	0.79	Accepted
19	Igbo films always shows that male youths as the community solders	2.91	0.72	Accepted
20	Igbo films always show the functions of daughters in settling disputes	3.15	0.78	Accepted
21	The justice system is adjudicated by the kinsmen	2.70	0.68	Accepted
22	Igbo films show that Igbos practice adequate representative government	2.75	0.83	Accepted

Table 3 showed the mean rating of impact of Igbo films with the themes of kingship and political system in the promotion of egalitarian society in the Igbo society. Results from the table showed that the respondents agreed in all the items. This is evidently shown in mean rating of the items which were above 2.5 the criterion for acceptance. This means that films with the themes of kingship and political system in the promotes egalitarian society in the Igbo society.

## Discussion of Findings

Table 1 shows the mean rating of the impact of Igbo films with abomination themes on the promotion of morality in the Igbo society. Results from the table showed that Igbo films on incest indicates that it is an abomination in Igbo culture. This result is in accordance with Ugwu (2019) who noted that incest and infidelity are abomination in Igbo society. Igbo films on religious practices promotes the religiosity of Igbo people, Igbo films with infidelity promotes trust in marriage in Igbo culture, Igbo films always shows that it pays to always be truthful, Igbo films usually shows that poisoning of kinsmen is an abomination, Igbo films usually promote communal living, Igbo films usually show that betrayal of brothers is an abomination, Igbo films usually show that stealing is an abomination, Igbo films usually shows that it pays to be hardworking and that Igbo films usually shows that chastity before marriage is accepted.

Table 2: Mean rating of impact of Igbo films with the themes of hard work on the promotion of skill development and hard work among Igbo youths. Result from the table revealed that the respondents agreed that Afam efuna (an Igbo film) shows the apprenticeship system of Igbo economics. The importance of Igbo apprenticeship system is always shown in most Igbo films. These apprenticeships indicate that Igbos are industrious. Igbo films usually show successive planning in Igbo business, the lions heart shows Igbo's approach to business, Igbos



hate laziness, Hard work is extolled in Igbo culture and that Igbo films usually show stewardship among Igbo business owner.

Table 3: Mean rating of impact of Igbo films with the themes of kingship and political system in the promotion of egalitarian society in the Igbo society. Results from the table showed that the respondents agreed that Igbo films show the importance of kinsmen in social decision making. Kinsmen are very crucial in governance in Igbo society. The result from the table further showed that Igbo films always show the functions of married women in the Igbo political system, Igbo films always shows that male youths as the community solders, Igbo films always show the functions of daughters in settling disputes, the justice system is adjudicated by the kinsmen and Igbo films show that Igbos practice adequate representative government. These results are in accordance with Nweke (2016) who noted that Igbo system of governance are always shown in Igbo films.

### **Summary**

From the foregoing, we can deduce that Igbo films started well by promoting our rich Igbo cultural heritage but somewhere along the line deviated to accommodate financial gains. This became prominent when the viewers of home videos increased drastically thereby giving rise to competition among film producers who were ready to pay heavily to get stories that would move and increase sales. This implies that the media (television) has a way of teaching us things we do not know and these things should be based on facts and the true teachings of our culture. Film is a mass communication medium that can be used to bring about unity and promote our cultural heritage and this can be done by the kind of messages portrayed. By and large, Nigerian films have gone to the far ends of the earth and it should be a medium for show casing our rich cultural heritage. The unity of this nation can be enhanced through the packaging of films or movies which is being watched by Nigerians at home and abroad.

### **Conclusion**

The cultural world view of the Igbos is grounded in fundamental beliefs and values which guide and shape life experiences. In spite of the ethnic differences, there are core values that transcend ethnic and regional boundaries. These include: religiosity; extended family; tradition and rituals; community; respect for elders; decent dressing; tolerance; hospitality; peace and so on. These values must transcend our national boundary and film or movie is the right path that can help us achieve this aim. The emphasis here is that culture is condensed human experience; a set of values, ideas and norms expressed in varying categories which is both rooted in history and tradition; dynamic and changing; past as well as future. Some cultural expressions are passed on from one generation to the other such as traditional dresses, food, and folktales while others are being transformed through encounters with other cultures and through technical developments such as music and dramatic arts as well as through the media, including film.

### **Recommendations.**

Following the trend of all that is going on in the film industry, I thereby make the following recommendations:

1. The Igbo films censors commission should scrutinise films before they are sent out for viewing by the larger audience.

2. Script writers should always have at the back of their minds that Nigeria's cultural heritage should be foremost on their minds when they are writing any script.
3. Henceforth, village heads should be contacted to get actual story lines that would reflect their culture.
4. Producers should use film as a medium to first and foremost promote unity among Nigerian communities as they have done in very few films to reiterate our oneness in spite of our cultural, religious or ethnic differences.
5. The talents (actors and actresses) chosen should be compelled to dress and speak like real Nigerians.
6. Filmmakers should explore the lives of great African women who have made meaningful contributions to the success of the family and the country, and whose stories are both powerful and compelling to promote unity.
7. There should be an analysis and understanding of the Nigerian cultural life, cultural values and cultural needs and expectations of people.

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