

## The Nigerian image on the Nollywood screen

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### Abstract

The Nigerian Image on the Nollywood Screen is that popular conception held of Nigerians, their institutions, and the nation through Nollywood films. Film is not only a form of art but also a tool for social Reformation, Transformation, and Decoloniality; as it expresses the feelings of humans and their ideas, seeks to liberate, make visible, and advance a distinct perception of the image of the creating society. The film of a Nation is a liberatory language for the future of the nation as it projects the identity of the nation to the world. The research examines and interrogates what image of Nigerians Nollywood projects to the world. Merton's theory of functionalism provides a fulcrum for the work and the survey method of data collection was employed. A questionnaire was administered to 500 respondents from the East (200), West (200), and North (100) who watch Nollywood films. Nollywood films portray Nigeria in a good light in the areas of lifestyle and infrastructure, but, considered the state as a stronghold in occultic practices. The respondents perceive Nigeria's image as developing (76.3%), technically advanced (53.2%), and as a state with rich cultural heritage (82.6%), and commended the exploration of Nigeria's heroic past and cultural heritage (62.0%). The respondents submitted that their interest in the country's affairs increased, the more they watched Nollywood films (50.1%), understanding of other cultures (75.1%). However, respondents perceive Nigeria as a society full of conflict (71.0%), supernatural (75.1%), and perpetrating all forms of violence (68.5%). It concludes that the image projected ties the country to the image as perceived by the Colonizers. It, therefore, recommends that Nollywood become a tool for decoloniality.

**Keywords:** Image, Nigerian image, Decoloniality, Nollywood, Film

### 1. Introduction

In Nigeria, the film did not start with Nollywood. The first public exhibition of film was in 1906 (Ekwuazi 2008). In tracing the history of indigenous filmmaking in Nigeria, it is pertinent to note that one of the factors that influenced indigenous filmmaking was the nationalistic fervour among Nigerian theatre artists before and after Independence. Nigerian theatre artists considered creating a national consciousness and identity. They believed that an indigenous film industry reflecting Nigerian culture and portraying the national outlook of the country would project an image that people would want to identify with the world over. Ukadike (1994) observes that "the cinema embarked upon its own project of complete decolonization following the example of an already flourishing liberationist literature channeled to this same purpose".

The Nigerian Image on the Nollywood Screen is that popular conception held of Nigerians, their institutions, and the nation through Nollywood films. Film is not only a form of art but also a tool for social Reformation, Transformation, and Decoloniality; as it expresses the feelings of humans and their ideas, seeks to liberate, make visible, and advance a distinct perception of the image of the creating society. The film of a Nation is a liberatory language for the future of the nation as it projects the identity of the nation to the world. The representation of the country in films in this regard should be such that shows the characteristics, feelings, or beliefs that distinguish the people from others.

The research is set to examine what Nollywood tells the world about Nigeria in their representations. The research interrogates the kind of image projected of Nigerians to the world. Merton's theory of functionalism provided a fulcrum for the work. A questionnaire was administered to 500 respondents in the sample area of the east (200), west (200), and north (100) by cluster sampling. The ratio of 2:2:1 is relative to the research population. The East and West are the core Nollywood zones that make pure Nigerian movies. The North makes movies that propagate Islam and imitate Indian films. Above all, the three regions represent the nation- Nigeria.

## **2. Research questions**

The research is set out to find answers to the under-listed questions:

1. What image of Nigeria is Nollywood projecting to the world?
2. How does the audience perceive the message Nollywood movies convey?
3. What influences do Nollywood movies have on the audience?

## **3. Theoretical framework**

The study employs Robert Merton's functionalism theory, which emerged as a theoretical approach to society's analysis in the post-World War II era. In his "Paradigm for Functional Analysis," Merton (1949) laid out this framework (Williams 2003). The functional analysis of mass communication focuses on how media contributes to maintaining social order and structure by performing specific tasks necessary for societal equilibrium. This study aims to explore Nollywood films' role in maintaining social order and structure through their representation of the nation. Specifically, it analyzes whether they effectively project an image that supports societal balance or not. The concept of decoloniality is also relevant here.

## **4. The concept of decoloniality**

According to William and Mary (2023), decoloniality is the study of the intricate processes and results of colonization and settler-colonialism, including how these processes and consequences affect ontology, metaphysics, logic, and power systems. "Colonialism" refers to both this matrix and the enduring patterns and results it produces. Put succinctly, decolonization is a strategy we use to recover the knowledge that settler-colonialism, modernity, and racial capitalism have destroyed. According to William and Mary (2023), decoloniality exposes "the dark side of modernity" and shows how it was constructed "on the backs" of "others," such as those whom modernity objectifies, racializes, or erases. Decolonization is therefore not a recent development. It is a paradigm and method of restoration and repair that takes into account the current situation as well as the historical context and geographic location. Consequently, it aims to revitalize, elevate, rediscover, and recognize the variety of lives, experiences, cultures, and knowledge held by people of colour, indigenous people, and colonized people.

Decoloniality is a perspective, position, and proposition of thought, analysis, sensing, producing, doing, feeling, and being that is actional, practical, and ongoing, according to Trembath (2023), who traces the concept to the sociologist Anibal Quijano. It's "about doing, or rather, undoing and creating just situations where unjust ones have long prevailed," she says in her explanation. The foundation of decoloniality is the idea that colonialism was harsh in its imposition upon the people and persisted even after the colonizing force departed. It argues that in order for the emancipated to prosper, cultural imperialism ought to be reversed. It is an attitude dedicated to eliminating colonial remnants from our society, education system, and culture. Trembath claims that decoloniality creates pathways and practices that lead to alternative ways of thinking by disobeying and severing from the colonial matrix of authority. According to Mignolo (2017), the decolonial project is a manifesto that calls on non-Western intellectuals and artists to recover politics, art, and sensibility as integral elements of their own culture. Hence, the Nollywood film is a true instrument for this alteration and reclamation of our culture through storytelling and the pictures it presents of the country to escape being chained to modernity, which is a byproduct of colonization.

## **5. Literature review**

Leerssen (2012) states that many cultures of the world are known only by reputation. We have images of other people's national character even if we have not personally met a handful of people from that nation. Moreover, we recognize certain temperamental attributes as being "typical" of nations. However, Leerssen argues that there is a degree of vagueness as to the 'truth' of these common places concerning national character. These common places and national characters form the disciplinary field called "Image Studies". In Image Studies, the climatologist is not interested in the degrees of truthfulness of such common places or stereotypes but in the effect such prejudices have caused the nation. In actual practice, Leerssen argues that an imageologist is not concerned with national stereotypes and alleged "national characters" or national reputations, but rather how it has become recognizable. Images are studied as properties of their context, not as items of information about reality, but rather as characteristics of their context.

Vazquez (2007), in the analysis of creating and projecting image, likens a nation's image to products and services, which people do not buy because of the quality or price but because of the symbol they represent. Vazquez sees humans as symbolic beings, who understand life through symbols and representations. These symbols are also known as stereotypes. The product may give us the impression of being top quality, may fit into the stereotype of a good cost-benefit relation, and might tell us that it will make us feel richer, prettier, thinner, and so on. These symbols, like the images projected in the movies, are always talking to us. They become the construction of our minds and society. Where people are concerned, the same thing that happens in buying a product occurs. This is because "we are all seen as symbols by others". Vazquez calls it subject-object relation.

The Nigerian Film Policy (2000) recognizes that film has a unique function in a nation or society. Hence, the policy states that Nigeria should, like other nations of the world, stipulate laws and guidelines through institutions and agencies on how its film industries are to operate. Having done this, it means that the nation wants its filmmakers to use film to restore, elevate, renew, rediscover, and acknowledge the diversity of lives in Nigeria, live experiences, culture, and knowledge of the indigenous people of Nigeria.

It is generally accepted that mass media has a significant social and psychological effect on viewers. Many people are introduced to people of other races, ethnicities, faiths, and cultures by film and television, for example. What they see on television, then, can influence their perceptions of others' treatment. Similarly, Bollywood films, according to Iqbal (2016), give the audience an appreciation of culture, tradition, nation-building, danger, threats, and identity messages. Since the 1980s, the majority of Indian governments have attempted to influence Bollywood. Governments such as the right-wing Bhartiya Janata Party government in 1994-2004 capitalized on Bollywood by describing it as "a transmitter of timeless Hindu values" (2016: 123), while the Congress Party regarded Indian film as "a modern version of India's syncretic tradition" (2016: 123). The former Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh claimed on September 26, 2007 "No other institution has been successful in achieving the emotional integration of this vast and diverse land of ours as our film industry has been... this unique mix of conversational Hindu from across the country, popularized by the film industry, has become the thread that weaves us all together as Indians" (Iqbal, 2016: 123).

Government policy and ideology can determine and influence the content of movies put forth by the movie industry. If the government provides an enabling environment, like building a functional film village and an accessible loan facility, the movie makers will make films with the national outlook of the nation. Making movie makers participate in the act of governance, appointments like ministers, commissioners, and special advisers on media, arts, and culture-related parastatals will influence the quality and content of movies. In other countries of the world where these happen, their movies speak for the country.

The Nigerian film is watched the world over and it is of utmost importance to Nigerians in the Diaspora. These Nigerians who raise children abroad need this film to educate their children on what their homeland is like, as opposed to what is being shown to them in Africa by Western films. If one portrays negative images of uncivilized people, rogues, and occultists then there will be no difference from what they see. Therefore Bekeh Utitiang, a Nigerian reverend and author living in Washington DC, speaks of the role of Nollywood as one engaged in the construction of global black identity. In his response to *Osuofia in London*, he notes that: "Most Europeans and Americans still have the knowledge of Africans depicted in the racial shows of the '60s. This image has not been helped by foreign charitable and religious organizations working in Africa who continue to present Africa in a bad light to the West to gain financial support for their humanitarian work in Africa. It is thus the place of Africans to legitimately defend their identity and seek equality for Africans with the rest of the world" (Brown, 2008: 59).

The reverend lamented, "The African of the 21st century deserves a better image than this". Although Brown tried in his reading of *Osuofia in London* to apply his theory of double-consciousness and dulcification genre to analyse the situation, he finally ended with the fallacy that the film is a real contribution to the discourse of African identity politics. Brown's reading rested on what is called the "juxtaposition of the self-confident *Osuofia* and the insecure Okafor." To him, the most important lesson from the film is *Osuofia* getting the money and Okafor ending in the police net, not for trying to outsmart his client, but for faulting traffic rules (Brown 2008). *Osuofia in London* portrayed a stereotype about Africa that is harmful to the African image and identity. These stereotypes are in actual sense what the Western world takes the Africans to be – misconceptions. Although the film is fiction, Utitiang observes in Brown (2008) that the fictional comedy *Osuofia in London* is unpatriotic to Africa; it shows *Osuofia* as more interested in the brother's wealth than the brother himself; it confirms the stereotypes of Africans held by the West, portraying them as timid and uncivilized people who don't know how to use a restroom; Mr. Okafor, Donatus's London-based solicitor, is portrayed as a corrupt man, perpetuating another Euro-American view of Africans. To demonstrate the producer's determination to sell this phony African identity to the West, *Osuofia* is shown as a fool who would sign off on all of his brother's belongings in exchange for a kiss from a white woman. Western viewers are the target demographic for the film. The narrations before and after the film make this quite evident.

Following this portrayal of Nigeria to Nigerians in the Diaspora and even non-Nigerians, one can clearly see that the story does not differ from the white stereotype about Africans; this time, the stereotype is reinforced by Africans. It is interesting to note here that the popularity of Nollywood is not among white viewers. If at all it is, it is because it "appeals to the sense of the noble savage, that picture of the African running around in circles in the jungle or beside the river waving frantically at Europe's steamer on the riverbanks" (Anyanwu, 2008: 130). Not because it projects an image different from what they already perceive. This is certainly why former Minister of Information and National Orientation, Chukwuemeka Chikelu, appealed to Nigerian filmmakers to desist from negative portrayal of the country. The minister made this appeal at the 2nd National Film Festival, held on 27th November 2003. Governor Timipre Sylva of Bayelsa state also decried the negative portrayal of juju glamorization by Nollywood in his opening speech at the 2010 AMAA Award.

Awani (2001) laments that a typical Nollywood film "lacks aesthetic quality and consequently cannot have a universal appeal", stressing that most of the indigenous films in circulation in Nigeria have common themes: violence, ritual, and sex. Such films, he claims, are not the true depiction of the sounds and rhythms of a nation in the twenty-first century. With the new Nollywood, which became necessary because of several criticisms on the quality of the films which are believed to be denting the image of Nigeria, the film filmmakers according to Gloria (2019) tend to wash off this criticism with the idea of the new Nollywood. They now make high-budget films to attract sponsorship from corporate bodies or banks, box offices with professional cameras and equipment, and premier cinema and film festivals. Gloria questions, if these have changed the perception and image of the country from the content of the movies.

## 6. Research method

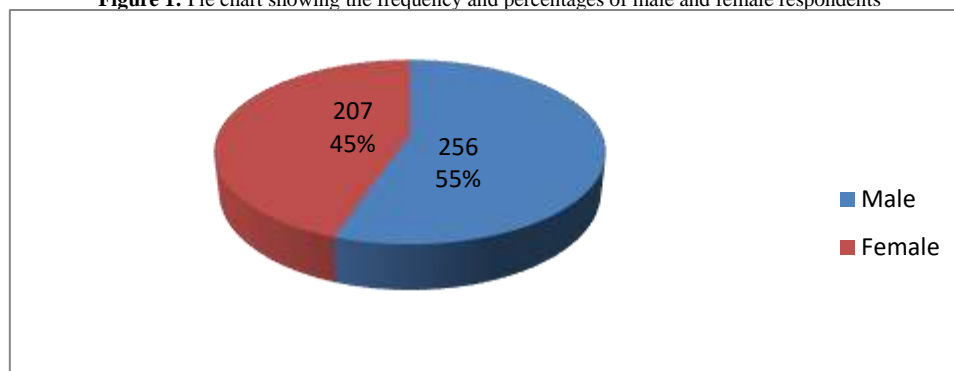
The research is set to examine what Nollywood tells the world about Nigeria in their representations. The research interrogates the kind of image projected of Nigerians to the world. The survey method of data collection was employed. A questionnaire was administered to 500 respondents in the sample area of the east (200), west (200), and north (100) by cluster sampling. The ratio of 2:2:1 is relative to the research population. The East and West are the core Nollywood zones that make pure Nigerian movies. The North makes movies that propagate Islam and imitate Indian films. Above all, the three regions represent the nation- Nigeria.

### 6.1. Data analysis

This section focuses on the analyses of the data collected in order to achieve the research objectives of the study. It presents the results for each of the research questions. It states and discusses findings from the questionnaire and in relation to literature that has been reviewed. Data were analyzed using cross-tabulation, descriptive statistics - tables, pie and bar charts, and simple percentages.

#### Demographic Characteristics

**Figure 1:** Pie chart showing the frequency and percentages of male and female respondents



The results from Fig.1 below indicate that 207 respondents constituting 45% were female while 256 respondents constituting 55% were male.

**Figure 2:** Bar chart showing the age distribution of respondents

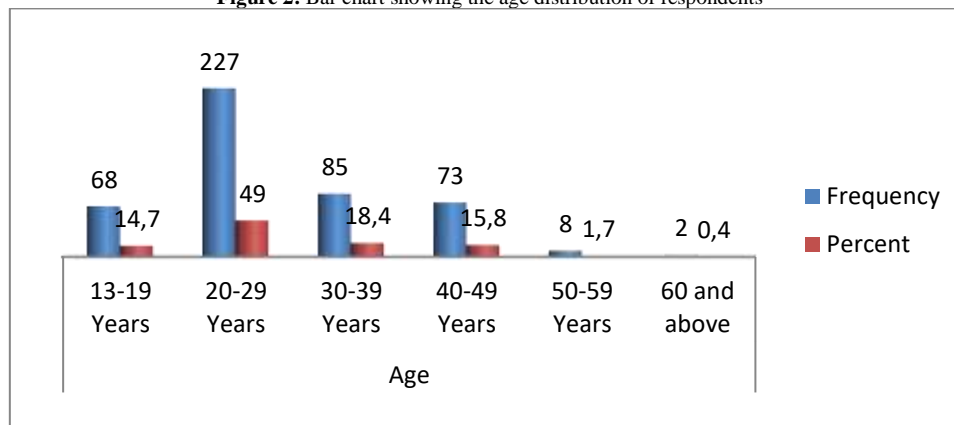


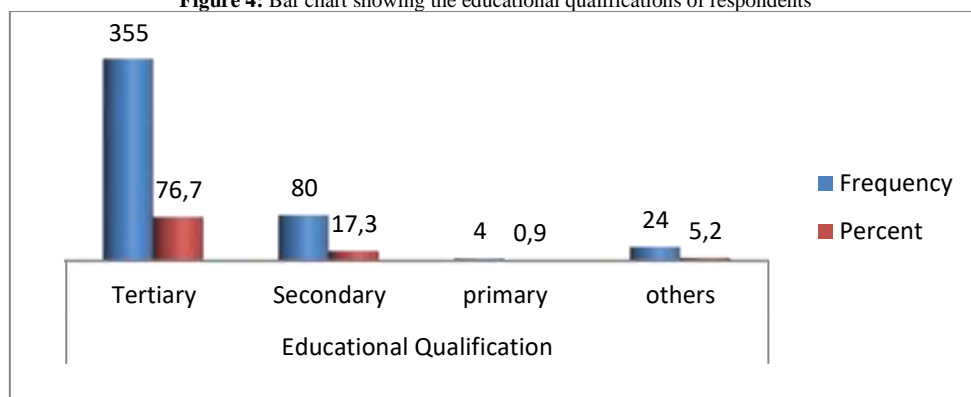
Fig. 2 indicates the age distribution of respondents. From the result, it can be seen that 14.7% were aged between 13 to 19 years, 49% were aged between 20 to 29 years, 18.4% were between 40 to 49 years, 1.7% were between 50 to 59 years, and 0.4% were between 60 years and above.

**Figure 3:** Bar chart showing the occupational distribution of respondents



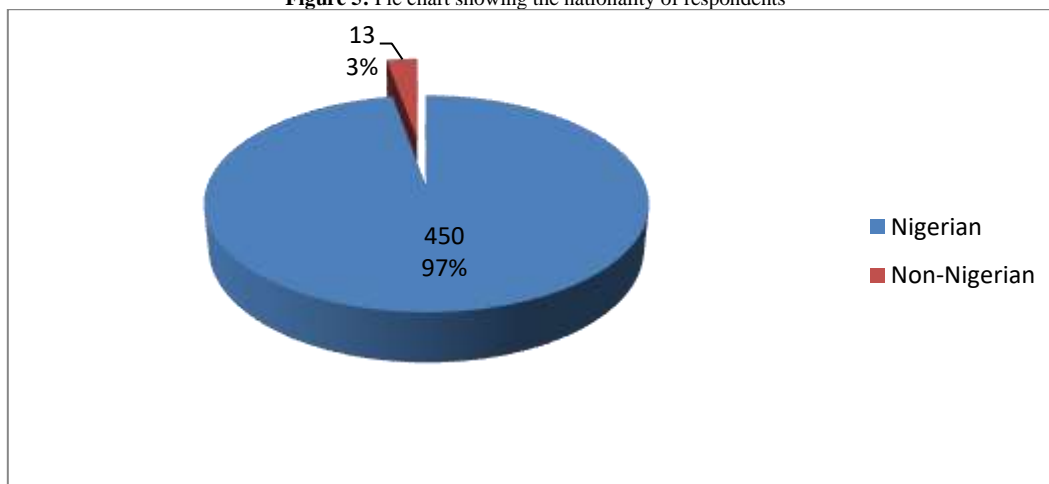
The results from Fig. 3 indicate that 15.3% of the respondents were civil servants, 25.9% worked in the private sector, 24.8% were unemployed and 33.9% were others.

**Figure 4:** Bar chart showing the educational qualifications of respondents



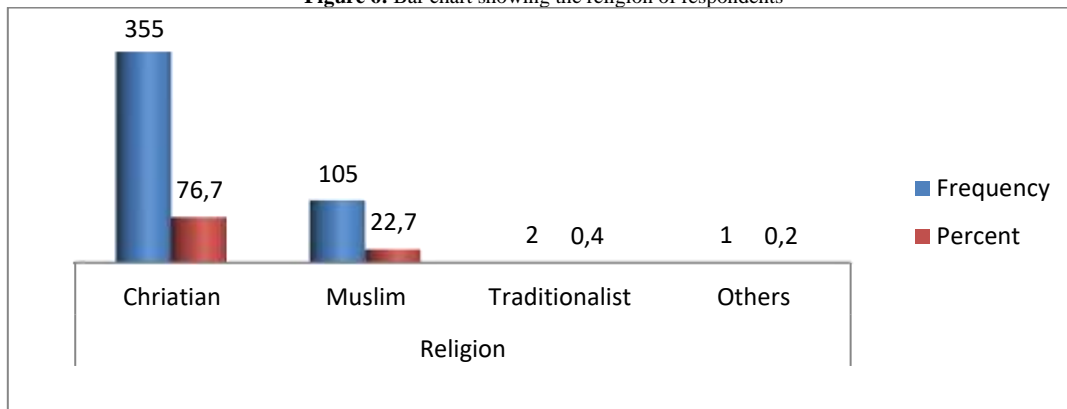
The results from Fig. 4 indicate the frequency and percentages of respondents on the basis of educational qualification. From 4 we discover that 76.7% had tertiary education, 17.3% had secondary education, 0.9 had primary education and 5.2% had other qualifications.

**Figure 5:** Pie chart showing the nationality of respondents



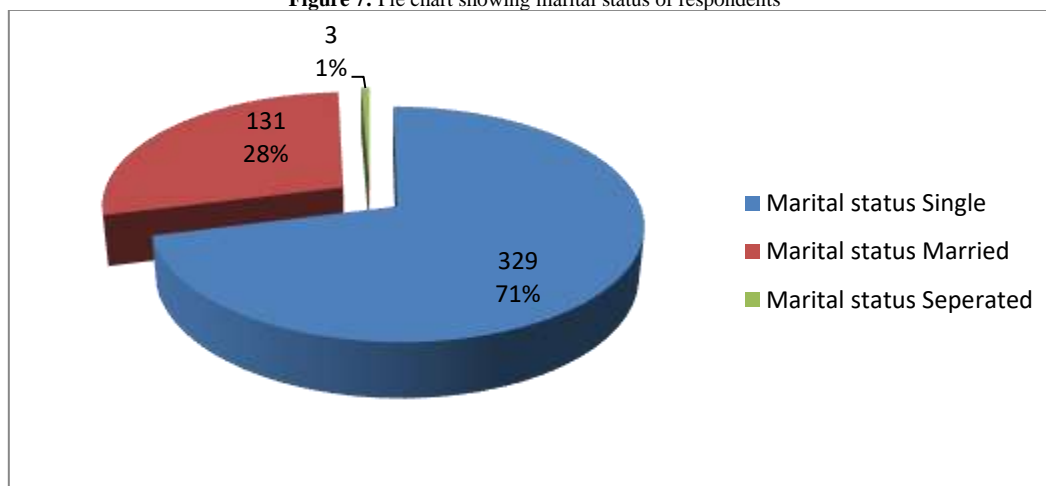
The results from Fig. 5 indicate that 3% of those who responded to the questionnaire were non-Nigerians while 97% were Nigerians.

Figure 6: Bar chart showing the religion of respondents



The results from Fig. 6 indicated that 76.7% of the respondents were Christians, 22.7% were Muslims, 0.4% were traditionalists and 0.2% were others.

Figure 7: Pie chart showing marital status of respondents



The results from Fig. 7 indicate that 71% of the respondents were single, 28% were married and 1% were separated.

#### Research question 1: What image of Nigeria is Nollywood projecting to the world?

To answer this research question, strongly agreed and agreed were collapsed into one. Similarly, strongly disagreed and disagreed were also collapsed into one.

Table 1: The image of Nigeria that Nollywood is projecting to the world

S/N	Statement	SA+ A	SD+ D	Indifference
1.	Nigeria as a developing society.	351 (76.3)	66(14.2)	46 (9.50)
2.	Nigeria as a technologically advanced society.	242 (53.20)	158 (33.40)	63 (13.4)
3.	Nigerians as people who believe very much in the supernatural.	320 (75.10)	66 (14.7)	47 (10.20)
4.	Nigerians as very religious people.	350 (74.4)	66 (14.80)	49 (10.8)
5.	Nigeria as a society full of conflict.	329 (70.80)	66 (14.5)	68 (14.7)
6.	Nigeria as a country with rich cultural heritage.	383 (82.6)	35 (7.8)	45 (9.6)
7.	In the Nollywood films, consequences of actions are portrayed clearly.	355 (76.50)	45 (9.70)	63 (13.7)
8.	The films show you the history of the Nigerian people as you know it	314 (68.6)	82 (17.0)	67 (14.40)
9.	Tool for cultural orientation for the youths.	304 (66.3)	108 (22.8)	51 (10.9)
10.	Nollywood film present Nigeria as you know it.	28(61.70)	107 (22.4)	73 (15.8)
11.	Being proud of Nigeria, going by what Nollywood films show.	244 (52.70)	129 (27.86)	90 (19.44)
12.	Going into a serious relationship or business with a Nigerian as a foreigner.	161 (34.50)	94 (20.50)	208 (45.0)

13.	Nigeria associated with prostitution from Nollywood films.	287 (61.85)	115 (25.85)	58(12.3)
14.	Nigeria associated with robbery from Nollywood films.	317 (67.9)	87 (19.6)	59 (12.5)
15.	Nigeria associated with ritual killings from Nollywood films.	339 (73.2)	70 (15.1)	54 (11.7)
16.	Nigeria associated with violence from Nollywood films.	319 (68.5)	91 (20.3)	52 (11.2)
17.	Nigeria associated with kidnapping from Nollywood films.	325 (70.2)	75 (18.7)	53 (11.10)

The question is spread into items 1-17 of the questionnaire. Regarding the first question: if Nigeria is a developing country, 351 (76.3%) of respondents strongly agreed and agreed, 66 (14.2%) disagreed and 46 (9.50%) were indifferent. On whether Nigeria is a technologically advanced society, 242 (53.20%) agreed, 158 (33.40%) disagreed and 63(13.6%) were indifferent. In responding to the axiom that Nigerians believe very much in the supernatural, 320(75.10%) agreed, 66(14.7) disagreed and 47 (10.20%) respondents were indifferent. Concerning Nigerians as very religious people 350 (74.4%) agreed, 66(14.80%) disagreed and 49(10.8%) were indifferent. whether Nigeria is a society that is full of conflict, 329(70.80%) agreed, 66(14.5%) disagreed and 68 (14.7%) were indifferent. On the question of Nigeria as a country with rich cultural heritage, 383(82.6%) agreed, 35(7.8) disagreed and 45(9.6%) respondents were indifferent. If the consequences of actions are portrayed clearly in the films, 355(76.50%) agreed, 45(9.70%) disagreed and 63(13.7%) were indifferent. If the films show the history of Nigerian People as they know it, 314(68.6%) agreed, 82(17.06%) disagreed and 67(13.7%) were indifferent. To the question, of do the films serve as a tool for cultural orientation for the youths 304(66.3%) agreed, 108(22.8%) disagreed and 51(10.9%) were indifferent. If the films represent Nigeria as they know it, 283(61.70%) agreed, 107(22.4%) disagreed and 75(15.7%) were indifferent.

To the question of if they are proud of the country Nigeria going by what the films show, 244(52.70%) of the respondents agreed, 129(27.86%) disagreed while 90(19.44%) were indifferent. On whether as a foreigner, can you go into a serious relationship or business with a Nigerian, 161(34.50%) agreed, 94(20.50%) disagreed while 208(45.0%) were indifferent. Regarding whether from the films, they associate Nigeria with prostitution, 287(61.85%) agreed, 115(25.85%) disagreed while 58(12.3%) were indifferent. On whether they associate Nigerians with robbery, 317(67.9%) agreed, 87(19.6%) disagreed while 59(12.5%) were indifferent. Concerning the possibility of associating Nigeria with ritual killings, 339(73.2%) agreed, 70(15.1%) disagreed and 54(11.7%) were indifferent. On Nigeria being associated with violence, 319(68.5%) agreed, 91(20.3%) disagreed while 52(11.2%) were indifferent. On whether they associate Nigeria with kidnapping, 325(70.2%) agreed, 75(18.7%) disagreed while 53(11.10%) were indifferent.

#### **Research Question 2:** How does the audience perceive the message Nollywood Movies convey

**Table 2:** How the audience perceived the messages from the movies

S/N	Statement	SA	AG	DA	SD	IN
1	The films portray the exploration of our heroic past and cultural heritage	111 (24.0)	176 (38.0)	42 (9.10)	17 (3.70)	117(25.20)
2	The themes in the film emphasize the desirable rather than the negative aspects of our present social existence	78 (16.80)	177(38.20)	58 (12.50)	15 (3.2)	135(29.20)
3	Nigerian society as a safe and habitable place	59 (12.70)	151(32.60)	84 (18.10)	31 (6.70)	138(29.80)
4	The capacity of our people to overcome extreme adverse conditions of climate and sociocultural arrangement	85 (18.30)	186(40.20)	37 (8.00)	18 (3.90)	137(29.60)
5	Remarkable in the extensive and authentic use of indigenous costume, makeup, music and dance	109(23.50)	197(42.50)	29 (6.20)	15 (3.20)	113(24.40)
6	The overall Nigerian image portrayal in the film(s) is sensible and morally gratifying	17 (16.60)	159(34.30)	64 (13.80)	20 (4.30)	143(30.90)
7	Some scenes need to be censored	127(27.40)	183(39.50)	27 (5.80)	11 (2.40)	115(24.80)

From Table 2 above, 111(24.0%) agreed, 176(38.0%) strongly agreed, 42(9.10%) disagreed, 17(3.70%) strongly disagreed while 117(25.20%) of the respondents were indifferent to the question on whether the films they watched portrayed the exploration of our heroic past and cultural heritage. Concerning whether the themes in the film emphasize the desirable rather than the negative aspect of our present social existence. 78(16.80%) strongly agreed, 177(38.20%) agreed, 58(12.50%) disagreed, 15(3.2%) strongly disagreed while 135(29.20%) of the respondents were indifferent. Regarding whether the films portray Nigeria as a society that is safe and habitable, 59(12.70%) strongly agreed, 151(32.60%) agreed, 84(18.10%) disagreed, 31(6.70%) strongly disagreed while 138(29.80%) were indifferent.

On whether the films reflect the capacity of our people to overcome extremely adverse conditions of climate and sociocultural arrangement, 85(18.30%) strongly agreed, 186(40.20%) agreed, 37(8.00%) disagreed, 18(3.90%) strongly disagreed while 137(29.60%) were indifferent. When asked if the films are remarkable in the extensive and authentic use of indigenous costume, make-up, music, and dance, 109(23.50%) strongly agreed, 197(42.50%) agreed, 29(6.20%) disagreed, 15(3.20%) strongly disagreed while 113(24.40%) were indifferent.

On whether the overall Nigerian image portrayal in the films is sensible and morally gratifying, 17(16.60%) strongly agreed, 159(34.30%) agreed, 64(13.80%) disagreed 20(4.30%) strongly disagreed while 143(30.90%) respondents were indifferent. On whether there are scenes in the films that need to be considered, 127(27.40%) strongly agreed, 183(39.50%) agreed, 27(5.80%) disagreed, 11(2.40%) strongly disagreed while 115(24.80%) were indifferent.

**Research Question 3: What influences do Nollywood movies have on the audience?**

Three questions from the questionnaire were used to get answers to the research questions.

**Table 3:** Influence of Nollywood movies on the audience

S/N	Statement	Yes	No	Indifferent
1	The films move you to take action either positively or negatively.	269 (58.6)	93 (19.7)	101 (21.70)
2	Interest in the nation's affair increase the more Nollywood films are watched	229 (50.10)	160 (34.10)	74 (15.8)
3	Understanding other cultures through Nollywood films	347 (75.10)	55 (11.90)	61 (13.0)

Responses as shown in the table indicate that 269(58.6%) agreed, 93(19.7%) disagreed while 101(21.70%) of the respondents were indifferent to the question of the films move than to take action either positively or negatively. If their interest in the nation's affair increase the more they watch Nigerian films, 229(50.10%) agreed, 160(34.10%) disagreed while 74(15.86) were indifferent. Then if the films help them in understanding other cultures, 347(75.10%) agreed, 55(11.90%) disagreed while 61(13.0%) respondents were indifferent.

## 7. Findings and discussion

This discussion is based on the findings from this study. The study was carried out with the aim of investigating what image of Nigeria Nollywood projects and the audience's perception of the image. The objective of this research is to interrogate what image of the nation is created and projected by Nollywood, to find out how the audience perceives the message projected, and to find out how the image projected influences the audience. Findings from research question 1: What image of Nigeria is Nollywood projecting to the world? The results are grouped into 1 and 2. In 1, the majority of the respondents agreed that Nollywood films project Nigeria as a country that is technically advanced, and very religious people with a rich cultural heritage. They also agreed that the movies portray the consequences of actions clearly, tell the history of the people, and serve as a tool for cultural orientation for the youths and that they are proud of Nigeria going by what the movies show. The majority would go into a serious relationship or business with a Nigerian if they were foreigners.

While in 2, the same majority of respondents agreed that Nollywood films portray Nigeria as a developing country, full of conflict and of people who believe so much in the supernatural. They also agreed that through the movies, they associate Nigeria with prostitution, robbery, ritual killings, violence, and kidnapping. This could be the case of different faces of the same coin, where everything in life has two sides, the good and bad and merits and demerits. A close reading and critical analysis of these films attested to the above findings; Reloaded 1 & 2 (2019), Hungry Men 1 & 2 (2012), Hoodlums 1 & 2 (2012), Facebook Queens 1 & 2 (2012), Family Crisis 1 & 2 (2012), Lagos Girls 1 & 2 (2011), Royal Rites 1 & 2 (2012), Lagos Girls (Sisi Eko) 1 & 2 (2011), Mr. Lecturer 2012), Eni-Ibi Ota - Olohun 1 & 2 (2012), Hindu (1&2), (3 & 4) (2015), Kwankwaso 1 & 2 (2015), Noor I & 2 (2015), King of Boys (2018), Gang of Lagos (2023).

This view agrees with what Ekwuazi, Awani, and a host of other scholars say, namely that Nollywood, right from inception, developed notoriety for dwelling on the themes of witchcraft, cultism/ritual, prostitution, armed robbery, fraud, and murder. Olukayode (2016), a moviemaker in an email chat with the researcher, speaking on the issue of image projection, asserts: "Majority of Nollywood cinematic releases are trying to portray the country in a good light when it comes to the lifestyles and infrastructure portrayed in them. However, most of our home videos portray us as lazy and unserious people who like rituals and divination". The finding also conforms to the fact that the stereotype created by these films is the key determinant of the perception and acceptability of Nigeria and Nigerians.

Research question 2, How does the audience perceive the message Nollywood films convey?

The findings show that the majority of the respondents agreed that the films portray the exploration of our heroic past and cultural heritage, that the films emphasize the desirable rather than the negative aspects of our present social existence, and that Nigeria is a safe and habitable place. They also agreed that films are remarkable in the authentic use of indigenous costumes, makeup, music, and dance. The findings also show that the majority of respondents agreed that there are scenes in the movies that need to be censored. This brings to mind, the issue of censorship. Adeyemi (2016) in a private with the researcher advocated for the classification of films rather than censoring. Adeyemi believes that the



different associations and unions in the industry should be able to monitor and intervene occasionally in the film process.

Findings from research question 3: what influence do Nollywood movies have on the audience show that the majority of the respondents agreed that the films move them to take action either positively or negatively, that their interest in the nation's affairs increases the more they watch Nigerian movies and the movies help them understand other cultures. The theory of functionalism in relation to this study is based on the fact that film (Nollywood film) is to maintain social order and social structure through the image it projects of the nation.

## **8. Contribution of the study**

This has contributed to the existing body of knowledge on Nollywood in general and Nollywood and the image question and has also joined the conversation of decolonizing Africa and opened up other areas of investigation.

## **9. Implications of the study**

Nollywood is a decolonial tool because it is a continuous process of "delinking" from the "colonial matrix of authority" and "relinking" to indigenous ways of seeing and organizing the world. The film industry should be seen as a model and a tool for restoration and restoration that adapts to our geographical location, historical context, and current-day conditions. *Anikulapo*, by Kunle Afolayan, is an evocative film about the Yoruba people, and teaches moral lessons about pride, greed, lies, and broken trust, among other things. The film depicts the Yoruba people in the 17th century in terms of hospitality, polygamous marriage, art skills, and ancient folklore and traditions. Afolayan, also on October 1, is a film about a colonized perspective, tracing the journey to Nigeria's independence. The film depicted the horror, anguish, loss, poverty, and oppression that the country faced before independence. These films, among others, tell our story in our own way and portray us as a species with a unique identity.

## **10. Conclusion**

The study was set to interrogate how Nollywood films have shaped the audience's perception of Nigeria as a country. The result obtained showed that Nollywood projects a positive as well as a negative image of Nigeria but frames its content in such a way that it tells the history of the people; emphasizes the desirable aspect of the country's social existence, showcases the country's rich cultural heritage and projects Nigeria as a country where change is possible. The predominant view of researchers and critics of Nollywood as seen in the review of literature that Nollywood projects a negative image of Nigeria is not unfounded but this research has revealed that although Nollywood projects a negative image of Nigeria, it has been a positive in the areas of telling the world about Nigeria and projecting our cultural heritage and being a tool for cultural orientation for the youths and an instrument of decoloniality. Nollywood should seek to liberate, make visible, and advance a distinct perception of the image of the creating society, Nigeria, and Africa in a broader sense. The film of a Nation is a liberatory language for the future of the nation as it projects the identity of the nation to the world. The study recommends further study; of Nollywood and redefining Nigeria's cultural identity through storytelling.

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