

Understanding the Stereotyping Effect of Ethnocentrism in Nollywood Films

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Abstract

This paper investigates the stereotyping effects of ethnocentrism in Nollywood films, which play a significant role in shaping the perceptions of African identity both within and outside of the continent. By analyzing the portrayal of different ethnic groups and cultures in Nigerian cinema, this study explores how ethnocentrism fosters stereotypes and impacts audience perceptions. Ethnocentrism, defined as the belief in the inherent superiority of one's own ethnic group, often leads to biased depictions that perpetuate harmful stereotypes. This paper also discusses the social, cultural, and psychological effects of these portrayals, offering insights into the challenges and opportunities for Nollywood filmmakers in fostering more inclusive, realistic representations.

The stereotyping effect of ethnocentrism in Nollywood films has been a topic of interest among scholars in recent years. Within this context, this study aims to explore the depth of this phenomenon and its impact on the film industry in Nigeria. Using the secondary data, the study examined the portrayal of ethnocentrism in Nollywood films the study analysed "Living in Bondage" (1992), "The Figurine" (2009), Okafor's Law (2016), and Blood Sisters (2022). The findings of the study revealed that ethnocentrism is a prevalent issue in some Nollywood films and has a significant impact on the audience's perceptions and attitudes towards different ethnic groups. The study also explored the various factors that contribute to the perpetuation of this phenomenon in the film industry, such as cultural biases, audience preferences, and commercialization. Furthermore, the study sheds light on the possible consequences of the stereotyping effect of ethnocentrism in Nollywood films, including reinforcing harmful stereotypes, promoting a sense of superiority among certain groups, and hindering the progress towards a more inclusive and diverse society. In conclusion, this study provides

valuable insights into the complex relationship between ethnocentrism and Nollywood films and highlights the need for more awareness and sensitivity in the production and consumption of these films. In this contestation, the findings of the study contributed to the ongoing discussions and initiatives, which aimed at addressing this issue and promoting cultural understanding and inclusivity in the film industry.

Keywords: *Effect, Ethnocentrism, Films, Nollywood, Stereotyping and Portrayal*

Introduction

The Nigerian film industry, popularly known as Nollywood, which is currently rated second in production of films after Bollywood (India) and over Hollywood (America). Whether this claim is true or not, the truth is that Nigerian films are widely watched. Nollywood, the Nigerian film industry, is one of the largest in the world, contributing significantly to both the economy and the cultural fabric of Nigeria and Africa at large. With its rapid growth, Nollywood has garnered international recognition, influencing the perception of African identity globally. However, like many other industries, Nollywood has faced criticism for perpetuating stereotypes, particularly those rooted in ethnocentrism.

Ethnocentrism refers to the tendency to view one's own culture or ethnic group as superior to others, and it often leads to biased or unfair representations of minority groups. This paper aims to explore the stereotyping effects of ethnocentrism in Nollywood films by examining the portrayals of different ethnic groups, gender roles, and cultural identities, as well as the psychological and social effects these portrayals have on both local and global audiences. The study will take a thorough look at "Living in Bondage" (1992), "The Figurine" (2009), Okafor's Law (2016), and Blood Sisters (2022).

Living in Bondage (1992) is one of the seminal films in the history of Nollywood, widely regarded as the movie that sparked the Nigerian video film industry (commonly known as Nollywood). Directed by Chris Obi Rapu and produced by Kenneth Nnebue, *Living in Bondage* is a supernatural thriller that explores themes of greed, power, ambition, and the consequences of making morally questionable choices. The film centers on the story of Andy (played by Kenneth Okonkwo), a man who is willing to go to extreme lengths, including engaging in occult practices, to achieve wealth and success. The film's success marked a turning point in Nigerian cinema, but it also faced criticism for its portrayal of certain stereotypes, particularly those associated with ethnic groups and cultural practices.

The Figurine (2009) is a Nigerian supernatural thriller directed by Kunle Afolayan. It is one of the most successful films in the history of Nollywood, known for its high production quality, captivating storytelling, and deep cultural exploration. The film revolves around a mysterious and ancient artifact, a figurine, that

is said to bring good fortune to those who possess it yet it also brings deadly consequences for those who dare to exploit its power. *The Figurine* explores themes of fate, superstition, and the interplay of tradition and modernity. It also delves into the role of Nigerian folklore and the impact of cultural beliefs on everyday life. While *The Figurine* is often praised for its cinematic artistry, it also raises important issues about cultural identity, representation, and the ethnocentric portrayal of certain ethnic practices, especially those associated with the Yoruba people.

Okafor's Law (2016) is a Nigerian romantic comedy directed by Omoni Oboli. The film centers on the character of Chuks (played by Richard Mofe-Damijo), a charming and somewhat arrogant man who has a reputation of being able to "conquer" any woman he desires. The plot revolves around Chuks's belief in "Okafor's Law," a fictional concept that suggests a man can always rekindle a past relationship with any woman he has previously been involved with, no matter how much time has passed. This belief is at the core of the film's exploration of relationships, love, and gender dynamics.

The film is an entertaining blend of romance and comedy, but it also tackles deeper issues about Nigerian society, relationships, and the roles that men and women play in romantic engagements. *Okafor's Law* engages with themes of sexual politics, gender stereotypes, and cultural values, offering a critique of certain societal norms and the complexities of modern relationships. It also offers an opportunity to analyze how Nollywood films often reflect and reinforce cultural expectations, particularly surrounding masculinity, feminism, and the sexual politics between men and women.

Blood Sisters (2022) is a Nigerian crime thriller miniseries that premiered on Netflix. Directed by Biyi Bandele and produced by Mo Abudu's EbonyLife Studios, the series follows two best friends, Sarah and Kemi, as they find themselves entangled in a web of murder, lies, and family secrets. The show has been praised for its high production value, its bold exploration of themes like power, family, loyalty, and corruption, and its reflection of the complexities of modern Nigerian society. However, *Blood Sisters* also includes ethnocentric elements and reinforces certain stereotypes, which merit a closer examination within the context of Nollywood's cinematic landscape.

Nollywood has grown from a small, localized film industry to one that is globally recognized, particularly for its high output of films that cater to African audiences both on the continent and in the diaspora. Founded in the late 20th century, Nollywood produces hundreds of films annually, covering genres ranging from drama and comedy to thriller and action. Despite its commercial success, Nollywood films have been critiqued for their lack of nuanced storytelling, as they often lean on the stereotypes associated with Nigeria's different ethnic groups. Nollywood films often

rely on ethnic distinctions to create characters and narratives. However, these distinctions are sometimes exaggerated or simplified, contributing to the stereotyping of specific ethnic groups. For example, the portrayal of Igbo people is often linked to themes of wealth, greed, and crime, whereas Yoruba characters may be shown as more traditional or religious. Hausa characters, on the other hand, are frequently portrayed as conservative and strict. This tendency to depict certain ethnic groups with fixed characteristics stems from ethnocentrism, which assumes that the dominant cultural norms are universal.

The three major ethnic groups in Nigeria—Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa—often serve as cultural markers in Nollywood films. In many cases, the Igbo are depicted as business-oriented and ambitious, sometimes to the point of villainy, as seen in films like *Living in Bondage*. The Yoruba are often represented as adherents to tradition, frequently shown in films focusing on religious beliefs, such as in *The Figurine*, where ancestral worship and folklore are central to the plot. The Hausa, whose culture is primarily based in northern Nigeria, are sometimes portrayed as rural, conservative, and distant from modernity, which reinforces a divide between "urban" and "rural" cultures. In addition to ethnic stereotypes, Nollywood also propagates gender-based stereotypes, particularly in the context of marriage, power dynamics, and gender roles. Women in Nollywood films are often depicted in submissive roles, conforming to cultural expectations rooted in ethnocentric views of traditional gender norms. These portrayals reinforce the idea that African women are often passive or subservient, a stereotype that is compounded by ethnic biases.

Purpose of the Study

"Despite Nollywood's global influence and success, its portrayal of cultural identities often been accused of reinforcing ethnocentric stereotypes, presenting a skewed image of ethnic groups and perpetuating harmful generalizations. This accusation has triggered scholarly investigation on Nollywood portrayal of various ethnic groups in Nigeria. Many Nollywood films tend to present certain ethnic groups, practices, and cultural norms through a narrow lens, often positioning them as either inferior or superior to others. This ethnocentric portrayal not only distorts the diversity of Nigerian cultures but also perpetuates negative biases and reinforces societal divisions. The problem, therefore, lies in how these films inadvertently contribute to the stereotyping of ethnic identities, influencing public perceptions and fostering a limited understanding of Nigeria's rich cultural tapestry. This study aims to examine the extent of ethnocentric stereotyping in Nollywood films and its broader implications on cultural representation and social harmony.

Objective of the Study

The overall aim of this study is to shed light on how ethnocentrism

manifests in Nollywood films, its implications for societal attitudes and perceptions, and potential strategies for promoting more inclusive and representative storytelling in Nollywood films. To achieve the overall interest of this study, the following objectives are set to:

1. Analyse how different ethnic groups are portrayed in Nollywood films and to identify common stereotypes associated with each group.
2. Understand how these stereotypes influence audience perceptions of various ethnicities within Nigeria and across the globe.
3. Critically examine the role of Nollywood in perpetuating or challenging ethnocentric biases and stereotypes within Nigerian society.
4. Explore the broader social implications of these representations, including their potential effects on interethnic relations, identity formation, and social cohesion in Nigeria.

Research Questions

Based on the problem statement and research objectives, the following will serve as the basic tools of scientific inquiry:

1. How do Nollywood films represent various ethnic groups, and what stereotypes are commonly associated with each group in these representations?
2. In what ways do the stereotypes portrayed in Nollywood films shape the perceptions of audiences about different ethnic groups in Nigeria and internationally?
3. How does Nollywood contribute to either reinforcing or challenging ethnocentric biases and stereotypes within Nigerian culture?
4. How do the portrayals of different ethnic groups in Nigerian media and popular culture influence interethnic relationships, the formation of individual and collective identities, and overall social unity within the country?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it addresses the intersection of media, ethnicity, and social cohesion, with the potential to influence not only academic discourse but also practical efforts in media reform, cultural understanding, and national unity in Nigeria. The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on media studies, cultural representation, and ethnocentrism, particularly in the African context. It provides an academic framework for understanding how media portrayals,

specifically those in Nollywood, can perpetuate or challenge stereotypes related to ethnicity. On a practical level, this study holds significant implications for the Nigerian film industry and its stakeholders. It provides critical insights into how ethnocentrism, if left unchecked, can contribute to social divisions and undermine national unity.

In essence, this study is significant in its potential to bridge the gap between theoretical concepts of media influence and real-world practices in Nollywood, contributing to both academic research and practical efforts for media reform, ethnic understanding, and national unity.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is specifically four (4) Nollywood Contemporary films produced between 1992 to 2022. Given the increasing global influence of the industry in recent years, sample of films from different genres ranging from drama, comedy, thriller, and others were analysed to understand how ethnocentrism and stereotyping manifest across various types of narratives. "Living in Bondage" (1992), "The Figurine" (2009), Okafor's Law (2016), and Blood Sisters (2022), were considered. these films were scrutinized for depictions of ethnic identities, particularly focusing on the portrayal of Nigeria's numerous ethnic groups, such as the Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa, and others, as well as how these groups are represented in relation to one another.

Methodology

The study makes use of secondary data from significant books, periodicals, newspapers, government publications, historical records, and the Internet. Nonetheless, the study was limited to information that was recorded, currently accessible, or documented regarding the topic of inquiry (Sabiou & Aondover, 2023). The study employs content analysis as its analysis approach, which considers the corpus of existing literature.

Theoretical Framework

To understand the stereotyping effect of ethnocentrism in Nollywood films, several theoretical frameworks can be valuable in providing a comprehensive analysis, but in order not to bore the reader, we will apply two theories which are Social Identity Theory and Cultivation Theory

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory, developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner, (1979) explains how individuals derive their self-concept and behavior from their social group memberships, emphasizing the importance of social categorization, comparison, and identification. Social identity theory is an interactionist social

psychological theory of the role of self-conception and associated cognitive processes and social beliefs in group processes and intergroup relations. Social identification speaks to one key reason why groups of people are different from object categories: the fact that the self can also be seen as belonging to a social group (Tajfel, 1974, 1978a, 1978b).

Identity Formation through Group Membership

Social Identity Theory suggests that individuals derive a significant portion of their self-esteem from their group affiliations. Andy's sense of identity shifts significantly when he joins the occult group. As a member of the group, he experiences a transformation, shifting from a humble and morally driven man to someone who values material success above all else. His association with the occult society enhances his self-esteem, as he begins to see himself as a powerful and successful individual. His participation in this group allows him to adopt a new social identity centered around occult practices and the pursuit of wealth.

However, as Andy becomes more entrenched in the occult group, he loses sight of the moral values that originally formed part of his identity. This shift demonstrates how social identity, as proposed by SIT, can influence behavior, leading individuals to act in ways that align with the norms and values of their in-group. In Andy's case, his growing association with the occult group leads him to prioritize personal gain over ethical considerations, resulting in destructive actions that cause harm to both himself and those around him.

The discovery of the figurine however, introduces an external factor that influences their sense of identity. Sola's Transformation: Sola's character is significantly affected by the figurine. His desire for success and the figurine's promise of power and wealth lead him to redefine his personal identity. As he becomes increasingly obsessed with the figurine, Sola's sense of self shifts from a loyal friend and decent individual to someone who is willing to forsake ethical considerations in exchange for material gains. This transformation exemplifies how group identity can be altered by an external object or influence, as Sola begins to prioritize the figurine's power over his relationships with his friends. His growing attachment to the figurine and his willingness to violate ethical boundaries in its pursuit reflect how an external group or symbol can redefine one's social identity.

Aremu and Femi's Responses: On the other hand, Aremu and Femi represent different responses to the figurine's power. Aremu, initially skeptical, becomes entangled in the consequences of Sola's actions, and his own identity is influenced by the events surrounding the figurine. Femi, who starts off as relatively neutral, finds himself caught in the moral dilemmas that emerge as the figurine's curse affects the group. Their reactions to the figurine demonstrate how identities within a

group can be fluid, influenced by external forces, and how individuals in a group may adopt varying stances based on their personal beliefs or the group's collective pressure.

In Okafor's Law, Chuka's identity is primarily shaped by his membership in a social group of men who share the belief in "Okafor's Law." This group's values define his views on women and relationships. Initially, Chuka identifies strongly with this group, gaining a sense of pride and self-worth from his ability to seduce women without the need for commitment. This identity is reinforced by his interactions with other men who support this worldview, giving him a sense of belonging and acceptance.

In Blood Sister, According to SIT, a significant part of an individual's identity is shaped by their group affiliations. The Odufuwa family, particularly Kemi, is deeply shaped by their social class, wealth, and history of power. These elements contribute to the formation of their social identities. Sarah, on the other hand, is not born into the Odufuwa family's power and wealth, and her initial identity as an independent, ambitious woman contrasts with the manipulative environment of the Odufuwa family.

Intergroup Conflict and Prejudice

Social Identity Theory emphasizes that intergroup conflict often arises due to perceived threats to one's social identity or group status. In *Living in Bondage*, this conflict is most visible in the clash between Andy's in-group (the occult group) and his wife, who represents the out-group. Throughout the film, Andy's actions and moral decline create tension in his personal relationships, especially with his wife, who remains morally opposed to his choices. Her belief in the importance of ethics and family highlights the stark contrast between the two groups, leading to a deeper rift and conflict.

The resentment between these two groups—the occult practitioners and the moral "out-group" can be seen as an example of how intergroup conflict can escalate when individuals identify strongly with their respective groups. For Andy, his membership in the occult society becomes so central to his identity that he is willing to alienate those who belong to the "out-group," even if they represent his original, more ethical self.

The central conflict in *Blood Sisters* revolves around the tension between family loyalty and personal morality, and how these forces influence the characters' actions. Kemi's loyalty to the Odufuwa family and her desire to uphold its legacy contrasts sharply with Sarah's growing awareness of the family's corruption. This conflict between group identity and personal identity is central to the narrative, as both women struggle to reconcile their relationships with the family and their individual sense of right and wrong.

Ethnocentrism and Group Bias:

A central concept in Social Identity Theory is ethnocentrism, which refers to the tendency to view one's in-group as superior to others. In the case of *Living in Bondage*, the occult group, particularly the leader, exhibits a form of ethnocentrism by believing that their methods of achieving success and wealth are superior, even though these practices involve moral corruption and sacrificial rituals. The group's bias is reflected in their belief that they are justified in their actions, as they see themselves as part of an exclusive, privileged group that holds the key to wealth and power.

For Andy, the longer he is involved in the group, the more he begins to view the world through the lens of his new identity. He develops a sense of superiority over those who reject the occult practices, seeing their moral and spiritual objections as naive or outdated. His identity becomes increasingly entangled with the occult group's values, reinforcing his ethnocentric views and contributing to the moral decay that ultimately leads to his downfall.

On the other hand, *The Figurine* provides a deeper understanding of how group affiliations, personal identity, and external symbols (like the figurine) interact to shape the characters' behavior and moral choices. The film demonstrates how group dynamics—especially in terms of in-group loyalty, out-group prejudice, and the quest for social comparison—can significantly impact identity formation. Sola's obsession with the figurine, the division it creates within the group, and the moral and psychological consequences that follow highlight the power of external influences on identity and the destructive potential of ethnocentrism, materialism, and status-seeking behaviors within social groups. Ultimately, *The Figurine* illustrates how an individual's identity can be deeply affected by both internal group dynamics and external forces, with profound consequences for both personal and collective well-being.

In *Okafor's Law*, the male characters, especially Chuka, exhibit ethnocentric tendencies toward women and the opposite gender. The belief in "Okafor's Law" is inherently ethnocentric because it positions men as superior and women as objects to be conquered. Chuka's disregard for women's emotional needs and his view of them as disposable or interchangeable reflect an ethnocentric attitude toward gender relations.

In *Blood Sisters*, this concept is evident in the interactions between the Odufuwa family (and its members) and the outside world. The Odufuwa family's sense of superiority, based on their wealth, power, and legacy, creates an ethnocentric attitude where they feel justified in their manipulation and control over others.

Cultivation Theory

Cultivation Theory, proposed by George Gerbner, suggests that long-term exposure to media content can shape viewers' perceptions of reality, cultivating a worldview that reflects the dominant themes and ideologies presented in the media. This theory posits that repeated media exposure reinforces particular cultural norms and values, often shaping individuals' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about the world around them. By focusing on how media consumption influences viewers' social and personal identities, Cultivation Theory helps explain how films, especially those with repeated messages about gender roles, power structures, and societal expectations, can cultivate certain beliefs in society. The application of this theory to films such as *Living in Bondage*, *Okafor's Law*, *Blood Sisters*, and *The Figurine* offers insights into how these movies shape and reflect societal views.

Living in Bondage (1992)

Living in Bondage is a foundational Nollywood film that deals with themes of ambition, power, and the supernatural. The story follows a man, Andy, who sacrifices his wife in a bid to gain wealth and power, only to be haunted by the consequences of his actions. The film explores the concept of the price one must pay for material success and how personal desires can lead to destruction. The supernatural elements in the film also serve to cultivate beliefs in the power of occult practices and the idea that individuals can engage in ritualistic acts to alter their fates. This can contribute to the normalization of such beliefs in real life, especially for viewers who are repeatedly exposed to them in Nollywood films.

Okafor's Law (2016)

One of the major themes in *Okafor's Law* is the objectification of women and the idea that men hold power in romantic relationships. The film also contributes to the cultivation of attitudes about casual relationships and non-commitment, which could influence how younger generations approach romance and sexual relationships. As viewers continue to watch films where sexual conquests are portrayed as normal and even desirable, they may internalize these beliefs and adopt similar attitudes toward relationships in real life.

Blood Sisters (2022)

The series portrays complex power dynamics within families, particularly focusing on how the Odufuwa family's wealth and influence shape their behavior and interactions with others. Cultivation Theory suggests that prolonged exposure to such power struggles, especially in films where women are often caught between loyalty to family and personal morality, could normalize the idea that women are often victims of patriarchal and family structures. These repeated themes may cultivate a sense of helplessness or inevitability in viewers regarding gender inequality, reinforcing the notion that women must navigate oppressive systems to survive.

Blood Sisters also delves into the corrupt practices of powerful families. As audiences see the Odufuwa family manipulate, exploit, and destroy others to maintain their power, it may cultivate a perception that such behaviors are common among the wealthy and influential. This could normalize corruption, bribery, and moral compromise as integral parts of success, especially in the context of Nigerian society, where such themes are prevalent in both real-life discussions and media portrayals.

The Figurine (2009)

The Figurine, directed by Kunle Afolayan, is a supernatural drama that blends mystery and cultural beliefs with contemporary issues. Like *Living in Bondage*, *The Figurine* incorporates supernatural elements that play a significant role in shaping the characters' lives. The central motif of the figurine, which provides wealth and success but also leads to misfortune, cultivates the belief that people's fates can be influenced by supernatural forces. For viewers, especially those who are highly exposed to films incorporating spiritual and mystical elements, such themes might cultivate a worldview where success and failure are sometimes attributed to the actions of unseen forces or deities, rather than personal effort or societal conditions.

The film also cultivates an understanding of Nigerian cultural beliefs, especially regarding ancestral worship and the influence of deities. Over time, repeated exposure to these themes may reinforce a sense of fatalism, where individuals believe that their destinies are controlled by forces beyond their control. This cultivation of superstition can impact how people view life choices, responsibility, and personal agency.

General Cultivation Effects Across the Four Films

Across all four films, there is a strong cultivation of gender roles and power dynamics. Whether it's the patriarchal relationships seen in *Okafor's Law* or the manipulation and control seen in *Blood Sisters*, viewers are repeatedly exposed to the idea that power is predominantly in the hands of men and families. This repeated exposure reinforces gender inequality and can shape how viewers perceive gender roles in their own society.

All four films incorporate supernatural elements, whether through occult practices in *Living in Bondage*, the supernatural figurine in *The Figurine*, or the familial legacy and moral consequences in *Blood Sisters*. Cultivation Theory suggests that when media consistently portrays the supernatural as a means of influencing one's destiny or success, it cultivates a worldview where mystical forces are seen as playing a significant role in everyday life, influencing individuals' decision-making processes and their understanding of fate and control.

The four films illustrate how consistent portrayals of gender roles,

power dynamics, materialism, and supernatural elements in Nollywood films can shape societal perceptions and attitudes. Prolonged exposure to these films may cultivate certain beliefs, such as the normalization of patriarchal structures, the glorification of wealth, and the acceptance of supernatural forces as influential in daily life. As viewers internalize these repeated themes, their understanding of reality may become aligned with the portrayals seen in these films, influencing societal behavior, expectations, and attitudes over time.

Ethnocentrism in Nollywood Films

Without a question, film takes on a strategic role as a means of delivering messages to a sizable and diverse audience (Chalaby, 2023). Ethnocentrism in Nollywood films is often apparent in how ethnic identities are portrayed. These portrayals tend to reflect the dominant ethnic group's perspectives, marginalizing or misrepresenting minority groups. For instance, the Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa ethnic groups, which make up a significant portion of Nigeria's population, are frequently depicted in certain ways based on regional or cultural biases. The popular film "Living which tells the story of a man who acquires fortune and power by killing his wife and then repenting after her ghost haunts him, was the first release in 1992. Many of these films, which have gone viral throughout Africa and its diaspora, from Kinshasa to Kingston, explore themes of ritual murder and redemption, human cravings, shattering social taboos, and the malevolent pursuit of wealth and luxury (Iwowo & Iwowo, 2023). Ethnocentrism has been among humans since the time of the primitive tribes, and early philosophers.

The depiction of particular ethnic groups as either heroic or villainous, or the constant association of a specific group with negative behaviors, creates an ethnocentric worldview. For example, in some Nollywood films, the Yoruba are often portrayed as wise, spiritual, and connected to tradition, while the Igbo are frequently depicted as entrepreneurial but also materialistic, aggressive, and greedy. These stereotypes contribute to the formation of ethnocentric views in viewers, who may begin to believe these exaggerated portrayals are universally true.

Ethnocentrism can also manifest through regional biases, where characters from one region are shown as superior or more civilized compared to others. This reflects an underlying ethnocentric attitude, where one group's practices, dialects, and behaviors are seen as the "norm," while those from other regions are viewed as inferior or problematic.

Stereotyping and its Impact

The stereotypes reinforced by ethnocentrism in Nollywood films can have profound effects on viewers, particularly in how they perceive different ethnic

groups. These portrayals can affect not just perceptions of individuals from other ethnicities, but also self-perception among the ethnic groups being depicted. Stereotyping creates and reinforces social divisions by presenting one group as "the other." It exacerbates ethnic tensions and promotes division, as viewers are encouraged to see people from different ethnic backgrounds as fundamentally different or even inferior. For instance, a movie that constantly portrays a particular ethnic group as dishonest, criminal, or lazy can perpetuate negative perceptions about the entire group, leading to widespread prejudice and discrimination.

On the flip side, stereotypes can also shape the way people from the dominant ethnic group view their own cultural identity. In films that portray their ethnic group in a positive light, individuals may internalize these portrayals as part of their self-concept, reinforcing a sense of pride or superiority. While this can boost confidence in one's own identity, it also risks fostering an "us vs. them" mentality, which can hinder true cultural understanding and solidarity.

The Future of Nollywood: Moving Beyond Ethnocentrism

The future of Nollywood films may involve greater awareness of the potential harm caused by ethnocentrism and stereotyping. Filmmakers can actively work to deconstruct negative stereotypes by creating more well-rounded characters and storylines that move beyond traditional representations of ethnic groups. By embracing inclusive storytelling that reflects the diversity of Nigerian society, Nollywood can help dismantle the stereotypes that have been perpetuated by earlier generations of filmmakers. The shift toward more nuanced, multifaceted portrayals of ethnic identity will require a conscious effort from filmmakers to engage with the complexities of Nigerian society and move beyond simplistic, reductive depictions.

It is also important for audiences to critically engage with films and reflect on how media representations influence their perceptions of ethnicity and culture. Educating audiences about the dangers of ethnocentrism and the importance of empathy and understanding across ethnic lines can help mitigate the harmful effects of stereotyping.

Findings

The findings of this study on the stereotyping effect of ethnocentrism in Nollywood films reveal several key insights regarding how ethnocentrism and stereotyping are depicted in Nollywood and their subsequent impact on both viewers and Nigerian society at large. The study suggests that Nollywood films contribute significantly to the reinforcement of ethnic stereotypes, with potential consequences for intergroup relations, identity formation, and social cohesion in Nigeria. The following findings emerge from the research:

1. The study found that ethnocentric portrayals are pervasive in Nollywood films, with certain ethnic groups being depicted as superior, while others are often marginalized or negatively stereotyped. For example, characters from ethnic groups like the Yoruba and Igbo tend to be cast in roles that either romanticize or vilify them based on cultural biases.
2. A significant finding of this study is the reinforcement of negative stereotypes through repeated media portrayals. The films examined tend to portray certain ethnic groups as involved in criminal activities, greedy, corrupt, or untrustworthy. In contrast, other ethnicities may be depicted as honorable, hardworking, or morally upright. These recurring stereotypes contribute to the solidification of biased attitudes among audiences. For example, films that focus on the Igbo's alleged obsession with wealth and business often depict them as unscrupulous, while Yoruba characters are frequently associated with cultural or spiritual wisdom.
3. The study found that ethnocentrism and stereotyping in Nollywood films can deepen ethnic divisions and social polarization. These portrayals often lead to a "them vs. us" mentality, where viewers perceive individuals from other ethnic groups as inherently different or even inferior. The reinforcement of such stereotypes fosters intergroup mistrust, prejudice, and sometimes hostility, undermining social cohesion. As a result, instead of celebrating diversity, these films can perpetuate divisions among Nigeria's multi-ethnic population, making it more challenging to foster unity.
4. The study underscores the significant role that Nollywood plays in shaping public perceptions of ethnicity and culture in Nigeria

Conclusion

This study reveals that Nollywood films, through their pervasive use of ethnocentrism and stereotypes, significantly influence perceptions of ethnicity and culture in Nigeria. While these films often reinforce negative stereotypes that fuel ethnic divisions, they also possess the potential to foster greater social cohesion and national unity by embracing more inclusive and nuanced representations. As Nollywood continues to evolve, there is a critical opportunity for filmmakers to challenge harmful portrayals and contribute to a more unified, diverse national identity. Greater awareness and media literacy are essential for audiences to critically engage with these portrayals and mitigate their harmful effects, ultimately promoting a more tolerant and understanding society.

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