



AN APPRAISAL OF THE DOMINANT DEPICTION OF WOMEN IN NIGERIA NOLLYWOOD MOVIES

JIMI Kayode; SALAU Jumoke; FOLARIN Florence

Faculty of Communication
Lagos State University, Ojo,
Lagos state, Nigeria.

Corresponding Author: adekitanolajumoke16@gmail.com
(+234)-8052168644

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ABSTRACT

This article looks at how female stereotypes are portrayed in Nigerian movies using a feminist critic point of view. It also identifies the most often used gender-stereotypical representations and ways of fighting the stereotyping for future movies. The article analyses how women are depicted in Nollywood movies and the method of combating the negative presentation of women, its implications and the way forward. This assessment revolves around Nigerian Nollywood movies. For this study, the quantitative research method via secondary data was adopted to collect necessary information for a period of 20 years (i.e. 2002-2022). Feminist cinema theory established the foundation for explaining the dominant depletion of women in movies. The paper reviewed and recognised the understudied efforts by many Nigerian actresses against women's stereotyping in the Nigerian film industry. This implies that a good number, if not most actresses, aid women's sexual objectification in Nollywood by accepting to play demeaning roles in films. This does not mean that all female actors in the industry are passive. While some actresses passively agree to play sexual roles, others do counter sexual objectification through overt or implicit resistance. The study concludes that encouraging positive portrayals of women in Nollywood movies is important. Only by altering the narrative tone of the film scripts can this be accomplished. This is a call for more women to work as scriptwriters and directors in Nollywood to create stories that adequately represent women and give them new roles and a voice.

Keywords: Dominant images, Film, Nollywood Movie, Representation, Women

1. Introduction

The Nigerian Movie Industry (Nollywood) is globally recognised as the second-largest movie producer in the world. The industry is a significant part of the Arts, Entertainment and Recreation Sector, contributing 2.3% (#239 billion) to Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2016. (PwC's Global Entertainment & Media Outlook 2017 – 2021). Nollywood was ranked as the world's second-largest movie industry by volume, behind India's Bollywood. With a high production capacity, the industry has enabled the spread of movies across Africa as well as to Africans in the diaspora.

There is no telling that the Nigerian movie Industry, popularly referred to as Nollywood, has emerged to become one of Africa's most famous film industries. Nollywood is the third largest film industry in the world, behind only Hollywood in America and Bollywood in India (Ekwuazi, 2007; Aromona, 2016; Kurfi & Dahiru, 2020). The means of production and consumption of Nollywood movies have undoubtedly gone a long way in redefining African Cinema. This is the ostensible reason why Nollywood keeps attracting the attention of film scholars and film critics across the globe (Kumwenda, 2007; Uchendu, 2012).

Unquestionably, the film is a mass communication medium, sometimes known as a movie, motion picture, theatrical film, or photoplay. It fulfils the tripartite roles of information, education, and entertainment as well-liked and trustworthy mass media (Ekwuazi, 2007; Kurki & Dahiru, 2020). The portrayal of faiths, civilisations, and ideologies in films as well as the teaching and indoctrination of residents in a nation all contribute to the creation of ideas and attitudes (Perkins, 2000; Ibrahim, 2013; Uzuegbunam & Ononiwu, 2018). The movie is an effective medium for communicating essential concepts, standards, and values to worldwide audiences, as Ibrahim (2013) noted. In support of this claim, Uzuegbunam & Ononiwu (2018) point out that critical eyes, ideologies, empathy, misunderstandings, beliefs, and stereotypes may all be exposed in a movie.

Depending on the person delivering the tale's attitude, philosophy, and objective, men and women are typically represented differently in movies. Dehchenari, Abdullah and Eng (2014) argued that gender generalisations in films are very influential, and they affect people's conceptualisation of men and women as well as establish social categories for both genders. Previous studies (Adamu, 2007; Dehchenari, Abdullah & Eng, 2014; Aromona, 2016; Afolabi & Oyero, 2017; Ibbi, 2017; Uzuegbuna & Ononiwu, 2018; Onyenkeya, Onyenkeya & Osunkunle, 2019; Kurfi & Dahiru,

2020) have also established the fact that negative presentation in movies have a significant impact on how people think about men and women and create societal categories for both genders.

Scholars (Okunna, 2006; Kumwenda, 2007; Aromona, 2016; Omatsola, 2016; Ibbi, 2017; Onyenankeya, Onyenankeya & Osunkunle 2019) argue that men, for instance, are generally depicted as competent, assertive, independent and achievement-oriented, whereas is the portrayal of women as weak, dependent, cheap, wicked, relationship-oriented and opportunist folks. Other representations of females include full-time homemakers, witches, prostitutes and objects of ritual and sexploitation by men (Aromona, 2016; Omatsola, 2016; Ibbi, 2017).

Debates have focused on how women are presented in movies for many years. The stereotypical image of women in films has been steadfastly contested by feminist academics, critics, and women's movements. Feminism has centuries-old origins that go back to mythical beings like Lilith, legendary Greek warrior women known as amazons, classical dramas, and even Nigerian culture. J. P. Clark's *The Wives Revolt*. Women have long fought for liberation from oppression and male dominance, equality of rights with men, and independence, and they are unwilling to give up this fight now.

Extant literature contend that deeply ingrained economic and cultural views gave women in society only limited positions (Uchendu, 2012). Most countries have restricted women's education to studying domestic skills due to the pervasive perception that women are cognitively inferior. Men from the upper classes with a good education dominated the workforce and held positions of authority. Women's dependence on men is heightened by traditional beliefs, conventions, and regulations limiting their roles and economic potential.

Socialisation teaches boys and girls a belief system that devalues women and instils a sense of female responsibility for the upkeep of the family, according to feminist researchers (Llewellyn Jones, 2002). Women typically accepted their inferior status as their only alternative since they lacked the economic and educational resources necessary to challenge the social order. The findings of numerous studies on how women are depicted in Nollywood films have also glaringly demonstrated that women are typically presented as wayward and of low moral standing, materialistic, lazy, dependent on and subservient to men, the root of family issues, and more suitable for domestic rather than professional and career roles, among other things (Okunna, 2006). Women are typically represented as "the weaker sex," less ambitious than men, sexual objects, and

wearing looking glasses to fulfil men's passionate gaze (Haskell, 1974). This critical stance may help to explain the inappropriate placement of half-naked and sexually explicit images of women in still and moving photographs in movies, music videos, and commercials for goods unrelated to women in Nigeria.

In Nollywood, stereotypical representations of female sexuality are common. Usain et al. (2017) observed in a study that Nollywood, the Nigerian film industry, has also come under fire for presenting women as sex objects, weak, cold-hearted, materialistic, vindictive, nasty, diabolical, and plotting (Onyenankeya et al. 2019). Against this backdrop, this study looks at how women are depicted in Nollywood movies and the method of combating the negative presentation of women, its implications and the way forward. This assessment revolves around Nigerian Nollywood movies. However, the theoretical approach is feminist film theory. The following research objectives were formulated for this study based on the problem statement:

- i. to describe the various ways the movie industry has portrayed the image of women in Nigeria;
- ii. to ascertain ways of fighting negative protesters of women in Hollywood movies;
- iii. to investigate the consequential effect of negative representation of women in Nigeria Nollywood movies; and
- iv. to present the way forward.

2. Literature Review

2.1 An Overview of Nollywood

Norimitsu Onishi, a journalist for the New York Times, first used the term "Nollywood" in 2002 after observing film production in Lagos, Nigeria. The phrase refers to two of the most well-known filmmaking hubs: Hollywood in the US and Bollywood in Bombay, India (Igwe, 2015). Nollywood is the term used to describe the Nigerian film industry, which is the second-largest after Bollywood in India. The term "Nollywood" is a combination of "Hollywood," the former hub of film production in the United States, and "Bollywood," the abbreviation for the Indian film industry (Foster, 2022). However, not all stakeholders agreed with the term "Nollywood."

Detractors claim that the term, which originated with people outside of Nigeria, has a connotation with the country's past as a colony of imperialist nations, and that it represents a further colonization of Nigeria (Foster, 2022). Others point out that the term "Nollywood" minimizes the accomplishments and cultural identity of the Nigerian film industry by implying that it is a carbon

copy of "Bollywood" and "Hollywood." According to a number of filmmakers, including Kunle Afolayan and Tunde Kelani, the term ignores a fruitful period in Nigerian cinema history that took place before the phrase first appeared in Western media in the 2000s. ” It is crucial to note that Nigeria has produced mainstream movies before the 1960s and 1970s (Okon, 2009).

The video film industry is an important private sector player in the Nigerian economy (Asemah & Edegoh, 2013). In a study conducted by Onuzulike (2007), cited in Usaini, Chilaka & Okorie (2017), it was discovered that “Nigerian films (Nollywood) are deeply rooted in the Nigerian cultural traditions and social texts that focus on Nigerian community life.” Quoting Owens-Ibie (1998), Chimbuto (2015) notes that “the history of film or cinema in Nigeria dates back to 1903 when the first motion pictures were reportedly screened for the first time in Lagos at the Glover Memorial Hall. The films screened at this time were imported from overseas.”

The influence and impact of Nollywood is far-reaching, including the African continent. In his doctoral thesis, Chimbuto (2015) posits that “Nollywood film industry is fast becoming social, cultural and economic phenomenon among Malawian audiences. Every year, Nollywood actors visit Malawi and some Malawi print media have columns dedicated to Nollywood. According to unofficial statistics carried out by this study, nine out of every ten film enthusiasts in Malawi’s rural areas are Nollywood fanatics and at least seven out of ten people in the urban areas frequently watch Nollywood films. The films are more popular than both Hollywood and Bollywood films.”

Esan (2008), using a sample of UK Nollywood viewers, conducted an audience study. Esan's research showed that (UK) viewers believed the (Nollywood) stories provided a connection to their cultural heritage. Esan (2008) made the case that the respondents thought Nollywood movies gave them a place to socialize. According to Nigeria's National Film & Video Censorship Board (2014), Nollywood has replaced agriculture and oil as the nation's third-largest economic contributor. It is debatable whether Nollywood can claim to have influenced how people talk about social and political issues (Chimbuto, 2015).

2.1 Portrayal of Women and Social Media

Concerns have long been raised about how women and girls are portrayed in the media. In almost all forms of mainstream media, there are significantly fewer women than men, according to research, and those that do appear are frequently portrayed in very stereotypical ways (Edegoh &

Asemah, 2013). The power of the media has increased in the modern world. In addition to informing and educating the public, the mass media plays a crucial role in forming people's opinions and framing their outlook on life. Through media exposure, perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs are cultivated (Aromona, 2016). The formation and evolution of social and cultural norms pertaining to women and gender are significantly influenced by the media (Sarikakis, 2013).

Feminists and advocates for gender and human rights frequently have important discussions about how women are represented in the media. Asemah, Edegoh, and Ojih (2013), citing Limpinnian (n.d.), noted that understanding what it means to be male or female has always depended on gender representation on a micro level. Studies have shown that traditionally, women are portrayed in advertising in stereotypical roles or in ways that don't always reflect reality, and they all demonstrated that women are never well represented (Matlin, 1987; Asemah et al 2013; Edegoh, Asemah & Okpanachi, 2013). With only a few exceptions, major media do not perform well in terms of gender representation worldwide.

Advocates are concerned that how women are portrayed and represented in the media has a direct impact on how women are perceived, even by women themselves. The stereotypical portrayal of women would diminish the advancements made by women if it were not moderated. According to Chapman (2011), media tries to minimize the value and worth of women. The African Training and Research Centre for Women (ECA) emphasized that depending on how they are portrayed, women can be discouraged from participating in development or encouraged to do so.

2.2 Discourse on the Portrayal of Women in Nollywood Movies

There are numerous movies that portray female sexuality in Nollywood. However, the majority of these movies portray female sexuality in stereotypical and contentious ways. Over the past two decades, there hasn't been a significant shift in how women are portrayed in Nollywood from the traditional preconceptions of their roles in society (Onyenankeya et al 2019). It's interesting to note that stereotypical and divisive representations of women in visual media are not limited to Nollywood. Smith, Choueiti, and Pieper (2015) proposed that both in developed and developing countries, controversial female sexuality portrayal is essentially the same. Given that gender consciousness has longer and deeper roots in developed countries and that women have more voices, faces, and presence in those environments, this is quite interesting. According to Davis

(2010), women are significantly underrepresented in nearly all spheres of society, not just on screen, but for the most part we are simply unaware of the extent to which media images have a significant impact on developing and maintaining our unconscious bias..

Through UNESCO's Policy Monitoring System, innovative policies and efforts resolving gender-based inequities in this area are now more easily discovered. For different cultural expressions to be produced and disseminated, it is necessary to respect fundamental freedoms and human rights, specifically gender equality. One of the 11 assessment aspects of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development's Goal 5 and UNESCO's 2005 Convention on the Preservation and Advancement of the Diversity of Cultural Forms is gender equality. With significant cultural, social, and economic weight, the movie industry is the creative enterprise with the highest profile. The movie is a potent channel that depicts and influences culture and society in many respects. Thus, diversity and equal representation are essential to the creative process of filmmaking if the cinematography is to portray the experiences and viewpoints of many social groups.

Over the past few decades, gender inequality and stereotyping in movies have drawn critical attention. Gender disparities in the industry have come to light more lately. According to UNESCO's 2018 Global Report "Re|Shaping Cultural Policies," women confront significant gender pay discrepancies, are significantly marginalized in the profession, and have less access to resources. Only 1 in 5 movies are directed by women in Europe, according to data provided in the paper, and only 16% of funding goes to these films. Further, a pan-European survey (European Women's Audiovisual Network, 2016) finds a considerable underrepresentation of women in important creative roles, such as directing, even though nearly equally as many women and men obtain a degree from film schools.

A comprehensive assessment of the Nollywood film industry and the movies produced reveals that women have always been portrayed in a way that significantly emphasizes male chauvinism and patriarchy. For instance, Aromona (2016) discovered that there has not been a change in the conventional way that women are portrayed in the business after researching the representation of African women in Nollywood films over five years. The depictions of women in Nigeria and African films for a long time has been embarked upon by male producers and directors for the singular reason that as in every other sphere of human endeavour, men were at the centre stage while woman remained in the fringes (Asemah, Nwammuo, & Uwaoma 2017). Although the

prominence women were gaining after years of concerted efforts of feminist movements, women presently are beginning to speak for, and on behalf of fellow women.

In Africa, a woman is recognized first by her status in her family and community before she is recognized for who she is as an individual. This is always reflected in videos because; like Christine Odi says (2012) “Every art form mirrors the society that produces it” To this extent, Nollywood movies propel themes existing within Nigerian Society. Doki (2012) Says women are presented as trivial beings whose only concern is with unsophisticated and domestic aspects of life. Doki says the import of the expose on this is to show how the female gender has been so repressed and short-changed image-wise. According to Asabe Kabir and Aisha Umar (2012), the depictions of women tend to have a relationship with the social constructions of society especially that which supports patriarchy. To this, most film producers make films in line with a male domineering status that is traced to patriarchy (Anaza 2019).

Onyenankeya, Onyenankeya, and Osunkunle's (2019) in-depth analysis of Nollywood films shot over two decades (1997-2016) indicated that there hasn't been much of a change in how women are stereotypically depicted in the films, supporting Aromona's conclusion. Women were primarily represented throughout the aforementioned time as sexual objects, wicked, weaker weasel and tools for ritualists In the movies, the way female characters were treated and clothed was an example of sexual objectification. According to 2015 research by the Geena Davis Institute on Gender and Media, female characters in Nollywood movies are more likely to be portrayed as prostitutes than their male counterparts and frequently wear scant clothing.

The portrayal of gender representation in movies has been demonstrated and proven in earlier research (Dehchenari, Abdullah, & Eng, 2014; Aromona, 2016; Afolabi & Oyero, 2017; Ibbi, 2017; Uzuegbuna & Ononiwu, 2018; Okafor, 2018; Onyenankeya, Onyenankeya & Osunkunle, 2019; Kurfi & Dahiru, 2020), For example, males are typically portrayed as capable, forceful, independent, and goal-oriented, whereas women are typically seen as gregarious, warm, subdued, wicked, interdependent, and relationship-focused (Langford & Mackinnon, 2000; Dehchenari, Abdullah & Eng, 2014; Aromona, 2016).

In both overt and covert ways, sexism, sexual pleasure, and objectification were weaved throughout the films that were released at the time (Brock, 2009; Onyenankeya, Onyenankeya &

Osunkunle, 2019). Another way that Nigerian women were represented in these movies was as spouses or homemakers—neither more nor less, of course. According to Onyenankeya, Onyenankeya, and Osunkunle (2019), the female characters portrayed in these Nollywood movies were happy ladies whose main life goal was to have children. As long as the women maintained their image as unambitious housewives, they were seen as decent and obedient partners. However, the women were seen negatively and irresponsibly when they decided to be ambitious and establish themselves in their different industries. Okuyade (2011) refers to the well-known Nollywood film *End of the Wicked* while describing this situation in great detail. He emphasized that the dependent lady, whose happiness could only be related to her need to score a appearance in the movie.

Women were also frequently presented as helpless and dependent people. According to Olupohunda (2013), women in Nollywood movies were frequently at the mercy of the males who predominated the culture in such movies. As a result, these women risk being kicked, stomped on, raped, and hurt. Contrarily, they were often reminded that their accomplishment was nothing unless they complied with the societal construct of good women in their personal life in situations where the films supported the advancement achieved by women in the political or economic sphere (Abbah 2008. According to Duru (2013) and Onyenankeya, Onyenankeya & Osunkunle (2019), when women were portrayed as independent people or feminists, they were portrayed as materialistic and self-centred, while men were typically portrayed as heroes who freed the community from the control of these liberated women. Women were frequently portrayed as the "quiet ones" as well. They were represented as people who could be seen but never heard and were muffled. Therefore, the men surrounding them frequently questioned their deeds and inactions. Of course, this portrayal stood in stark contrast to that of men, who were frequently shown to be brave, forceful, and daring (Oyinade, Babatunde, Daramola, Ifedayo, Ishola, & Lamidi 2013)Lamidi.

Women were also characterized as evil, cunning, and very dangerous people. Every time women were portrayed in positions of authority, whether in business or politics, this portrayal was brought to light. According to Duru (2013), Okafor (2018), Ending, Floribert Patrick (2020), strong women are frequently viewed as treacherous, vicious, and dangerous individuals. The academics also noted that because these women dared to succeed, they consistently faced some sort of backlash from the males. As a result, being strong always had drawbacks for female characters, such as losing their beauty, families, or even their lives in some circumstances (Ukata, 2010). Therefore, Nollywood movies implied that women's access to authority was exceedingly deplorable.

However, this kind of maligning of womanhood did not stop but was augmented through negative representations. In most Nigerian films, women are portrayed as home breakers, prostitutes, materialists, victims of poverty, and evil-doers. This type of representation is not restricted to films produced by men in Nigeria; even those produced by women situate women in such ominous positions. Women are suppressed and maligned within the film industry; they play secretaries, prop girls, odd-job girls, receptionists, and similar characters. They are oppressed by being packaged as images (sex objects, victims, or vampires) and they are oppressed within film theory by male critics who celebrate auteurs (Endong, Floribert & Patrick, 2019).

2.3 Theoretical Justification

Feminist film theory serves as the foundation for this paper. Feminism is, by definition, a political and sociological movement that works to advance women's rights. Many writers link the phrase to themes like women's rights protests or patriarchal movements for women's independence (Doane 1987). The phrase should instead be understood to mean "belief in and promotion of equal rights for women based on the principle of the equality of sexes" (McAfee, 2018). Demonstrations or campaigns against male dominance need not accompany them. Following this reasoning, Afam (1996) defines feminism as a condition where women express their opinions in non-censored media, politics, culture, and communication. The key, according to him, is that what the women say "represents their own honest, realistic, and constructive perception of order and stability in the community, not necessarily if it is drastically opposite to existing standards" (Anaza 2019).

Feminist film theory emerged in the 1970s and is rooted in the women's movement of the 1960s. The central discourse of the feminists involves how film texts are worked and constructed to impose patriarchal ideology on females. The feminine discourse and gender inequality in movies are the main concerns of feminist cinema theory proponents. Feminist film theory, as a theory of cinema, is opposed to women's secondary and humiliating representation in cinematic texts. Studies that support this notion typically criticize the sexual objectification of women in movies, especially those that are patriarchy-inspired. The theory is based primarily on two tenets. First, it criticizes the classical film for its stereotypical representations of women using ideas from the Marxist critique of ideology, deconstruction, psychoanalysis, and semiotics. Besides, it makes the case that film creates meanings regarding sexual differences and sexuality, arguing that it is more than just a mirror of social interactions. According to feminist film academics, movies typically

depict women as passive sex objects or clichés, such as femme Fatales or housewives (Freeland 2012, Guilluy 2018). Cinema egregiously distorts reality by reiterating these preconceptions, socializing women to accept their lower standing in society.

Feminist film researchers demand an end to the misrepresentation and sexist depictions of women in film, using the aforementioned argument as their foundation. However, the desire of the female to counter and criticize the mainstream cinema while advocating alternative cinema and filmmaking in which women were given favourable, active, and leading roles as the main protagonists led to the birth of feminist film discourses. Additionally, in their bid to counter the masculine-oriented cinema, feminists even delved into criticism of the mainstream media representation of women, such as in television programmes, newspapers and magazines (Hollinger, 2012) cited in Abubakar (2014).

Ngomba maintains that the primary intention of feminist films is to understand how women are represented in film, expose the sexist and women-centred content of cinema narratives, and reveal the media description of women as sexual objects for men's pleasure (Ngomba. 2016). Feminists in film studies are also concerned about the sexist image of women in the works men produce, which led to the coining of the term 'sexual difference (Anneke & Smelik. 2016).' Feminist studies have focused on establishing a female aesthetic independent of the cultural norms and values set by men (Buikema, 1995). Nevertheless, Haskell (1973) and Rosen (1993) reveal that feminist arguments on films are about representation and spectatorship, the stereotypes of women in cinema, and the distortion of women's images from reality.

Moreover, feminists are accusing the media, scriptwriters and film producers of misrepresenting women, stereotypically portraying them, denigrating them, and always showing them in the home as subordinate to men (Nelmes, 2007). Women must be shown in a variety of roles; they should be depicted as heroines, not only in the roles of loving a man, homemaking, and bearing children. Women should be represented as active. They should not face ridicule or unhappy or tragic endings; women should be given high positions and depicted in adventures that do not centre on sexual attraction for a man or on working with other women without cattiness (Anneke & Smelik. 2016).

Additionally, Claire Johnson, in her paper “Women Cinema, a Counter Cinema,” showed how women had been portrayed in films since the days of silent cinema. Women are always seen as an extension of a man. Thus, she castigated the narrow roles women have been given in films (Nelmes, 2007). The way women are depicted in films is the way society treats them. These depictions are false and distorted; hence, they should be changed (Hill & Church, 2012). If the cinema reinforces the social reality, feminists must first change the societal perceptions of women and the way they are treated, starting from the grassroots rather than attacking the male auteur to the extent of deconstructing the cinema contents concerning female representations.

3. Methodology

For this study, the quantitative research method via secondary data was adopted to collect necessary information for a period of 20 years (i.e. 2002-2022). Table 1 describes the results of the search. The use of systematic review was adopted and justified since it provides thorough and reliable information about the current phenomena (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study population comprised journal articles within the subject areas of an image representation of women in movies, implications, and combating negative depiction of women in movies. Only journals that are in respected printing outlets such as Sage Publications, Elsevier Publications, Springer, Allied Academies Publications, Nature Publications, Academy of Management Publications, and Taylor & Francis Publications will be chosen for this study, as demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1: No of Selected Publications

SN	Publisher	No of Papers Assessed for Eligibility [N=60]	No of Papers Selected for Qualitative Synthesis [N=42]
1	Elsevier Publications	10	7
2	Sage Publications	13	9
3	Springer Nature	16	12
4	Taylor & Francis Publications	9	6
5	Allied Academies Publications	7	5
6	Routledge Publications	5	3
Total		60	42

4. Analysis and Discussions

4.1 Objective 1: *Uncover the various ways of image presentations of women in Nigeria movie industry*

In addition to being eroticized, Nollywood actresses are also portrayed unfavourably. In accordance with this, observers have called attention to harmful stereotypes that are frequently employed to depict women in Nollywood films, including Anaza (2019), Endong (2019), Ibby (2017), Okafor (2018), O'Lekam (2017), and Aje-Ori (2012), among others. These consist of:

- i. **Submissive Wife/Dependence housewife:** Women are consigned to the background in most social institutions in a largely patriarchal nation like Nigeria (Ogege 2011). They are frequently seen as things as well as creatures that are beneath the man. They are viewed as sex objects, in particular, due to widespread misconceptions. In many Nigerian cultures, women should be kept out of positions of authority and public life. They should stay at home, preferably in the kitchen. While their husbands can work, they must raise and care for the children (Ogege 2011, Oyinade, Daramola & Ishola 2013). Women also owe their husbands flawless, reliable obedience. In certain cultures, they must maintain their virginity until marriage to gain the respect of their society and have no right to inherit landed property. Accordingly, a variety of rules and regulations are implemented to encourage virginity among women only before marriage (Makama 2013). Other widely held notions in Nigerian culture show women as a man's property and as creatures that live primarily for sexual gratification—a man who may or may not be her spouse. According to all these widely held notions, Nollywood movies frequently feature sexually objectified and inaccurate portrayals of women.
- ii. **Emotional Beings** This shows women as highly emotional beings whose main life goal is to find a husband. This common notion holds that a woman will employ black magic and seduction to win a man's heart (Chika 2012). According to a related myth, a woman's primary purpose in life is to please her husband and demonstrate her femininity by bearing children, especially boys. Also, girls aren't seen as being as prominent as their male counterparts. Her education is less crucial than the boy's child (Chika 2012, Ifemeje & Ikpeze 2012). As a result, the male kid is highlighted. Other widely held notions in Nigerian culture depict women as a man's property and as creatures that live primarily for sexual

- gratification—a man who may or may not be her spouse. According to all these widely held notions, Nollywood movies frequently feature inaccurate portrayals of women.
- iii. **Wicked stepmother:** an evil stepmother is an awful person. She is rude, wicked, crafty, terrible, cunning, conniving, and selfish.
 - iv. **The female fatale,** an inherently lethal lady. She is quite gorgeous by Nigerian society's standards for beauty. She also uses her sexuality as a weapon against men or to further her selfish interests.
 - v. **Domestic worker** who supports men provide a range of services in their homes; they sweep and clean; wash clothes and dishes; shop and cook; care for children and the elderly.
 - vi. **Obedient wife/dependent housewife:** She is devoted and uses all the tools at her disposal to help her spouse succeed in life.
 - vii. **Object:** Women are presented as being utilised by their parents or guardians for their selfish ends as the object of bartering. It depicts a girl who is taken advantage of by her parents or guardians for them to get out of some terrible circumstances.
 - viii. **Ritual tools:** The symbolic representation of women as tools employed by powerful people or cults as sacrificed lambs in pursuing wealth or power. For instance, this conception may be seen in Kenneth Kebue's 1996 film *Living in Bondage*, which catalysed the Nollywood cinematic movement.
 - ix. **Sex exploitation:** which is a stereotype used to portray women as people who powerful men sexually exploit. It usually takes the form of a lecturer who exploits his female students or a boss who pressurises or lures his house girl into unwanted sex. The witch is used to represent women (ancient ones) as beings bent on frustrating their neighbours' plans through mystical powers. The prostitute, who is typically a city girl, uses her body as a means of helping affluent men advance economically and socially. The second option is a stereotype that portrays women as less valuable than their male counterparts. This frequently manifests as a young girl being denied opportunities for school, inheritance, or even life to favour her brothers. Women are thus frequently stereotyped in Nollywood movies. The fact that males predominately control women's presence in the film business emphasises this stereotype. While Nollywood places African representation in African hands, Anaza (2019) correctly notes that "those hands are usually male, and it's evident. Female actors frequently play demeaning or sexual roles in Nollywood films as a result of

the male dominance of the industry and gender stereotypes. As was already noted, it is sometimes asserted that by accepting such positions, women actively contribute to being sexual objects. It has also been stated that the adoption of such humiliating parts by Nollywood actresses demonstrates how well Nigerians' worldviews have been socialised into their acceptance of seeing no harm in being the spectacle in a movie set.

4.2 Objective 2: *Ways of combating negative misrepresentation of women in Nigeria Nollywood movies*

Based on the review of the selected articles, the following strategies are presented as ways of combating negative misrepresentation of women in Nigeria Nollywood women.

- i. **Refusal of Disparaging Roles:** It will be helpful to define "degrading roles" precisely before discussing how Nollywood actresses reject demeaning roles. The phrase "demeaning roles" refers to roles that denigrate women and objectify them sexually. They include sex and naked acting for scenes and movies whose respective meanings may be conveyed without sex or nudity. As several writers have pointed out, it is important to distinguish between acceptable and gratuitous female nudity. The former is essential for conveying the filmmaker's message, but the latter is optional and is most frequently employed to sexualize the movie either subtly or overtly. The intention of the author, screenwriter, producers or director to infuse their picture with soft-core or hard-core porn and, in turn, draw spectators is primarily what drives gratuitous nudity and sex scene/roles. This is consistent with the widely held yet unhelpful notion that sex sells any movie. Nollywood actress Moet Abebe emphasizes the distinction between elegant nudity, which is essential, and gratuitous nudity, a site of women's objectification in movies. According to her, the length of time each kind is permitted to appear in a sequence and the script's decency differentiates the two sorts. She claims that a movie is pornographic and insulting to women when it is mostly or solely about sex. In the meantime, sex stops being objectifying or a venue for stereotyping women when it is used to advance the plot and the characters as well as a means of expressing a particular meaning.
- ii. **Nollywood Actresses' Opposition to Women's negative representation:** The fact that a significant portion, if not the majority, of Nollywood's female performers, participate in the sexual objectification of women does not imply that all of them are indifferent to it.

While some actresses passively accept to perform sexual parts, others actively or subtly fight sexualization. Such opposition has expressed itself in a variety of cinematic productions and has taken many different shapes. Three strategies— rejecting humiliating parts, producing the feminine feminist films, and the propensity to ask for the same terrible roles for men—are discussed as ways to combat sexual objectification in Nollywood.

- iii. **Taking Directing Career and unifying the Feminist Cinema:** By supporting the feminist film paradigm, Nollywood actresses have taken on the industry's tendency to view them as sexual objects. A handful of actresses have transitioned to directing and created movies that quietly refute stereotypical or objectifying views of women. One example is Genevieve Naji, who 2018 directed the feminist film *Lion's Heart*. The female director of this movie gives women not just the essential parts. Still, she also manipulates her narrative to imply that the stereotypes of women in Nollywood, such as the "femme fatale," "gold digger," "housewife," "the prostitute," and "second choice," are unfounded. Adaeze, a young woman, is forced to take over the management of her father's transportation business, "LionHeart," in the movie. Out of love and respect, her father picks her above her brother and entrusts her with the task of managing the family company. The transport company is on the verge of bankruptcy because of a variety of factors. Adaeze succeeds in creating the finest solutions to the enterprise's concerns. She stunningly revives the firm, showing that Nigerian women in business management may be as competent, if not better, than men. As a result, Genevieve Nnaji's portrayal of the lead character in the movie serves as a metaphor for the "manly" woman. In the film, Adaeze is obliged to work with her uncle not as a subaltern but as a partner with her uncle. She encounters sexual harassment in some scenes, develops feelings for a man outside of her Igbo tribe, and is forced to deal with several challenges typical of Nigerian women. However, the plot of the movie purposefully shuns negative preconceptions about women and typical Nollywood cliches. The emphasis on typical stereotypes like the desperate desire of women to marry or their need to be fertile to gain their husbands' respect and love is avoided.
- iv. **Offering the Same Degrading Roles for Men:** Sexual objectification is typically based on the extent to which the "denial of personhood" and portrayal of actors as sex objects is sex-biased or gendered. In accordance with this, Downs, Shaan, and Cowan (2006) define women's sexual objectification as a situation in which they are required to dress and behave

in a very sexual manner. Still, their male counterparts are exempt from such demeaning treatment or roles. The exclusive attribution of sexual roles to women in contexts of actor casting or film production is also frequently criticized by feminist commentators. There is a higher likelihood that breasts and female butts will be displayed or used as bait in typical sex or nudity scenes than penises. In light of this, some experts argue that scriptwriters and film directors shouldn't discriminate based on gender when it comes to the eroticization of their characters or performers to combat this sexual objectification of women. This claim is made in the 2016 online tabloid *Girl Talk*. It analyzes a number of female Hollywood actors who promote the notion of balancing out sexually objectifying moments based on gender.

4.3 Objective 3: *Implication of negative representation of women in Nigeria Nollywood movie*

Unbalanced gender portrayal is pervasive, according to Ann, Huma, Erika, and Evie's (2015) research. Stereotypes are frequently used in daily media. A common stereotype of women is that they are only good at taking care of the home and family, are dependent on men, or are objects of male attention. Women's expectations of themselves and the attitudes of society as a whole will be constrained to these roles if women are only depicted in traditional roles in the media. Unbalanced gender portrayal is pervasive, according to Ann, Huma, Erika, and Evie's (2015) research. Stereotypes are frequently used in daily media. A common stereotype of women is that they are only good at taking care of the home and family, are dependent on men, or are objects of male attention. Women's expectations of themselves and the attitudes of society as a whole will be constrained to these roles if women are only depicted in traditional roles in the media and Nollywood movies.

Participants in a focus group discussion in a study by Okunna (2002), which was cited by Ojiakor et al (2018), unanimously agreed that negative and unrealistic portrayals of women are capable of adversely affecting people's perceptions of women and behaviors toward them. The researcher deduced from the data that these films will only serve to subjugate women by fostering distrust among women, fostering men's contempt for women, undermining women's self-confidence, and bolstering the forces that push women to the margins in this patriarchal society. Women's contributions to national development are negatively impacted by how they are portrayed and represented (Usaini et al 2017). Media sexism and stereotypes harm women as citizens and infringe on their human rights (Sarikakis, 2013).

Men are frequently portrayed as leaders, tyrants, and prosperous businessmen in Nollywood films. Contrarily, women are typically depicted in domestic contexts where their responsibilities are limited to that of mothers, daughters, brides, housewives, and other similar positions. Even in a few films where the female character is given a somewhat "masculine" job or a place in a position of power, it is still planned such that she must submit to a male boss higher up or to a husband who rules over her. This gives the girl the notion that her future is limited to this. Her mind has been trained to accept it and even relish it. The direct and indirect messages that contemporary Nollywood films may convey should be considered and not ignored.

Few institutions in our lives likely have a greater impact on us than the media. They are so close to invading us. There is no doubt that media have ingrained themselves into our lives, and we will never be able to change that. We will be impacted by media for the rest of our lives (West & Turner, 2010). Whether we are aware of it or not, what we read, see, and hear in the media affects us, according to Matthiesen-Jones (2021). A person's perceptions are strongly and overwhelmingly influenced by the media (Cheng, Mitomo, Otsuka & Jeon, 2015). Further, West & Turner (2010) assert that television and other media have a significant impact on how people perceive the world.

The majority of people in today's society get their information from media sources rather than from personal experience. As a result, mediated sources can influence how a person perceives reality. According to Amobi (2013), Nollywood movies are one of the main media platforms where women are becoming more visible. According to the opinions of academics whose work was reviewed in this article, mass media, in all of its manifestations, has some impact on public perception, knowledge, and opinion. This further supports the idea that Nollywood's stereotypical portrayal of women influences how society views women.

Aromona (2018) asserts that despite Nollywood's growing popularity and visibility, its depictions of gender inequality and patriarchy continue to be present in the films. Nollywood movies create images that further reduce women to roles of domesticity and subservience. Viewers develop ideas that women should be inferior and less ambitious than their male counterparts and that they should only be evaluated on their capacity to manage their homes and marriages as a result of exposure to these movies. As a result, these movies uphold social and cultural expectations. Many academics concurred that media and Nollywood have the power to shape perceptions and narratives about the portrayal of women in movies.

4.4 Objective 4: Way Forward

As Asemah, Nwammuo and Uwaoma (2017) claimed, there should be a policy to address gender misinterpretations and furnished information against assertions frequently put forward as barriers to gender parity. Various initiatives have to be set up to contradict gender stereotypes to make female movie-makers in Nigeria more prominent, and programmes that can help women movie-makers acquire leadership strategies and career techniques. This policy should acknowledge and facilitate women's contributions to cultural existence, vigorously promoting the execution of Goal 4 of SDG 5 on women empowerment.

The Nigerian Video and Film Censors Board screens the contents of Nollywood movies and must ensure that only the acceptable Nigerian/African cultural values - in content and costuming are retained. Movie producers and directors should always strive to edit their movies and ensure that the negative presentation of women characters is balanced or curtailed. To achieve this, promoting a good portrayal of women in Nollywood movies is important. This can be made possible by altering the narrative structure of the film scripts in the production of Nollywood movies. This pleases more women to work as directors and scriptwriters to create stories that properly offer women new roles, voices, and appropriate representation in Nollywood movies.

As stated in the Global Report by Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "We must build a society where a woman is as eligible as a male to be a decision maker. We need to establish a culture where seeing movies with female writers, directors, and producers is normal and accepted. In creating art and telling stories, women must be personified in a multi-faceted and dynamic manner that showcases and honours the plethora of female experiences.

5. Conclusion

As long as women are still portrayed in stereotypical and outdated ways, there is still much room for improvement in how Nollywood portrays female sexuality. The discourse makes it clear that this inaccurate representation of female sexuality forces harmful gender inequality on women. Therefore, the researchers conclude that the sooner stereotypical portrayals of women are recognized as a national issue and swiftly addressed, the better it will be for society. The study serves as a reminder of the crucial roles that the media play in assisting women and girls in realizing their full potential. This paper concludes that workshops and conferences should be used to strengthen the orientation, skill, and capacity of Nollywood movie producers on balanced female

sexuality portrayal. To ensure that the films' contents are current, objective, and sensitive to gender and sexuality, peer reviews of the films should be conducted with gender experts. Finally, those who advocate for gender equality and feminists should create or support the creation of Nollywood films that support themes of positive female sexuality or who champion women and he-for-she role models in crucial areas of filmmaking, such as scriptwriting, directing, and producing.

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