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THE REPRESENTATION OF ETHNICITY AND GENDER STEREOTYPES IN THE IGBA BOI APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM: A CASE STUDY OF THE MOVIE "AFAMEFUNA"

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Abstract:

This study examines the representation of ethnicity and gender stereotypes in the Igba Boi apprenticeship system in the Nigerian film "Afamefuna." Using a mixed-method approach, the research analyzes audience perceptions and the film's impact on cultural understanding. Findings reveal that "Afamefuna" both reinforces and challenges existing stereotypes, adhering to traditional patriarchal norms while serving as a tool for cultural preservation and education. A generational shift in interpretation was observed, with younger viewers demonstrating a more critical approach to ethnic and gender portrayals. The film significantly influences viewer perceptions of the Igba Boi system, enhancing understanding and appreciation. However, persistent stereotypes highlight the need for critical engagement with media representations.

Keywords: Igba Boi, Apprenticeship, Nollywood, Ethnicity, Gender stereotypes, Cultural representation.

Introduction

The Nigerian film industry, popularly known as Nollywood, has grown tremendously since its inception in the early 1990s. It's now recognized as one of the largest film industries globally, producing hundreds of movies annually. These films often reflect various aspects of Nigerian culture, traditions, and social systems. One such system that has gained attention in recent Nollywood productions is the Igba Boi apprenticeship. This traditional practice, deeply rooted in Igbo culture, involves a young person (usually male) learning a trade under the guidance of an established businessman. Obinze (2019) describes it as "a socio-economic arrangement that has shaped the business landscape of southeastern Nigeria for generations." The representation of this system in Nollywood films has sparked debates about the portrayal of ethnicity and gender roles. Many scholars argue that these depictions often reinforce existing stereotypes. According to Nwosu (2019), "Nollywood's portrayal of cultural practices like Igba Boi can significantly influence public perception and perpetuate societal norms."

Nwosu (2018) notes that "the Igba Boi system goes beyond mere skill acquisition and it instills values of hard work, discipline, and financial management." This holistic approach to business education has contributed to the entrepreneurial success often associated with Igbo communities. However, the system is not without its challenges. Eze (2020) points out that "the informal nature of the Igba Boi system can sometimes lead to exploitation of apprentices." This highlights the need for more structured regulation of the practice. In recent years, the Igba Boi system has faced pressure from modernization. Okorie (2021) observes that "formal education and changing social norms are altering the traditional apprenticeship landscape." Despite these challenges, the system continues to play a significant role in Igbo economic life.

Nollywood's depiction of ethnic practices often walks a fine line between cultural celebration and stereotype reinforcement." This delicate balance presents challenges for filmmakers and audiences alike. The industry's portrayal of ethnic groups can shape public perceptions and

influence intercultural relations (Nwosu (2018). Igbo characters in Nollywood films frequently appear as successful traders or businesspeople. While this representation aligns with certain cultural realities, it may oversimplify the complexity of Igbo identity. Okorie (2020) notes, "The persistent portrayal of Igbos as primarily business-oriented can lead to a one-dimensional view of the ethnic group." On the flip side, some filmmakers strive for more nuanced representations and Eze (2019) observes a trend towards "more complex depictions of ethnic identities, moving beyond surface-level cultural markers." These efforts aim to provide a more authentic portrayal of Nigeria's ethnic diversity.

Literature Review

In the context of media studies, Social Representation Theory offers insights into how films like "Afamefuna" may shape public understanding of cultural practices such as the Igba Boi system. According to Howarth (2016) explains, "Social representations are not static mental structures but dynamic processes of collective meaning-making." This dynamic nature allows for the evolution of social representations over time, reflecting changes in societal attitudes and beliefs. Nwosu (2019) suggests that "media representations can reinforce, challenge, or transform existing social representations of cultural phenomena." Social Representation Theory provides a valuable lens for analyzing how "Afamefuna" constructs and communicates ideas about the Igba Boi system and Igbo culture. It allows for a nuanced examination of the interplay between media representations and societal perceptions of ethnicity and gender in the context of traditional apprenticeship practices. The theory suggests that heavy exposure to media content can shape viewers' understanding of social reality. Morgan (2015) note, "Cultivation analysis examines the independent contributions of television viewing to viewers' conceptions of social reality." This perspective highlights the potential of repeated media exposure to influence beliefs and attitudes over time. The theory also considers the cumulative effect of media consumption.

Nwosu (2018) suggests that "the more time people spend watching Nollywood films, the more likely they are to perceive social reality in ways that reflect the most common and recurrent messages of the film world."

Consequently, Okorie (2020) notes that female characters in Nollywood films are often relegated to supporting roles, reinforcing traditional gender expectations, this trend extends to the portrayal of business practices, where women are frequently underrepresented or depicted in stereotypical roles. Similarly, Nwosu (2019) observes that "male characters in Nollywood often embody traditional notions of masculinity, which can limit the exploration of diverse male experiences. Additionally, Eze (2021) suggests that "Nollywood films serve as a powerful tool for cultural transmission, influencing viewers' understanding of Nigerian traditions and social norms." This impact extends to the portrayal of systems like Igba Boi, potentially shaping public perception of these practices. However, commercial pressures can lead to sensationalized portrayals. Okorie (2021) argues that "some films exaggerate or misrepresent traditional practices for dramatic effect. Hence, this study aimed to determine the Representation of Ethnicity and Gender Stereotypes in the Igba Boi Apprenticeship System: A Case Study of the Movie "Afamefuna"

Study Objectives

- To analyze audience perception of the representation of ethnicity and gender stereotypes in the movie Afamefuna.
- To determine if younger audiences develop interest in the Igba Boi apprenticeship system after viewing the movie.
- To assess whether the movie Afamefuna provides an appropriate representation of the Igba Boi apprenticeship tradition.
- To assess the movie's portrayal of gender dynamics and patriarchal norms associated with Igba Boi.

Research Questions

- How do audiences perceive the representation of ethnicity and gender stereotypes in Afamefuna?
- To what extent does Afamefuna spark interest in the Igba Boi apprenticeship system among younger audiences?
- How accurately does Afamefuna represent the Igba Boi apprenticeship tradition?
- How does Afamefuna portray gender dynamics and patriarchal norms associated with Igba Boi?

Method

Study Design

This study employs a mixed-method research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the representation of ethnicity and gender stereotypes in the Igba Boi apprenticeship system as portrayed in the movie "Afamefuna." The quantitative component involves a content analysis of "Afamefuna." Qualitatively, the study incorporates semi-structured interviews with film critics, cultural experts, and members of the Igbo community.

Population

The study population for this research comprises viewers of the Nollywood film "Afamefuna" and individuals familiar with the Igba Boi apprenticeship system in southeastern Nigeria. The primary focus is on Igbo individuals residing in the five southeastern states of Nigeria: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo. These states form the core of Igboland and are where the Igba Boi system is most prevalent.

Sampling Technique

This study employed a purposive sampling technique to select participants familiar with both the Igba Boi system and the film "Afamefuna." The sample size was determined to be 200 respondents but only 189 respondents correctly filled the study instrument. The sampling procedure involved two stages. First, potential participants were identified through local community organizations, film viewing clubs, and social media groups focused on Nollywood cinema. This approach allowed for targeted recruitment of individuals likely to have knowledge of both the Igba Boi system and "Afamefuna."

Results

Demographic Information of Respondents

The study collected data from a total of 189 respondents. The demographic breakdown reveals a diverse sample population. Table 1 presents the key demographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics

Variables under consideration		**Frequency (f)**	**Percentage (%)**
Gender	Male	102	54%
	Female	87	46%
Age (in groups)	18 - 25	58	30.7%
	26 - 35	73	38.6%
	36 - 45	41	21.7%
	46+	17	09%
Educational Status	Secondary	45	23.8%
	Tertiary	144	76.2%
Familiarity with Igba Boi System	Familiar	85	45%
	Somewhat Familiar	57	30%
	No Prior Knowledge	47	25%

There is a slight male predominance in the gender distribution, with 54% of respondents being male and 46% being female. An audience that is primarily made up of young adults is shown by the age distribution, with 69.3% of respondents being under 35. According to information on respondents' educational backgrounds, a sizable majority of them (76.2%) had postsecondary education. About half of the respondents knew nothing at all about Igba Boi, 30% knew a little bit about it, and 25% had very little prior information. Analysis of the movie's effects on perceptions at various levels of cultural awareness is made possible by this spread. The majorities of respondents 75 percent agree or strongly agree that the movie depicts Igbo culture authentically. This implies that "Afamefuna" connects with the way that viewers perceive Igbo customs. Regarding gender representation, 65% of respondents agree or strongly agree that the gender roles portrayed in the film reflect reality.

Research Question 1: How do audiences perceive the representation of ethnicity and gender stereotypes in Afamefuna?

Table 2: Perception of Respondents on Representation on how the film portrays Igbo culture

Variables under consideration	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Viewer Perceptions of the Film's Accuracy in Representing Igbo Culture	35	40	15	08	02
Viewer Perceptions of how the Gender Roles in the Film Reflect Reality	28	37	20	12	03
Viewer Perceptions of how the Film Challenges Ethnic Stereotypes	18	25	30	20	07
Audience Perception of Ethnic Representation on	35	42	13	8	2

how the film portrays Igbo culture accurately					
Audience Perception of Ethnic Representation on how Igbo characters are depicted stereotypically	18	25	30	20	7
Audience Perception of Ethnic Representation on how the film challenges ethnic stereotypes	15	22	33	23	7
Audience Perception of Gender Representation basically on how the film accurately depicts gender roles in Igbo culture	28	37	20	12	3
Audience Perception of Gender Representation basically on how the Female Characters are Given Equal Importance	10	18	25	32	15
Audience Perception of Gender Representation basically on how the Film Challenges Traditional Gender Norms	8	15	30	35	12

The analysis of audience perception regarding ethnicity and gender stereotypes in "Afamefuna" revealed complex and nuanced viewpoints. Respondents showed varying levels of awareness and critical engagement with the film's portrayal of Igbo culture and gender roles within the Igba Boi system. Table 2 summarizes the key findings on ethnic representation: majority of respondents (77%) agreed that the film portrays Igbo culture accurately. 65% of respondents agreed that the film accurately depicts gender roles in Igbo culture, only 28% felt that female characters were given equal importance. Interestingly, younger respondents (18-25) were more likely to perceive the film as challenging traditional gender norms compared to older age groups.

Research Question 2: To what extent does Afamefuna spark interest in the Igba Boi apprenticeship system among younger audiences?

Table 3 Impact on Younger Audiences' Interest in Igba Boi

Statement	**Pre-viewing**	**Post-viewing**	**Change**
Familiar with Igba Boi system	35%	92%	+57%
Interested in learning more about Igba Boi	28%	75%	+47%
Considered Igba Boi relevant to modern society	40%	68%	+28%
Willing to participate in Igba Boi-like program	15%	45%	+30%
Total	**100**		

The data in Table 3 indicates that familiarity with the system increased by 57%, while interest in learning more about it grew by 47%. Notably, willingness to participate in a similar apprenticeship program tripled from 15% to 45%. The data also revealed gender differences in

interest levels. Female respondents showed a 40% increase in willingness to participate in Igba Boi-like programs, compared to a 25% increase among males. This finding challenges traditional notions of Igba Boi as a male-dominated practice.

Research Question 3: How accurately does Afamefuna represent the Igba Boi apprenticeship tradition?

Table 4: Perceived Accuracy of Igba Boi Representation

Aspect	**Training process**	**Master-apprentice relationship**	**Duration of apprenticeship**	**Settlement ceremony**	**Economic aspects**
Very Accurate	45%	50%	30%	55%	35%
Somewhat Accurate	35%	30%	40%	25%	38%
Neutral	12%	15%	20%	15%	18%
Somewhat Inaccurate	6%	4%	8%	3%	7%

Very Inaccurate	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Table 4 data indicates that the accuracy of the film's portrayal of the Igba Boi system is largely viewed favorably. Even though the impression was largely favorable, 20% of respondents thought the length of the apprenticeship was misrepresented. This disparity could be the result of shifting practices over time or geographical differences in the Igba Boi system.

Discussion:

The study's conclusions demonstrate the intricate relationship that exists between audience perception and cultural representation in Nigerian cinema. The Igba Boi system is depicted in "Afamefuna" in a way that simultaneously challenges and validates preexisting gender and ethnic prejudices. According to Okorie (2018), "Contemporary Nollywood films often navigate a delicate balance between cultural authenticity and progressive ideals." Although "Afamefuna" portrays the Igba Boi system in a way that mostly upholds patriarchal hierarchies, it also subtly challenges these conventions. Viewers seem to respond well to this nuanced approach, which is igniting conversations about gender roles in conventional apprenticeship programs.

Most viewers thought the movie's portrayal of Igbo culture especially the Igba Boi system was accurate. This supports Adichie's (2019) claim that "Nollywood has evolved into a potent cultural transmission medium, frequently acting as a mirror to Nigerian society." The study did

find, nevertheless, that this genuineness can occasionally verge on clichéd portrayal. According to Emeka (2021), the line between cultural authenticity and stereotype reinforcement in Nigerian cinema is often blurred, requiring critical viewership. "Afamefuna" mostly upholds the Igba Boi system's traditional gender rules. As noted by Ezeajugh (2019), "Nollywood films often reproduce societal gender expectations, particularly in depictions of traditional practices." This is reflected in the film. The study did discover, however, that younger viewers interpreted these gender portrayals differently than older viewers.

Even though "Afamefuna" perpetuates some prejudices, it is a valuable resource for cultural education and preservation. This confirms Okorie's (2018) assertion that "ethnographic films play a crucial role in preserving and transmitting cultural knowledge, particularly to younger generations." The film dramatically boosted spectator comprehension and enjoyment of the Igba Boi system, emphasizing cinema's potential as an instructional medium. The study found that different demographic groups had differing degrees of critical engagement with the film's depictions. This is consistent with Okafor's (2021) research on the "evolving media literacy among Nigerian youth," which points to a developing ability to analyze media content in a nuanced manner. Although "Afamefuna" mostly mirrors prevailing societal conventions, it also offers a forum for discussion on gender roles and cultural customs. According to Nwosu (2021), Nollywood films have the potential to not only mirror society but also to challenge and reshape societal perceptions.

The film "Afamefuna" seems to support some ethnic stereotypes about Igbo people, especially when it comes to their business sense and spirit of entrepreneurship. This is consistent with Nnamani's (2019) finding that deeply embedded societal beliefs are frequently reflected in Nollywood films. The study did, however, also reveal a generational difference in how these representations are understood. According to Okafor (2021), younger viewers showed a more critical attitude toward ethnic depictions, indicating that media literacy is changing among

Nigerian youth. In terms of gender roles, "Afamefuna" mostly upholds the patriarchal traditions that are common in the Igba Boi society. The movie's portrayal of male domination in the workplace and women's restricted agency is a reflection of the social systems that are in place.

The study shows the film has a considerable influence on cultural preservation and education despite these stereotypes reinforces. "Afamefuna" is a potent instrument for cultural transmission since it has successfully raised audience awareness and respect of the Igba Boi system. This data backs up Okorie's (2018) claim on the ethnographic films in Nigerian cinema's educational value. The way the film affects viewers' views highlights how powerful a tool it may be for societal change. Although it might support some preconceptions, it also offers a forum for thought-provoking debate and introspection about cultural norms. This duality placed "Afamefuna" at the confluence of amusement and social commentary, echoing broader developments in contemporary African cinema. Movies like "Afamefuna" are essential for navigating cultural identities and questioning social norms as Nigerian cinema develops. The study findings regarding generational disparities in interpretation point to a slow transition towards more complex interpretations of gender and ethnic representation. In order to create a cinema that honors cultural legacy and advances progressive ideals, it will be imperative going forward for both filmmakers and viewers to critically interact with these portrayals.

Conclusion

This research has shown the intricate relationship between gender and ethnic representations in Nigerian cinema, with a particular emphasis on how the Igba Boi apprenticeship system is portrayed in the film "Afamefuna." The results paint a complex picture of cultural representation that both confirms and contradicts preexisting beliefs. In summary, "Afamefuna" depicts gender and ethnic prejudices in a way that accurately captures the nuanced reality of Nigerian society. The movie shapes perceptions and reflects prevailing conventions, acting as a mirror and a lens

at the same time. Its influence on education and cultural preservation cannot be emphasized. But the enduring existence of some prejudices emphasizes the continuous necessity of critically interacting with media depictions.

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Recommendations

Balanced Representation: Filmmakers should strive for more balanced representations of ethnicity and gender in Nigerian cinema. While "Afamefuna" effectively portrays the Igba Boi system, future films could explore diverse perspectives within this tradition. As Nwosu (2020) suggests, "Nollywood has the potential to challenge societal norms while celebrating cultural heritage."

Gender Inclusivity: The Igba Boi system, as portrayed in "Afamefuna," largely reinforces traditional gender roles. Future films could explore the evolving role of women in this apprenticeship system. Okorie (2018) notes that "contemporary cinema can serve as a catalyst for social change by presenting alternative narratives."

Cultural Education: Given the film's impact on audience understanding of the Igba Boi system, similar projects should be encouraged. These films can serve as valuable educational tools, particularly for younger generations and non-Igbo audiences. Nnamani (2019) argues that "ethnographic films play a crucial role in preserving and transmitting cultural knowledge."

Critical Media Literacy: Educational institutions should incorporate critical media analysis into their curricula. This would equip students with the tools to critically engage with ethnic and gender representations in media. Okafor (2021) emphasizes the importance of "fostering media literacy to promote more nuanced interpretations of cultural portrayals."

Audience Engagement: Filmmakers and producers should consider post-screening discussions or online forums to engage audiences in critical reflection on the themes presented. This could enhance the educational impact of films like "Afamefuna."

Collaborative Filmmaking: To ensure authentic representations, filmmakers should collaborate closely with cultural experts and members of the communities being portrayed. This approach can lead to more nuanced and accurate depictions of cultural practices.

Support for Diverse Voices: The Nigerian film industry should actively support and promote filmmakers from diverse backgrounds. This could lead to a wider range of perspectives in the portrayal of cultural practices like the Igba Boi system.

By implementing these recommendations, the Nigerian film industry can continue to evolve, producing content that not only entertains but also educates and challenges societal norms. Films like "Afamefuna" have the potential to spark important conversations about cultural practices, ethnic identity, and gender roles in contemporary Nigerian society.

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