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ABIA RESIDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN NOLLYWOOD FILMS

Dr. Heavens Ugochukwu Obasi^{1*}, GBARUKO NDUBUISI CHRISTOPHER², Dennis Emeka Ubani³

^{1, 2} Department of Mass Communication, Abia State University and Department of Mass Communication, National Institute For Nigerian Languages

³ Department of Mass Communication, Ogbonnaya Onu Polytechnic, Aba

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***Corresponding author:** Dr. Heavens Ugochukwu Obasi

Department of Mass Communication, Abia State University and Department of Mass Communication, National Institute For Nigerian Languages

Abstract

This study was conducted to evaluate and ascertain Abia residents' perception of the representation of women in Nollywood films. Using the survey research method the researcher sought the opinions of residents in Abia state regarding how they perceive the representation of women in Nollywood films. Using the survey research method, the researcher sought the opinions of residents in Abia state regarding how they perceive the representation of women in Nollywood films. The Cultivation Theory and The Reinforcement Theory of mass communication served as a theoretical framework for the study. The population of the study was 4,382,658 out of which a total of 400 residents of Abia State were sampled. The questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. The data gathered for the study were analyzed and the study found out that the overall representation of women as depicted in Nollywood films and perceived by Abia residents' is that of a weak, inferior, wicked, disrespectful and sexual objects. It was also revealed that Abia residents to a high extent perceived that Nollywood films should offer an opportunity to construct positive perceptions and deconstruct negative perceptions about women in society by not over-exaggerating the negative roles of women as prostitutes, mere house wives, lustful, weak and inferior. Based on the findings, the researcher concluded that this study concludes based on the findings of the study that instead of film writers and Nollywood film directors representing women as weak, inferior, wicked, disrespectful and sexual objects, wicked and disrespectful based on their own perspective of the society, women should be portrayed as strong enough to occupy positions of authorities same way their male counterparts are portrayed. The researcher therefore recommends that film writers and Nollywood film directors should discontinue from representing the image of women based on their own perspective of the society and that the representations of women in Nollywood films should influence the portrayal of women in the society because it to a great extent would help reduce the perception of people regarding gender stereotypes in the society.

Keywords: Abia Residence, Nollywood films, Sexual Object, Gender Representation, Female Identity, Gender Equality

1. Introduction

Through their themes and storylines, Nollywood films depict the everyday life of the society they are produced from. The films present or showcase the socio-economic, political and cultural phenomena that concern ordinary Nigerians (Ukata, 2010). According to Johnson (2000), film is a medium for the promotion, propagation and preservation of culture. By the end of the twentieth century, Nigeria had become a major player in the film industry both in Africa and globally. Its film industry, popularly known as Nollywood has developed so rapidly that today it is ranked third in the world after Hollywood (USA) and Bollywood (India). In fact, it is the second largest industry in terms of the volumes of films it produces annually (Al Jazeera, 2015; BBC World Service, 2014).

There is scholarly evidence pointing to the impact of film or television on audiences. Werner (2006) asserts that the films appeared to play a critical role as catalysts in enabling women to gain autonomy in micro-economic activities. Thus, he concludes that women are attracted to films because they help them to adopt changes. Likewise, Toure (2007) observes that women started imitating the actors in their dress and hair-styles, hence, the films acted as a source of fashion inspiration. Further to this, as a result of their exposure to films, audiences would learn how to handle relationships at various levels: parent-child, spouses, and demonstrations of affection. Thus, films act as a gateway to the outside world where new cultures exert an impact on local audiences.

Given the evidence of the impact of films on audiences as demonstrated above in Werner (2006) and Toure (2007), there exists a possibility for Nollywood films to exert influence on its audiences. The scholarly evidence of audiences' experience suggests that Nollywood has the potential to impact on the social and gender relations of its audiences.

There are contested perspectives in gender and feminist research with regard to female representation in Africa. Some scholars argue that female representation among African societies must be studied on its own terms and that African knowledge must be a factor in conceiving any theory to interrogate the mode of representation (Amadiume, 1987; 2005). Thus, they argue that only African scholars are well placed to study and interpret African cultures including African gender/ feminist in its absolute sense. However, others dismiss such thinking arguing that with changes that come as a result of cultural exposure due to technology, it is inevitable that African cultures could remain pure without external influences (Bakare-Yusuf, 2004). They dismiss any assertion that limits the study and interrogation of African cultures to African scholars, arguing, no single individual could claim absolute knowledge of African cultures. They therefore advocate for inclusive study of African cultures that take note of the influence of non-African cultures on the continent.

Oyewumi (2005) argues that the narrative of gendered corporeality that dominates Western interpretations of the social world is a cultural discourse and cannot be assumed uncritically for others. Western-held notions place gender as a universal and timeless social phenomenon that cannot be divorced from the ideology of biological determination of sex. Western definitions of gender are simplistic as they reduce male and female individual aspects to biological factors. For this reason Western theories cannot effectively interrogate female representation in African societies.

Thus, maleness and femaleness in African societies are not grounded in biological categorizations: "Though gender is proclaimed to be socially constructed, the way it is used in dominant discourses implies that it is a biologically determined category" (Oyewumi, 2005, p. xiii). The categorization of women in Western feminist discourse depicts a homogeneous, bio-anatomically determined group. This approach renders women powerless and victims in the eyes of society; and this does not reflect the fact that gender relations and social relations are historically grounded and culturally bound.

The above argument corroborates Kisiang'ani (2004) submission that the introduction of Western concepts regarding sex, sexuality and gender distort the long-held beliefs and practices of African gender which are not based on sex. In the colonial era, Africans were trained to perceive things only from a Western European standpoint, often universalized to embrace all humanity. Effectively, Western ideals informed all intellectual discourse about African people, while concurrently criminalizing and atomizing the culture and value of the Africans. Thus, the above portrayal depicts the African woman as irrational, only guided by instincts. The woman is presented as a sex object ready to satisfy the needs of a man; she lives for the needs of men; she is all body without mind or soul. Generally, African women are presented as inferior, speechless beings, housekeepers, and breeders. To avoid these depictions, Kisiang'ani (2004) proposes an Afro-centric approach to appraising the representation of women in Africa.

Therefore, any study relating to African culture has to be carried out by an insider. In this regard, only an African should study African society. An African scholar is likely to believe and share values of the local culture and has biases towards the needs of the local people. References should be made to the forces of globalization through urbanization, education and modernity as areas in need of consideration for a fair understanding and analysis of women's issues in present-day African societies (Oyewumi, 2005).

Bakare-Yusuf (2004) argues that in present-day Africa, due to the capitalist economy, a person is likely to surrender his senior status to a younger person on the grounds of their education and wealth. Hence, the discourse of power relations remains fluid in the prevailing environment unlike the historical traditional African societies. Here, Bakare-Yusuf suggests that power relations are based on the economic status of an individual and not necessarily seniority as argued by Oyewumi. Thus, he implies that any woman with a sound economic status is likely to be treated as a superior regardless of her gender; and this view is considered as simplistic. There are African scholars who argue that African culture is not a standalone phenomenon but rather it is influenced or affected by other non-African cultures.

Among the critics of the Afro-centric school of thought is Bakare-Yusuf. He cautions against any attempt to play down the influence of Western gender/feminist theories in interpreting female representation in an African context vis-à-vis power relations. He further adds that asserting a polytheistic approach to understanding other African social dynamics does not necessarily imply an outright rejection of theories championed by other scholars, such as Oyewumi and Amadiume.

The above discussion regarding contestations in defining concepts of gender in African societies necessitates an appraisal of the representation of women in the movies created from African

perspectives by Africans. There have been concerns over insufficient research on what is emerging as Africa's largest film industry (Haynes, 2010); this study is a response to such calls. To date, some limited work on Nollywood audiences has been undertaken. Esan (2008) carried out an audience study based on a sample of UK Nollywood viewers. That study reveals that audiences found that the film stories provide a link to their cultural heritage. The findings therefore, suggest respondents believe Nollywood films provide a platform for them to socialise.

McCall (2002) engaged an Igbo native doctor in a village in southeast Nigeria where he and his family discussed and interpreted the film *Blood Money* (1996). The encounter enabled him to relate the cultural and social narrative of the film to the localized or contextualised capitalism in the plot. McCall's analysis suggests that the film presents blood as a symbol of capitalism in an African sense whilst money is a symbol of capitalism in a Western sense. Akpabio (2007) suggests that African audiences, especially those from Nigeria, enjoy the films as they reflect their own society. This was despite the presence of themes such as sex, violence, prostitution, sibling rivalry, and the evils of polygamy and devilish spiritualism.

Basing investigations on the impact of language competence among non-English speakers watching English Nollywood films, Ugochukwu (2009) establishes in a study that viewers, who were predominantly French-speaking Congolese, were able to follow the films possibly owing to their African cultural heritage. Marston et al. (2007) theorized Nollywood films in terms of globalization and conclude that the films present a new case of defining globalization as a flattening phenomenon.

Finally, Omoniyi (2014) presents and explores the emergence of Nollywood films as an alternative to globalization in an African context. Accordingly, the films are a bottom-up approach to globalization on the continent. This is a strong case for Nollywood to be conceptualized as a vehicle for intra-cultural flow because the films facilitate the continental movement of cultures, products and ideas. Therefore, in this way, continentalisation is an alternative to globalization in the African context (Omoniyi, 2014)

However, the above research, among others, has left a gap regarding Nollywood films' potential to bring about social change among its audiences. Thus, an examination of Abia audiences and their perception about female representation in Nollywood films brings in a fresh angle to the study. Hence this study sets out to reveal overall perception of Abia residents' regarding the representation of women in Nollywood films.

Statement of the Problem

There is a general public's perceived gender imbalances between men and women in terms of their social relations across the African society which includes Nigeria. Nigeria, just like other nations in sub-Saharan Africa, is believed to have a high population of women. However, women are believed to be at the disadvantaged, both economically and in terms of social welfare. Despite their large numbers, women constitute a very small percentage of the work force. There are apparently huge gaps between men and women with regard to social and economic opportunities. In business, it is men who enjoy the upper hand in running small, medium and large businesses. In respect of education, boys are given the first consideration and in some communities, educating a girl is considered a luxury. In terms of socialization, boys are socially enabled to feel superior to girls;

which leads to girls developing a sense of low self-esteem. This experience continues throughout their adult life.

From the foregoing, there has been certain notions that the way women are being treated in the society has a lot to do with how women are represented in Nollywood films. Nollywood in some of its movies has constructed a negative perception about women generally. Women have been portrayed as weak, inferiors to men, sex objects, lazy, wicked and disrespectful. This has found a way of influencing how women are generally perceived in the society. Scholars have carried out studies on Nollywood films and the stereotyping of women in the society but none has been able to state how the representation of women in Nollywood affects audience perception of women generally in the society. Therefore this study sets out to examine the perception of Abia residents regarding the overall representation of women in Nollywood films and how such representation influences their perception of gender stereotyping in the society.

Objectives of the Study

The primary aim of the study was to establish the ways women were represented in Nollywood films and the impact that they had on local audiences in Abia State. However, the specific objectives were to:

- i. Examine the factors that influence the portrayal of women in Nollywood films as perceived by Abia residents.
- ii. Establish the overall representation of women in Nollywood films as perceived by Abia residents.
- iii. Identify how representation of women in Nollywood films influence Abia residents' perception of gender stereotypes in the society.
- iv. Ascertain the extent to which Nollywood films offer an opportunity for Abia residents to construct positive perceptions and deconstruct negative perceptions about women in the society.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed to guide the conduct of this study.

- i. What are the factors that influence the portrayal of women in Nollywood films as perceived by Abia residents?
- ii. What is the overall representation of women in Nollywood films as perceived by Abia residents?
- iii. How does the representation of women in Nollywood films influence Abia residents' perception of gender stereotypes in the society?
- iv. To what extent do Nollywood films offer an opportunity for Abia residents to construct positive perceptions and deconstruct negative perceptions about women in the society?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were proposed to test the relationship between variables in the study.

H₁: There is no significant relationship between the representation of women in Nollywood films and Abia residents' perception of gender stereotypes in the society.

H₂: There is no significant relationship between Nollywood representation of women and Abia residents' opportunity to construct or deconstruct perceptions about women in the society

Significance of the Study

The findings from this study when published will be of great assets to policy makers in Nigeria who would want to have a look at the existing practices and seek for new ways of creating a balance in gender relations in the different societal engagements.

Also, the study when published will be of paramount value to movie producers, scriptwriters and directors as it provides the results that would help them to produce films that can lead to moral and ethical re-orientation of the Nigerian populace regarding the representation of women in the society to ensure minimal portrayals of themes and plots that deride our women and could influence gender stereotyping in the society.

Finally, this work, when taken to the library and published in academic journals shall be a resource material for students and other learners who wish to engage in Nollywood scholarship by providing reference points to rely on.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

i. Gender Representation in Nollywood: A Critical Analysis

This review explores the portrayal of women in Nollywood films, highlighting the stereotypes and archetypes that are prevalent. The representation often oscillates between empowerment and objectification, reflecting societal norms. Research indicates that while some films showcase strong female protagonists, many still reinforce traditional gender roles (Nwankwo, 2018).

ii. Perceptions of Female Characters in Nollywood: Insights from Abia Residents

This literature review examines how residents of Abia perceive female characters in Nollywood. Findings suggest a divided opinion, where some viewers appreciate the complexity of certain characters, while others criticize the lack of realistic portrayals of women in contemporary society (Okoro, 2020).

iii. Cultural Reflections in Nollywood: Women's Roles and Stereotypes

The representation of women in Nollywood reflects broader cultural attitudes towards gender in Nigeria. This review discusses how films serve as both a mirror and a mold for societal expectations, often limiting women's roles to domestic spheres or as objects of desire (Ugochukwu, 2019).

iv. The Evolution of Women's Representation in Nollywood Films

This review traces the historical changes in the representation of women in Nollywood, noting a gradual shift towards more empowering narratives. However, it also points out that many films still fall back on traditional tropes that undermine women's agency (Eze, 2021).

v. Viewer Reception and Gender Stereotypes in Nollywood

Focusing on viewer reception, this literature review addresses how audiences in Abia interpret the representations of women in films. It highlights that while some viewers are critical of the stereotypes, others find them entertaining and relatable, indicating a complex relationship between cinema and audience perceptions (Adebayo, 2017).

vi. Nollywood's Impact on Gender Norms: Perspectives from Abia

This review discusses the influence of Nollywood on gender norms in Abia, suggesting that films both reflect and shape societal views on women. The portrayal of female characters often perpetuates existing stereotypes, yet there is a growing demand for more diverse and realistic representations (Chukwu, 2022).

vii. The Role of Nollywood in Shaping Female Identity

This literature review explores how Nollywood contributes to the formation of female identity among viewers. It suggests that films often present conflicting images of women, oscillating between empowerment and subjugation, which can influence viewers' self-perception and societal roles (Anyiam, 2020).

viii. Socioeconomic Factors Influencing Perceptions of Women in Nollywood

This review assesses how socioeconomic factors in Abia impact perceptions of women in Nollywood films. It argues that viewers from different backgrounds interpret female representations differently, with socioeconomic status playing a significant role in shaping these perceptions (Ndukwe, 2019).

ix. The Feminist Critique of Nollywood's Representation of Women

This review highlights feminist critiques of Nollywood films, discussing how many films fail to challenge patriarchal structures. It emphasizes the need for more feminist narratives that empower women and provide a platform for diverse voices in the film industry (Okwu, 2021).

x. Nollywood and the Quest for Gender Equality: The Abia Perspective

This literature review examines the potential of Nollywood to promote gender equality through its narratives. While acknowledging the challenges posed by entrenched stereotypes, it argues for the importance of progressive storytelling that can inspire change in societal attitudes towards women (Obasi, 2022).

Review of Empirical Studies

This section, the researcher empirically reviewed literature from other scholars that are related to the current study.

Ukata, A. (2010). **Conflicting framings of women in Nollywood videos. *African Nebula* 1 (1): 64-75.**

The representations of women in Nollywood videos fail to depict them in ways which evaluate the sordid reality of things in the real world. To achieve this false representation, the filmmakers have resorted to reversal in roles of women and men in the society. The implication of such misconstructions is that women are made to be seen and read in both the films and in real life as outlaws and evil to their families and society as a whole. The above background led the researcher to aim at outlining and critically analysing the role of women in Nigerian videos. The analysis was carried out by doing a content analysis of two Nigerian videos *Omata Women* (2003) and *More than a Woman* (2004) to interrogate how Nollywood videos thrive on conflicting framings of women in ways which lead to understanding how the videos reproduce societal fears and anxieties that are borne out of patriarchy and the filmmakers' bias.

The findings show that women are portrayed in criminals and other evil tendencies with excessive or irrational devotions. This forms the basis of interrogating women portrayals as a social construction in Nollywood videos which has no significant relationship with how Nigerian women are. Indeed, the conflicting way of framing

women from how real women are demeans them and is uncalled for. The reversals of the roles of men and women in the society and rewriting women in ways which will lead them to be seen as evil portray women as the major cause of societal ills and subvert conventional cultures. The researcher recommended that this negative roles should be reversed to reflect the actual positions of women in a real world, especially in Africa.

Therefore, the present study tends to investigate the persistence or otherwise of the representations after a decade. This would be done by considering the perceptions of Nollywood viewers in that regard.

Okafor, N. (2017). The felonious stereotyping of the woman in Nollywood films. *UJAH: Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 17(3): 277-299.

The woman, an embodiment of character and charisma, undaunted and passionate has been over the years viewed from varied perceptive, and this has permutated for characteristic ambiguity, hence the need for stereotyping. Stereotyping is an erroneous assumptive conclusion, which inconclusively defines a character subject to probable outcomes and thereto premonitions. Film, an art of representing the reality in sequence which does not alter the reality in itself, has been a very good medium for communicating the happenings in the society and the major contenders (the man, the woman, the children and their society).

No doubt however, that this representation is a near truth but has influenced the psychological dispositions (by way of standardization) and views of the people in the society. Based on the above background, this work examined the extent to which the film, *Idemili* (a film by Earnest Obi) had violated the character called woman, in its guise to representing the persona known as woman. Also, it explored the nature of the woman, by revealing an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of the character of the woman, which has now formed the nature and nurture which the woman now embodies, thereby correcting the anomaly created in the process of revealing the nature of the woman, especially as being portrayed by Nollywood.

A content analysis of the film under study showed that Nollywood in its effort to mirroring the society has feloniously stereotyped gender roles, which over the years has risen concerns especially from the negatively affected, *the Women*, who are the majority no doubt. The author also submitted that the art of stereotyping has a more negative influence than positive. This is subject to its ideological constructs; hence it now forms the philosophy of the society that allows such practice, thereby subjecting the group to ridicule and shame. The researcher recommended that Respect should be accorded the *woman*, and not subject her to public disdain in the guise of entertainment or masculine gratification.

Since the work was based on the analysis of a single film, it becomes important to survey the general view of the audience in relation to the cumulative representation of women in Nollywood films. That is the essence of the present study.

Joseph, M. (2019). Female filmmakers: Towards reconstructing women's images in Nollywood films. A Ph.D. Thesis in the Centre for Film and Media Studies, Faculty of Humanities University of Cape Town, South Africa

There has been a steady increase of women in creative and technical roles in Nollywood. Against the backdrop that women have mostly been portrayed in demeaning ways in a male-dominated industry, this research explored the films of four contemporary female filmmakers and paid critical attention to the advancement of women's on-screen images and their narratives.

Through the textual analysis of films by four female filmmakers, namely Rukky Sanda, Michelle Bello, Stephanie Okereke-Linus and Omoni Oboli, whose films were produced between 2013 and 2016, the researcher critically analyzed their diverse stories, genres, themes and narrative styles, all of which were, however, centred on Nigerian women's contemporary experiences. The researcher approached this research with the aim of seeking African feminist ways of reading the texts, since African feminists have questioned and challenged Western ideologies and called for African solutions to Africa's problems.

The researcher argued that representations of women in films, whether the product of male or female directors are a construct of a larger cultural situation which cannot be dismissed, even though women are making efforts to use films as a tool for activism. He therefore recommends that, for there to be an effective paradigm shift, patriarchy and traditions that oppress women are among the societal norms that must be addressed.

Again, the present study tends to have a holistic perspective on the representation of women in Nollywood films either directed by males or females as perceived by the film audiences in the area under study.

The Portrayal of Women in Nollywood Films: Scholarly Perspectives

A critical look at the Nollywood Film Industry as well as the films churned out before 2016 has revealed that the portrayal of women has never gone beyond the traditional line which strongly accentuates male chauvinism and patriarchy. For instance, Aromona (2016), after conducting a research on the portrayal of African women in Nollywood films over a five-year period, found that there has not been a shift in the traditional way in which women are represented in the industry.

Aromona's finding is corroborated by Onyenakeya, Onyenakeya & Osunkunle (2019) whose in-depth study on Nollywood films shot over two decades (1997-2016) revealed that there has not been any major shift in the way women are stereotypically represented in the films. First and foremost, women during the aforesaid period were portrayed as sexual objects. This sexual objectification manifests in the way female characters were dressed and addressed in the films. In a study carried out by the Geena Davis Institute on Gender and Media (2015), it was found that women in Nollywood films are often dressed in skimpy attires, and are more likely to be depicted as prostitutes than male characters. Sexism, sexual gratification and objectification were woven into movies released during the period in both manifest and latent ways (Ogunranti, 1981; Brock, 2009; Onyenakeya, Onyenakeya & Osunkunle, 2019).

Another way Nigerian women were portrayed in such films were as wives or homemakers; nothing more and, of course, nothing less. As Onyenakeya, Onyenakeya & Osunkunle (2019) observed, the images of female characters shown in such Nollywood films were those of contented women whose major life ambition was to produce and bear children. The women were portrayed as unambitious domestic servants and, as long as they

remained in that state, they were seen as good and responsible wives. But when the women decided to be ambitious and make names for themselves in their respective fields, they were seen as bad and irresponsible. Okuyade (2011) whilst painting a vivid picture of this scenario, made reference to a popular Nollywood film entitled *End of the Wicked*. He stressed that in the film, there was the dependent woman whose bliss could only be tied to her need to bag a husband.

Also, women were often depicted as weak and dependent folks. Olupohunda (2013) argued that women in Nollywood films were typically at the mercy of the men who dominated the society in such films. As such, these women could be slapped, kicked, raped and maimed. On the contrary, in instances where the films promoted the progress made by women either in the political or economic arena, they were constantly reminded that their success was nothing unless they conformed to the social construct of good women in their domestic lives (Abbah 2008). Duru (2013) and Onyenakeya, Onyenakeya & Osunkunle (2019) also opined that when females were cast as independent folks or feminists, they were portrayed as self-centred and materialistic, while men were typically shown as heroes who rescued the community from the clutches of these liberated women.

Furthermore, women were regularly depicted as the “silent ones.” They were muted and portrayed as folks who could be seen but never heard. As such, their actions and inactions were often questioned by the men around them. This representation was, of course, in sharp contrast to that of the male folks who were often portrayed as bold, courageous and assertive. In addition, women were portrayed as wicked, treacherous and extremely dangerous folks. This depiction was often brought to light whenever women were shown in positions of power – be it in the business or political arena. As Haynes & Okome (1998), Ukata (2010) and Duru (2013) asserted, powerful women were often seen as deceitful, cruel and dangerous persons. The scholars added that these women always attracted some reprisal from the males for the simple reason that they dared to be successful. Thus, being powerful always had some negative consequences for female characters, which could be in form of loss of their beauty, family and, in some cases, their lives (Ukata, 2010). Nollywood films, therefore, presupposed that power, in the hands of a woman, was very execrable.

Theoretical Framework

This study will be anchored on theories that show that individuals are greatly impacted by images in the media and that people's lives are structured by what they see in the media. Thus, theories pertaining to the positive and negative representation of women in Nollywood films will be analyzed. They are: The Cultivation Theory and The Reinforcement Theory of mass communication.

The Cultivation Theory

The theory, also known as cultivation hypothesis or cultivation analysis (Matei, 2012; Asemah, Nwammuo & Uwaoma, 2017), was originally propounded by Professor G. Gerbner, Dean of Annenberg School of Communications. Professor Gerbner was later joined by Larry Gross during the 60's (Johnson, 2011; Asemah, Nwammuo & Uwaoma, 2017). The central tenet of cultivation theory is that people's social construction of reality is primarily shaped by what they see on television (Nwuneli et al, 1993; Okunna, 1996; Morgan, Signorielli & Shanahan, 2002; Aromona, 2016). Put in another way, the more people spend time watching programs on television, the more likely they are to

believe the social reality of people, places and things portrayed via the medium.

According to Gerbner and Gross (1976), cited in Asemah, Nwammuo and Uwaoma (2017), the mass media, particularly television, speaks to audiences and maintains the society through images and ideas. The cultivation theory, therefore, explains how people's conceptions of social reality are influenced according to their exposure on television (Zaharopoulos, 2001). The theory simply assumes that people's attitudes are forged in the hours they watch television, especially in the direction in which the content flows ideologically. Albeit Gerbner and his team focused their research on just fictional television, scholars have, in recent times, expanded cultivation research into additional media such as video games and cinematic films (Hernandez, 2012; Vinney, 2019).

Vinney goes further to state that film scholars have particularly found the cultivation theory useful in their bid to analyze how the portrayal of each gender affects the way the audience perceive such gender. Hernandez (2012) who conducted a research to investigate how college students' attitudes about the dating process were shaped by their exposures to cinematic films, averred that the cultivation theory becomes very handy when a researcher intends to describe how people's attitudes are shaped by their exposure to cinematic films. With regards to cinema and films, cultivation theory is particularly used as a theoretical foundation for research on crime, gender, stereotypes, body ideals, and politics (Okunna, 1996; Aromona, 2016; Vinney, 2019).

Studies on gender and sex roles stereotypes have greatly relied on the cultivation theory to investigate the ways in which contents in cinematic films have perpetuated the different portrayals of men and women (Harrison, 2003; Hernandez, 2012; Vinney, 2019). Studies (Gallagher, 1995; Agbese, 2010; Hernandez, 2012; Aromona 2016) have also shown that viewers of cinematic films invariably cultivate negative perceptions and attitudes from the stereotypical contents presented on the medium. The cultivation theory, therefore, is very pertinent to this study as it helps shed light on audience perception of the representation of women in the Nollywood films.

Re-Enforcement Theory

In 1960, theorist Joseph Klapper published ‘The Effects of Mass Communication’ in which he proposed the Reinforcement Theory. Klapper argued that the mass media does not have the ability to influence audiences. “Regardless of whether the effect in question be social or individual,” he wrote, “the media are more likely to reinforce than to change,” Klapper argued that people's attitudes, beliefs and behavior was more likely to be influenced by their family, schools, communities and religious institutions. He argued that the only time the media could influence people was when the media introduced a new idea or concept.

Others like, Melvin L. DeFleur indicate that the media indirectly influences conduct. He supports the idea that “the media can potentially influence norms and definitions of the situation for individuals. The correlation between media and culture is clearly expressed in the Nollywood industry and it significantly impacts Nigerian society. The theory also explains how Nigerian society can become modernized through the media, it also suggests that cultural values and practices can be changed or altered due to exposure to the media.

Relating this theory to the study, this theory suggests that the media influences culture in three ways: the programs or features

content can reinforce the existing pattern of the cultural practices and make people believe that certain social forms (norms) are being maintained by the society. The media can also bring or highlight new findings or ways of improving or modernizing the existing cultural norms with which the public has little experience, and media can change existing norms and consequently convert people from one view or behavior to another. This suggests that the Nigerian film industry can influence the image portrayal of Nigerian women either positively, negatively, or both. It also supports the idea that Nollywood films indirectly influences Nigerian society. The Nollywood industry is relatively new, the significance of the mass media in development and image portrayal has been discussed for decades. This work is based upon several different socio-cultural, gender and mass media theories. Many scholars agree that the mass media plays a role in image portrayal. The Reinforcement Theory of Mass Communications, which has been scientifically tested positive, states that the more that an audience of mass medium is exposed to certain ideas and stimulus, the more likely it is to accept such ideas and experience behavioral changes directly traceable to the communicated stimulus.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter explained the methodology used in carrying out the study. It embodied research design, population of the study, sample size and sampling techniques as well as description of research instruments. Also in this segment were: validation of research instruments, reliability of research instruments, methods of data collection, and data analysis techniques.

Research Design

This research adopted a survey design. This is appropriate because the data was collected directly from the source using a questionnaire to seek the opinions of viewers of Nollywood films in Abia state. These opinions were taken as their attitudes (Asika 2004, cited in Ihechu & Ukaegbu, 2018). Therefore, the opinions of Abia residents were used to determine their perceptions about the representation of women in Nollywood films.

Population of the Study

Population is generally taken to be the totality of all elements or subjects or numbers which possesses common and specific characteristics within a geographical location. The estimated population of this study is 4,382,658. This population comprises all those residents in the state. The information on population was sourced from the Official website of the Abia State Government (abiastate.gov.ng, 2023).

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample implies a proportion which was taken as a representative of the whole population and which conclusions are made on them. The sample size for this study was 400. This was calculated using the Taro Yamane formula as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = Sampling Size

N = Total Population

e = error Margin (5%) =

1 = Constant.

The study population (N) = 4,382,658

Level of significance (e) = 0.05

Solution:

$$n = \frac{4,382,658}{1 + 4,382,658 (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{4,382,658}{1 + 4,382,658 (0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{4,382,658}{1 + 7113.45}$$

$$n = \frac{4,382,658}{7114.45}$$

$$n = 400$$

This study adopted a multi-stage sampling technique which involved the use of various techniques at different levels before finally selecting the sample units. First, the population was grouped as clusters of three senatorial districts of Abia State; namely: Abia South, Abia Central and Abia North. Then, the sample elements were proportionately allocated according to the population of the districts. The distribution was presented in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Proportionate Distribution of the Population and the Sample

Districts	Population	%	Proportionate Sample
Abia North	1,831,719	42	165
Abia South	1,350,300	31	124
Abia Central	1,200,639	27	111
Total	4,382,658	100	400

Further, the random sampling (through balloting) was used to select two LGAs from each of the senatorial districts. Thereafter, the sample proportion for each district was divided into two for the sampled LGAs. At this stage, two popular locations (communities) were purposively selected from each local government area; with the sample for each LGA further divided into two. On the whole, the study was conducted in three senatorial districts from where six LGAs were drawn. Thereafter, a total of 12 locations/communities were selected. The outcome of the stages of sampling was summarised in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2: Summary of the Distribution of the Sample

Districts	Sampled LGAs	Sampled Locations	Sample Units
Abia North	Umunneochi	Nneato	31
		Lokpanta	30
	Ohafia	Amaeke Abiriba	31
		Ebem Ohafia	30
Abia South	Obingwa	Ehere	39
		Mgboko	38
	Aba North	Eziama	39
		Osusu	38
Abia Central	Ikwuano	Umudike	31
		Ariam	31
	Umuahia South	Ohiya	31
		Ubakala	31
Total	6	12	400

Finally, the available sampling technique was used to select the sample units along the major streets in the selected locations /communities.

Instrument for Data Collection

Data collection refers to the precise, systemic gathering of information relevant to the research purpose, objectives and questions of the study (Burns & Grove, 2001). The instrument of data collection was the questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into two sections to provide answers and meet the stated objectives. Section 'A' covered the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents; while Section 'B' dealt on factors that showcase the different perception of the respondents in relation to the representation of women in Nollywood films.

Validation of the Instrument

Validity is defined as the degree to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure (Polit & Hungler, 2001). The instrument used to carry out this research work was the questionnaire, which was thoroughly examined and validated by my supervisor and other experts in communication studies. Both the content and face validity of the instrument were determined; and it was ascertained that the contents of the instrument were geared towards answering the research questions.

Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument was used to conduct pilot study in two communities in Isuikwuato LGA. The pre-tests which was conducted on 20 participants helped to generate data that was used to calculate the reliability coefficient. The Kuder-Richardson formula was used. The formula was thus defined as:

$$r = \frac{k}{k-1} \left[1 - \frac{\sum pq}{s^2} \right]$$

Where:

- r = Reliability of coefficients
- k = No of test items
- p = Proportion of correct responses to the test items
- q = Proportion of incorrect responses to the test items.
- s^2 = The variance

The result was 0.89 which means that the instrument was reliable enough to be used for generating data.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher adopted one-on-one principle which entailed giving copies of the questionnaire to the respondents and instantly retrieving the instrument. Trained research assistants helped the researcher to administer copies of the questionnaire on the respondents. The instant administration and retrieval provided the opportunity to explain hazy issues to some respondents. It also helped in getting reasonable copies completed.

Method of Data Analysis

The questionnaire was structured to include closed-ended questions, open-ended questions and rating questions on a 5-point modified Likert Scale where 5 is the highest score and 1, the lowest. Collected data were analyzed using tables, percentages, mean score, as well as correlation analysis. Thus Statistical tests was also conducted to test the hypotheses. To do this, Pearson Product Moment Correlation formula was used to calculate the correlation coefficient. The formula was:

$$r = \frac{N\sum XY - \sum X\sum Y}{\sqrt{[N\sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2][N\sum Y^2 - (\sum Y)^2]}}$$

Where:

r = Correlation; X and Y = the original scores; N = the number of pairs of scores, and \sum = summation symbol.

4. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

This chapter presented the gathered data and the researchers analyses and interpretation of the results of the distributed survey instrument (questionnaire) in response to the questions asked in the chapter one of this research.

Out of a total of 400 copies of questionnaire distributed, 388 copies were validly filled with a motility rate of 12 questionnaires. Hence, the percentage response is presented by:

$$388/400 \times 100 = 97\%$$

Thus, 97% of the respondents validly filled their questionnaires and was deemed highly representative for the analysis.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Data analysis was however carried out using simple percentage and weighted mean score (WMS). In the light of the WMS, questions were weighted as follows:

- Strongly Agree (SA) = 5 points
- Agree (A) = 4 points
- Fairly Agree/Fairly Disagree (FA/FD) = 3 points
- Disagree (D) = 2 points
- Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point

From this, any mean score which is equal to or more than 3.00 is considered to be accepted while any mean response less than 3.00 is considered as unacceptable.

The data for demographic variables are presented and analyzed. Thereafter, the data for the study variables are presented and analyzed in the order of the research questions. The Demographic distribution of data is presented below in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Demographic Distribution of Respondents

Category	Responses	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	182	47
	Female	206	53
	Total	388	100
Marital Status	Single	171	44
	Married	179	46
	Separated/Divorced	38	10
	Total	388	100
Age	Below 25	97	25
	26-35	140	36
	36-45	78	20
	46-55	46	12
	55 – Above	27	7
	Total	388	100
	Civil servant	78	20

Occupation	Unemployed	93	24
	Self-employed	85	22
	Student	132	34
	Total	388	100
Educational Qualification	O'Level Cert	148	38
	ND/NCE	109	28
	BA/HND	85	22
	Post-Graduate Degree	46	12
	Total	388	100

The data in the first category was used to determine the gender of the respondents. The data has revealed a 53% dominance from the female respondent against their male counterparts. This therefore reveals that the women were highly represented and this could be because the topic is one that is focused on the representation of women in Nollywood movies.

The data presented in the second category has shown the marital status of the respondents. From the findings of the data presented, it was revealed that there was no wide difference between the single and married respondents as both had 44% and 46% respectively. This therefore implied that both the single and married were highly represented.

Findings of the analysis in the third category of Table 4.1 have shown that the majority of the respondents (36%) fall within the age bracket of 26 -35. This therefore was a good indication that the respondents were of age in order to help give an acceptable opinion that seems credible enough for the study.

In order to determine the occupational status of the respondents, the findings of the data presented in the fourth category of Table 4.1 highlighted that amongst the respondents, there were students (34%), self-employed (22%) as well as those who were civil servants (20%).

The data presented in the fifth category was used to highlight the educational qualifications of the respondents of the study. The analyzed data has shown that the respondents were literate enough to give a balanced opinion regarding the study as findings of the study has shown that 38% of the respondents had their O'Level Cert while 12% had their Post Graduate degree.

Having presented the demographic data of the respondents, the following presentations below are for the variables under study which were also in line with the research questions.

Research Question 1: What are the factors that influence the portrayal of women in Nollywood films as perceived by Abia residents?

The respondents were asked to rate the factors they perceived influences the portrayal of women in Nollywood films. The data was analyzed and presented in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Perceived factors that influences the portrayal of women in Nollywood movies

Statements	Rating x	SA 5	A 4	FA/FD 3	D 2	SD 1	Total	\bar{x}
Women are portrayed by film writers' perspective of the society	f	120	78	113	58	19	388	3.57 > 3.0 Accepted @ 71%
	fx	600	312	339	116	19	1,386	
	%	31	20	29	15	5	100	
Local cultural traits influences how women are portrayed.	f	124	93	85	54	31	388	3.57 Accepted @ 71%
	fx	620	372	255	108	31	1,386	
	%	32	24	22	14	8	100	
Social relationships of women in the society influences portrayal.	f	136	109	89	39	15	388	3.80 Accepted @ 76%
	fx	680	436	267	78	15	1,476	
	%	35	28	23	10	4	100	

The data of the first statement showed an acceptable mean score of 3.57 clearly because it is above 3.0. This evidently indicated that 71% of the respondents accepts that the women are portrayed in Nollywood movies based off the film writer's perspective of the society. This therefore implied that the way women are portrayed in Nollywood films are the film writer's perspective of the society.

According to the analysis carried out in the second statement in Table 4.2, there was a calculated average mean score of 3.57 which is above 3.0 thus considered acceptable. This therefore implied that 71% of the respondents agreed that local cultural traits influences how women are portrayed in Nollywood films.

The analysis of the last data in Table 4.2 showed an average mean score of 3.80. This was considered acceptable as it was greater than

3.0. Thus indicated that 76% of the respondents perceived the social relationships of women in the society to have influenced their portrayal in Nollywood films by film writers.

Research Question 2: What is the overall representation of women in Nollywood films as perceived by Abia residents?

The researcher sought to determine the overall representation of women in Nollywood films the aim was to ascertain how the images of women are perceived in Nollywood films by the respondents. The respondents were asked to rate different statements that highlights the perceived images of women in Nollywood films. The table below contained the data generated from the respondents.

Table 4.3: Perceived Images of Women in Nollywood Films

Statements	Rating <i>x</i>	SA 5	A 4	FA/FD 3	D 2	SD 1	Total	<i>xi</i>
Physical appearance of women in Nollywood movies portray them as objects, appendages to men, sex objects and lustful beings.	<i>f</i>	105	97	109	46	31	388	3.51 > 3.0 Accepted @ 70%
	<i>fx</i>	525	388	327	92	31	1,363	
	%	27	25	28	12	8	100	
Professional roles of women in Nollywood films portray them as weak and inferior.	<i>f</i>	81	128	101	70	8	388	3.52 Accepted @ 70%
	<i>fx</i>	405	512	303	140	8	1,386	
	%	21	33	26	18	2	100	
Interpersonal relationship roles of women in Nollywood films portray them as wicked and disrespectful.	<i>f</i>	109	124	70	62	23	388	3.60 Accepted @ 72%
	<i>fx</i>	545	496	210	124	23	1,398	
	%	35	28	23	10	4	100	

According to the data generated in the first statement, the findings revealed an average mean score of 3.51. This was accepted and considered appropriate as it was greater than 3.0. The findings of the analysis therefore implied that 70% of the respondents perceive that the physical appearance of women in Nollywood movies portray them as objects, appendages to men, sex objects and lustful beings.

According to the findings of the data generated in the second statement in table 4.3, there was an average mean score of 3.52 which is greater than 3.0 and thus considered to be acceptable. The findings of the analysis therefore indicated that 70% of the respondents have perceived the professional roles of women in Nollywood films being capable of portraying them as weak and inferior.

According to the data generated in the last statement, the findings revealed an average mean score of 3.60. This was accepted and considered appropriate as it was greater than 3.0. The findings of the analysis therefore revealed that a greater percentage of the respondents, 72% perceive that the interpersonal relationship roles of women in Nollywood films portray them as wicked and disrespectful.

Research Question 3: How does the representation of women in Nollywood films influence Abia residents' perception of gender stereotypes in the society?

In order to ascertain the influence of portrayed image of women on gender stereotypes of women in the society, the respondents were asked to agree or disagree that the representation of women in Nollywood films influences the portrayed image of women on gender stereotypes of women in the society. The ratings yielded the data presented in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4: Influence of portrayed image of women on gender stereotypes of women in the society

Statements	Rating <i>x</i>	SA 5	A 4	FA/FD 3	D 2	SD 1	Total	<i>xi</i>
Nollywood representation affects the family roles of women in the society.	<i>f</i>	62	78	93	109	46	388	3.00 = 3.0 Accepted @ 60%
	<i>fx</i>	310	312	279	218	46	1,165	
	%	16	20	24	28	12	100	
Nollywood portrayal influences the professional role of women in the society.	<i>f</i>	58	85	78	121	46	388	2.96 < 3.0 Rejected @ 59%
	<i>fx</i>	290	340	234	242	46	1,152	
	%	15	22	20	31	12	100	
Nollywood portrayal affects the expectations of women in relationships.	<i>f</i>	78	62	93	82	73	388	2.97 < 3.0 Rejected @ 59%
	<i>fx</i>	390	248	279	164	73	1,154	
	%	20	16	24	21	19	100	

The data of the first statement showed an acceptable mean score of 3.0 clearly because it is same with the accepted 3.0 decision rule. This therefore indicated that 60% of the respondents have the perception that Nollywood representation of women affects the family roles of women in the society.

According to the analysis carried out in the second statement in same table 4.4, there was a calculated mean score of 2.96 which is

less than 3.0 thus rejected and considered unacceptable. Thus this indicated that 59% of the respondents perceived that Nollywood films portrayal of women do not influence the professional role of women in the society.

The findings of the analysis carried out in the last statement in table 4.4 has also shown a mean score of 2.97. This was rejected and deemed unacceptable as it was less than 3.0. Thus indicated

that 59% of the respondents perceived that Nollywood films portrayal of women do not affect the expectations of women in relationships.

Research Question 4: To what extent do Nollywood films offer an opportunity for Abia residents' to construct positive perceptions and deconstruct negative perceptions about women in the society?

Table 4.5: Ways of constructing positive perceptions and deconstructing negative perceptions

Statements	Rating <i>x</i>	SA 5	A 4	FA/FD 3	D 2	SD 1	Total	<i>xi</i>
Negative roles of women as prostitutes, mere house wives, lustful should not be over exaggerated in Nollywood films	<i>f</i>	124	86	109	46	23	388	3.62 > 3 Accepted @ 72%
	<i>fx</i>	620	344	327	92	23	1,406	
	%	32	22	28	12	6	100	
Women should be portrayed equally as strong to occupy positions of authorities.	<i>f</i>	116	147	105	12	8	388	3.77 > 3 Accepted @ 75%
	<i>fx</i>	530	588	315	24	8	1,465	
	%	32	24	22	14	8	100	
Women should be portrayed as caring and loving and balanced with male disposition	<i>f</i>	109	109	124	38	8	388	3.70 > 3 Accepted @ 74%
	<i>fx</i>	545	436	372	76	8	1,437	
	%	28	28	32	10	2	100	

The data of the first statement in Table 4.5 has shown an average rating of 3.62. This is well above 3.0 thus considered acceptable. Therefore, at 72%, the respondents have to a great extent perceived that negative roles of women as prostitutes, mere house wives, lustful should not be over exaggerated in Nollywood films.

According to the findings of the analysis and data generated in the second statement in table 4.5, there was an average mean score of 3.77 which is greater than 3.0 thus considered to be acceptable. The findings of the analysis therefore indicated that there was 75% perception by the respondents on the need for women in Nollywood films to be portrayed equally as strong to occupy positions of authorities.

According to the data generated in the last statement, the findings of the analysis revealed an average mean score of 3.70. This was accepted and considered appropriate as it was greater than 3.0. The findings of the analysis therefore revealed that a greater percentage of the respondents, 72% perceive that women should be portrayed in Nollywood films as caring and loving and balanced with male disposition.

Testing of Hypotheses

H_1 : There is no significant relationship between representation of women in Nollywood films and Abia residents' perception of gender stereotypes in the society

To test the above hypothesis, Abia residents' perceived representations of women in Nollywood films (X) was correlated with influence of portrayed images of women on gender stereotypes (Y). The second statement in Table 4.3 represented perceived representation of women while the data of the second statement in Table 4.4 represented the perception of gender stereotype. To this end, the Pearson product moment of correlation was used to calculate the correlation shown in Table 4.6 below.

The researcher sought to determine the extent to which Nollywood films offer an opportunity to construct positive and deconstruct negative perceptions about women in the society. The respondents were asked to rate different statements that highlights ways of constructing positive perception and deconstructing negative perceptions about women in the society. Table 4.5 below contained the data generated from the respondents.

Table 4.6: Correlation of representation of women (X) perception of gender stereotypes (Y).

Ratings	X	X	Y	X^2	Y^2	XY
SA	5	81	58	6,561	3,364	4,698
A	4	128	85	16,384	7,225	10,880
FA/FD	3	101	78	10,201	6,084	7,878
D	2	70	121	4,900	14,641	8,470
SD	1	8	46	64	2,116	368
Total, Σ	N=5	388	388	38,110	33,430	32,294

$$r = \frac{N\sum XY - \sum X \sum Y}{\sqrt{[N\sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2][N\sum Y^2 - (\sum Y)^2]}}$$

$$r = \frac{(5 \times 32,294) - (388 \times 388)}{\sqrt{5 \times 38,110 - (388 \times 388) \times (5 \times 33,430 - (388 \times 388))}}$$

$$r = \frac{161,470 - 150,544}{\sqrt{40,006 \times 16,606}}$$

$$r = \frac{10,926}{\sqrt{664,339,636}}$$

$$\frac{10,926}{25,774}$$

$$r = 0.42$$

The correlation coefficient, r, is 0.42. This means that the result is unacceptable. Decision rule states that when r, is close to -1, it depicts a weak relationship between the variables in the study.

Thus the result indicates that there was no relationship between the representation of women in Nollywood films and Abia residents' perception of gender stereotype in the society.

Based on the above result, the alternate hypothesis was rejected while the null hypothesis was accepted and it is stated thus: *There was no significant relationship between the representation of women in Nollywood films and Abia residents' perception of gender stereotype in the society.* It therefore means that there is no relationship between the perceived images of women in Nollywood films which has to do with the portrayal of women as weak and inferior and the influence of those portrayed images on gender stereotypes of women in the society.

This indicated that there was no relationship between the two variables. This therefore means that the way women are portrayed and represented in Nollywood films will influence gender stereotypes of women in the society. This is because, as Nollywood films are portraying women as weak, inferior, and portray them as sex objects, objects, appendage and lustful beings through their attires and roles in movies, this tend to influence the way women are perceived in the society. This is not far from the findings of Table 4.3 as the findings has shown that Nollywood films tend to portray women as weak and inferior especially when compared to their male counterparts.

People tend to attribute this roles women play in Nollywood films as what should be in the reality in the society. Hence influencing gender stereotyping of women in the society. Making men to view women as sex objects, weak and inferior beings when compared to them. This is because the findings in table 4.4 have shown that Abia residents' do not perceive Nollywood films portrayal of women in their movies as one that has the ability to influence the professional roles of women in the society.

This findings is in line with what Aromona (2016), after conducting a research on the portrayal of African women in Nollywood films over a five-year period, found that there has not been a shift in the traditional way in which women are represented in the industry. Aromona's finding is corroborated by Onyenankya, Onyenankya & Osunkunle (2019) whose in-depth study on Nollywood films shot over two decades (1997-2016) revealed that there has not been any major shift in the way women are stereotypically represented in the films.

The finding of the hypothesis agrees with the assertions of Olupohunda (2013) who argued that women were often depicted as weak and dependent folks in Nollywood films. As such, these women could be slapped, kicked, raped and maimed. He stated that women in Nollywood films were typically portrayed to always be at the mercy of the men who dominated the society in such films.

H₂: There is no significant relationship between Nollywood representation of women and Abia residents' opportunity to construct or deconstruct perceptions about women in the society.

To test the above hypothesis, Abia residents' perceived representations of women in Nollywood films (X) was correlated with ways of constructing positive and deconstructing negative perception of women in the society (Y). The first statement in Table 4.3 represented perceived representation of women while the data of the third statement in Table 4.5 represented the construct or deconstruct perceptions about women. To this end, the Pearson

product moment of correlation was used to calculate the correlation shown in Table 4.7 below.

Table 4.7: Correlation of representation of women(X) and perceptions about women (Y)

Ratings	X	X	Y	X ²	Y ²	XY
SA	5	105	109	11,025	11,881	11,445
A	4	97	109	9,409	11,881	10,573
FA	3	109	124	11,881	15,376	13,516
D	2	46	38	2,116	1,444	1,748
SD	1	31	8	961	64	248

$$r = \frac{N\sum XY - \sum X \sum Y}{\sqrt{[N\sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2][N\sum Y^2 - (\sum Y)^2]}}$$

$$r = \frac{(5 \times 37,530) - (388 \times 388)}{\sqrt{5 \times 35,392 - (388 \times 388) \times (5 \times 40,646) - (388 \times 388)}}$$

$$r = \frac{187,650 - 150,544}{\sqrt{26,416 \times 52,686}}$$

$$r = \frac{37,106}{\sqrt{1,391,753,376}}$$

$$\frac{37,106}{37,306}$$

$$r = 0.99$$

The correlation coefficient, r, is 0.99. This means that the result is strong and acceptable. The decision rule states that when r, is close to +1, it depicts a positive relationship between the variables in the study. It suggests a connection between how Abia residents' perceived representations of women in Nollywood films and how they construct or deconstruct perceptions about women in the society. Thus the result indicates a positive relationship between perceived representation of women and the construct or deconstruct perceptions about women in the society.

Based on the above result, the alternate hypothesis was accepted while the null hypothesis was rejected and it is stated thus: *There is a significant relationship between Nollywood representation of women and Abia residents' opportunity to construct or deconstruct perceptions about women in the society.*

This therefore means that Abia residents perceive that Nollywood films can deconstruct the negative portrayal of women in films as weak, inferiors, sex objects, appendages to men, wicked and disrespectful Nollywood representation of women as objects and positively construct the representation of women by portraying women as caring, loving and being balanced with their male counterparts. Therefore, if Nollywood films represent women in such image, it will not give room for gender stereotypes as well as help to construct positive representation of women in the society.

In line with this findings, Okafor (2017) submitted in the findings of his study that the art of stereotyping has a more negative influence than positive. This is subject to its ideological constructs; hence it now forms the philosophy of the society that allows such practice, thereby subjecting the group to ridicule and shame. Therefore, he recommended that respect should be accorded the

woman, and not subject her to public disdain in the guise of entertainment or masculine gratification.

Just as Joseph (2019) has argued that the representations of women in films, whether the product of male or female directors, are a construct of a larger cultural situation which cannot be dismissed, even though women are making efforts to use films as a tool for activism. He therefore recommends that, for there to be an effective paradigm shift, patriarchy and traditions that oppress women are among the societal norms that must be addressed. This is because this will help in deconstruction negative perceptions and reconstructing positive perceptions about women generally in the society.

5. Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study are discussed in line with the research questions of the study. The discussion was also anchored on the relationship between the findings of the analysis and existing literature and theoretical framework.

Research Question 1: What are the factors that influences the portrayal of women in Nollywood films as perceived by Abia residents?

The result from the analysis carried out in Table 4.2 has revealed that there are certain factors that influences the portrayal of women in Nollywood films. According to the findings of the data of the first statement in the table, the findings has shown that 71% of the respondents accepted that one of the factors that influences the ways women are portrayed in Nollywood films is because the women are portrayed based off the societal perspective of the film writer.

Further analysis carried out in the second statement of same table 4.2 revealed that there was 71% perception by Abia residents that another factor that influences the way women are represented in Nollywood films is as a result of local cultural traits embedded in the society the women found themselves in. thus these local and cultural traits have a way of influencing how women are portrayed in Nollywood films.

It was also found as revealed in the last statement of Table 4.2 that 76% of the respondents perceived the social relationships of women in the society as one of the factors that have influenced their portrayal in Nollywood films.

This findings have led the researcher to answer the first research question which sought to determine the factors that influences the portrayal of women in Nollywood films as perceived by Abia residents by stating that: *there are certain factors which influences the portrayal of women in Nollywood films as perceived by Abia residents and they are;*

1. *Women are portrayed in Nollywood films based on the societal perspective of the film writer.*
2. *Local cultural traits embedded in the society the women found themselves in influences how women are portrayed in Nollywood films.*
3. *Social relationships of women in the society influences the portrayal of women in Nollywood films.*

Hence, in line with the findings of this research, Ukata (2010) has submitted that filmmakers have resorted to reversal in roles of women and men in the society. The implication of such misconstructions is that women are made to be seen and read in both the films and in real life as outlaws and evil to their families

and society as a whole. The findings of the current study has therefore proven that the way the film writer perceives women to be in the society will determine how women will be portrayed by them. Thus if they perceive women as weak, inferior, etc., that is how they will represent women in the film writing.

This findings corroborates with the argument of Joseph (2019) in his work that representations of women in films, whether the product of male or female directors, are a construct of a larger cultural situation which cannot be dismissed, even though women are making efforts to use films as a tool for activism. The current study has shown that the local cultural traits embedded in the society the women found themselves in have a way of influencing how women are portrayed in Nollywood films.

Research Question 2: What is the overall representation of women in Nollywood films as perceived by Abia residents?

The findings of the result from the analysis carried out in Table 4.3 has shown what the overall representation of women in Nollywood films as perceived by Abia residents' are. According to the data generated in Table 4.3, the findings of the first statement revealed that 70% of the respondents perceive that the physical appearance of women in Nollywood movies portray them as objects, appendages to men, sex objects and lustful beings. This indicated that women are represented in Nollywood films as sex objects who are simply appendages to men and are clearly lustful beings.

Further findings of the analysis generated in the second statement of same Table 4.3 have shown that 70% of Abia residents perceived that Nollywood films portray the professional roles of women as weak and inferior. This clearly implied that even when women are given professional roles in Nollywood films, they are still portrayed not as strong and confident people but as those who are weak and inferior to their male counterparts no matter the position they occupy.

According to the data generated in the last statement, the findings revealed that there was 72% perceived representation of women by Abia residents' that the interpersonal relationship roles of women in Nollywood films portray them as wicked and disrespectful. This therefore indicates that women by all standard are wicked and disrespectful beings by reason of the roles they are given to play in films.

This findings have led the researcher to answer the second research question which sought to ascertain the overall representation of women in Nollywood films as perceived by Abia residents' by stating that: *the overall representation of women as depicted in Nollywood films and perceived by Abia residents' is that of a weak, inferior, wicked, disrespectful and sexual objects. This is because;*

1. *The physical appearance of women in Nollywood films portray them as mere objects, sex objects, appendages to men, and lustful beings.*
2. *Nollywood films portray the professional roles of women as weak and inferior.*
3. *The interpersonal relationship roles of women in Nollywood films portray them as wicked and disrespectful.*

This therefore proves that the overall representation of women in Nollywood films is one which does not portray a positive image of the female gender as they are most of the time even when women are given professional roles in Nollywood films, they are still portrayed not as strong and confident people but as those who are

weak and inferior to their male counterparts no matter the position they occupy. The findings of the study has proven that women are sexually objectified and portrayed as appendages to men in Nollywood films.

This findings of the first hypothesis gives credence to the findings of this research question as it revealed the way women are portrayed and represented in Nollywood films has a way of influencing gender stereotypes of women in the society. This is because, as Nollywood films are portraying women as weak, inferior, and portray them as sex objects, objects, appendage and lustful beings through their attires and roles in movies, it will influence the way women are perceived in the society. This is because people tend to attribute these roles women play in Nollywood films as what should be in the reality in the society. This is in line with what the Cultivation theory states. It explains how people's conceptions of social reality are influenced according to their exposure on television (Zaharopoulos, 2001). Put in another way, the more people spend time watching programs on television, the more likely they are to believe the social reality of people, places and things portrayed via the medium.

This findings agrees with the assertions of Olupohunda (2013) who argued that women were often depicted as weak and dependent folks in Nollywood films. As such, these women could be slapped, kicked, raped and maimed. He stated that women in Nollywood films were typically portrayed to always be at the mercy of the men who dominated the society in such films.

Research Question 3: How does the representation of women in Nollywood films influence Abia residents' perception of gender stereotypes in the society?

The result from the analysis carried out in Table 4.4 has revealed the ways the representation of women in Nollywood films influence Abia residents' perception of gender stereotypes in the society. According to the findings of the data of the first statement in the table, the findings have shown that that 60% of Abia residents' have the perception that Nollywood representation of women affects the family roles of women in the society.

Further analysis carried out in the second statement of same table 4.4 has revealed that 59% of Abia residents perceived that Nollywood films portrayal of women do not influence the professional role of women in the society.

According to the findings of the data generated in the last statement of Table 4.4, it was revealed that 59% of the respondents perceived that Nollywood films portrayal of women do not affect the expectations of women in relationships.

This findings have led the researcher to answer the third research question which sought to identify how the representation of women in Nollywood films influence Abia residents' perception of gender stereotypes in the society by stating that: *the representation of women in Nollywood films highly influences Abia residents' perception of gender stereotypes in the society because;*

1. *Nollywood representation of women affect the family roles of women in the society.*
2. *Nollywood portrayal of women in films do not influence the portrayal of women in the society.*
3. *Nollywood films portrayal of women do not affect the expectations of women in relationships.*

This therefore proves that the representation of women by Nollywood films do not in any way help the gender stereotyping of women in the society. Rather it influences through its portrayal of women in such a way that it affects the roles of the women in the family and do not in any way help to enhance the roles of the women in the society.

The findings of first hypothesis gives credence to the findings of this research question when it stated that there was no significant relationship between the representation of women in Nollywood films and Abia residents' perception of gender stereotype in the society. This is because the findings of the analysis carried out in table 4.4 have shown that Abia residents' do not perceive Nollywood films portrayal of women in their movies as one that has the ability to influence the professional roles of women in the society.

This findings is in line with what Aromona (2016), after conducting a research on the portrayal of African women in Nollywood films over a five-year period, found that there has not been a shift in the traditional way in which women are represented in the industry. Aromona's finding is corroborated by Onyenankaya, Onyenankaya & Osunkunle (2019) whose in-depth study on Nollywood films shot over two decades (1997-2016) revealed that there has not been any major shift in the way women are stereotypically represented in the films.

The findings is also in line with the proposition of cultivation theory, as it helps shed light on audience perception of the representation of women in the Nollywood films and studies carried out by scholars such as (Gallagher, 1995; Agbese, 2010; Hernandez, 2012; Aromona 2016) have also shown that viewers of cinematic films invariably cultivate negative perceptions and attitudes from the stereotypical contents presented on the medium.

Research Question 4: To what extent do Nollywood films offer an opportunity for Abia residents' to construct positive perceptions and deconstruct negative perceptions about women in the society?

The findings according to the data analyzed in Table 4.5 revealed that Nollywood films to a great extent offer an opportunity to construct positive perception and deconstruct negative perceptions about women in the society. As there was 72% level of perception by Abia residents that negative roles of women as prostitutes, mere house wives, lustful should not be over-exaggerated in Nollywood films.

Also, it was evident in the second statement in same Table 4.5 that women to a great extent should be portrayed equally as strong to occupy positions of authorities. As there was 75% level of acceptance by Abia residents' that Nollywood movies should depict women as powerful gender like their male counterparts are always portrayed.

Further findings in same Table 4.5 showed 74% Abia residents perceived that another way of constructing positive perception and deconstructing negative ones about women is through the portrayal of women by Nollywood films as caring, loving and balanced same with their male dispositions.

Therefore, to answer the last research question, it will be apt to state that: *Abia residents to a high extent perceived that Nollywood films should offer an opportunity to construct positive perceptions and deconstruct negative perceptions about women in the society. This they can do through the following ways;*

1. *By not over exaggerating the negative roles of women as prostitutes, mere house wives, lustful in Nollywood films.*
2. *By portraying women as equally as strong to occupy positions of authorities same way their male counterparts are always portrayed in Nollywood films.*
3. *By portraying women as caring, loving and balanced same with their male dispositions in Nollywood films.*

This submission vilifies the findings of the second hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between Nollywood representation of women and Abia residents' opportunity to construct or deconstruct perceptions about women in the society. This is because Abia residents perceive that Nollywood films can deconstruct the negative portrayal of women in films as weak, inferiors, sex objects, appendages to men, wicked and disrespectful Nollywood representation of women as objects and positively construct the representation of women by portraying women as caring, loving and being balanced with their male counterparts. Therefore, if Nollywood films represent women in such image, it will not give room for gender stereotypes as well as help to construct positive representation of women in the society.

In line with this findings, Okafor (2017) submitted in the findings of his study that the art of stereotyping has a more negative influence than positive. This is subject to its ideological constructs; hence it now forms the philosophy of the society that allows such practice, thereby subjecting the group to ridicule and shame. Therefore, he recommended that respect should be accorded the *woman*, and not subject her to public disdain in the guise of entertainment or masculine gratification.

6. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

This study was conducted to evaluate and ascertain Abia residents' perception of the representation of women in Nollywood films. Using the survey research method the researcher sought the opinions of residents in Abia state regarding how they perceive the representation of women in Nollywood films. A total of 400 residents of Abia served as the sample that were used to generate data for the study.

The data gathered for the study were analyzed and the discussions of the findings were made. The analysis of the data led to several findings of the research which are succinctly itemized below:

1. The majority of the respondents were women and they were above 25 years of age and are educated. This implied that they were old and educated enough to understand and give opinions that could be treated as comprehensible for the study.
2. There are factors which influences the portrayal of women in Nollywood films as perceived by Abia residents. It was revealed that women are portrayed in Nollywood films based on the societal perspective of the film writer, local cultural traits embedded in the society and social relationships of women in the society acts as a factor that influences the portrayal of women in Nollywood films.
3. The overall representation of women as depicted in Nollywood films and perceived by Abia residents' is that of weak, inferior, wicked, disrespectful and sexual objects. This is because Nollywood films portray them as

mere objects, sex objects, appendages to men, and lustful beings, and portray the professional roles of women as weak and inferior and the interpersonal relationship roles of women in as wicked and disrespectful.

4. The representation of women in Nollywood films highly influences Abia residents' perception of gender stereotypes in the society because Nollywood representation of women affect the family roles of women in the society and it does not influence the portrayal of women in the society.
5. Abia residents to a high extent perceived that Nollywood films should offer an opportunity to construct positive perceptions and deconstruct negative perceptions about women in the society by not over-exaggerating the negative roles of women as prostitutes, mere house wives, lustful in Nollywood films.

7. Conclusion

The films medium of communication which many individuals, people and organizations can utilize to present or showcase the socio-economic, political and cultural phenomena that concern ordinary Nigerians. It is therefore necessary that the films be used for positive purposes especially when it concerns the portrayal of women in a society such as Nigeria.

The findings of the current study has shown that Nollywood films representations of women is one which is on the negative which the study has proven should be deconstructed and a positive image reconstructed. As the audience of these films agrees that Nollywood films prompt how women are or should be perceived base on the way and manner women are portrayed in films. This is because studies have shown that the way people, ideas and objects are portrayed in films affects the way viewers perceive the people, ideas and objects in real life. Men, for instance, are generally stereotyped as competent, assertive, independent and achievement-oriented whereas women are generally stereotyped as warm, sociable, muted, wicked, interdependent and relationship-oriented

Thus, this study concludes based on the findings of the study that instead of film writers and Nollywood film directors representing women as weak, inferior, wicked, disrespectful and sexual objects, wicked and disrespectful based on their own perspective of the society, women should be portraying women as equally as strong to occupy positions of authorities same way their male counterparts.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends the following:

1. Film writers and Nollywood film directors should discontinue from representing the image of women representing women base on their own perspective of the society.
2. Nollywood films should represent women as loving, caring and equally as strong to occupy positions of authorities same way their male counterparts are always portrayed in Nollywood films and not as weak, inferior, wicked, disrespectful and sexual objects, wicked and disrespectful gender.
3. The representations of women in Nollywood films should influence the portrayal of women in the society this is because it will to a great extent help reduce the

perception of people regarding gender stereotypes in the society.

4. Nollywood through its films should offer an opportunity to construct positive perceptions and deconstruct negative perceptions about women in the society by not over-exaggerating the negative roles of women as prostitutes, mere house wives, lustful in Nollywood films. Women have proven over time to be more than the narrative being disseminated by film writers and movie directors.

Suggestions for Further Studies

1. A similar study should be carried out but with different population. Since the study was carried out in the South East, other researchers can carry out the same study in the South West or North to compare findings and conclusion.
2. Researchers can carry out a different study on the representation of Men in Nollywood films.

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