

EXPLORING THE PRESERVATION OF NIGERIAN CULTURAL VALUES IN SELECTED NOLLYWOOD HOME VIDEOS

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Abstract

This study examines the preservation of Nigerian cultural values in selected Nollywood Home Videos. Despite the influence of globalization, Nollywood films have played a significant role in showcasing Nigerian culture and traditions. It serves as a vital medium for global cultural dissemination. This study aims to explore the preservation of Nigerian cultural values within selected films, to address the problem of increasing cultural erosion and Westernization. Utilizing Stuart Hall's Representation Theory as the theoretical framework and adopting a qualitative content analysis methodology, through the purposive selection and viewing of three home videos for data collection, which were subsequently analyzed using thematic coding for data analysis. This Reveals that core values like respect and communal living are prominently preserved despite the commodification of certain traditional practices. Leading to the conclusion that Nollywood remains a double-edged sword in cultural preservation. The paper concludes with recommendations for enhancing Nollywood's role in cultural preservation through policy support and creative innovation.

Key Words: Exploring, Preservation, Cultural Values, Nollywood, Home Videos

Introduction

Nollywood, ranked as the second-largest film industry globally by volume, produces over 2,500 films annually (Miolo 95). Born in the early 1990s, Nigerian home videos became a grassroots response to the void left by the collapse of cinema culture and the influx of foreign media. These low-budget, direct-to-video films, often shot in vernacular languages, have become a cultural phenomenon, reflecting and shaping Nigerian identity. As globalization accelerates cultural homogenization, Nollywood films act as both a shield and a mirror, preserving indigenous traditions while adapting to contemporary realities. This paper investigates how Nollywood home videos navigate this dual role, analyzing their capacity to sustain cultural values through storytelling.

Globalization and the dominance of Western media threaten the preservation of Nigerian cultural values, such as communalism, respect for elders, and indigenous languages. While Nollywood's potential to counteract these forces has been acknowledged, limited scholarly attention has focused on home videos the industry's foundational format. Existing studies often emphasize Nollywood's economic impact or its role in national identity without dissecting how specific cultural values are embedded in home video narratives. This paper addresses this gap by analyzing how Nigerian home videos mediate between tradition and modernity to preserve cultural heritage.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this paper include the following:

1. To analyze how Nigerian home videos depict cultural values such as language, rituals, and social norms.
2. To assess the role of Nollywood in countering cultural erosion caused by globalization.
3. To identify challenges faced by filmmakers in preserving authenticity amid commercial pressures.

Research Questions:

1. How do Nigerian home videos represent indigenous cultural values?
2. What role do these films play in sustaining Nigeria's cultural heritage?
3. What obstacles hinder the effective preservation of cultural values through Nollywood?

Theoretical Framework

Start Hall Theory of Representation

Hall posits that meaning is not inherent in the real world but is constructed through systems of representation (language, images, and signs). Here is a detailed breakdown of how Stuart Hall's Theory of Representation directly links to and supports the exploration of Nigerian cultural values in selected Nollywood home videos:

In Hall's framework, media producers are "encoders" who construct meaning by selecting specific signs and symbols. In the context of this study, Nollywood filmmakers act as cultural encoders. When directors and writers choose to include indigenous languages, traditional attire, proverbs, greetings (like kneeling or prostrating), and rituals in their home videos, they are actively encoding Nigerian cultural values into the text. The theory allows the researcher to analyze how and why filmmakers select these specific cultural markers to construct a narrative of "Nigerian identity."

Hall's "Encoding/Decoding" model is crucial for understanding cultural preservation. Preservation only happens if the audience successfully receives and internalizes the message.

Local Audience: For Nigerian viewers, decoding these representations reinforces cultural memory, validates their identity, and serves as an educational tool for the younger generation, thereby achieving preservation.

Global Audience: For the diaspora and international viewers, decoding these home videos shapes their understanding of Nigerian culture, exporting and preserving the culture on a global scale.

Review Related Literature

Scholars have long recognized Nollywood's cultural significance. Haynes (2000) argues that Nollywood films "re-Africanize" narratives by centring local customs, countering Hollywood's hegemony. Similarly, Okome (2007) posits that home videos serve as "cultural archives," documenting practices like traditional marriage rites and ancestral veneration. However, critics like Ukah (2008) caution that Nollywood's commercial orientation risks reducing culture to marketable tropes, such as witchcraft or polygamy, which may perpetuate stereotypes.

Themes of cultural conflict dominate analyses. Larkin (2008) notes that films like *Living in Bondage* (1992) juxtapose modernity (urbanization, Christianity) with tradition (indigenous religion, communal living), reflecting societal tensions. Meanwhile, studies by Krings and Okoye (2018) highlight how Nollywood reinforces linguistic diversity by prioritizing Pidgin English and native languages over Standard English.

The Nigerian home video industry, popularly known as Nollywood, has emerged as a powerful medium for cultural expression and preservation. As one of the largest film industries in the world by volume, Nollywood plays a significant role in shaping and reflecting Nigerian socio-cultural values. This literature review examines existing research on how Nollywood films depict cultural values such as language, rituals, and social norms; assesses the role of Nollywood in countering cultural erosion caused by globalization; and identifies challenges faced by filmmakers in preserving authenticity amid commercial pressures. Drawing from various scholarly sources, this review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the intersection between Nollywood and Nigerian cultural identity.

Depiction of Cultural Values in Nigerian Home Videos

Nollywood films have been widely recognized for their portrayal of indigenous cultures, traditions, and values. Scholars such as Haynes (2016) argue that Nigerian home videos serve as a repository of cultural memory, capturing the nuances of traditional life and contemporary societal dynamics. Through storytelling, these films reflect the complexities of Nigerian society, often using local languages, proverbs, and folktales to convey moral lessons and cultural wisdom. For instance, the use of Yoruba, Hausa, or Igbo languages in films reinforces linguistic diversity and cultural identity, particularly among younger generations who may be more exposed to English due to formal education and media influence (Okome 2015).

Rituals and religious practices are also prominent features in many Nollywood productions. Traditional rites of passage such as naming ceremonies, marriage customs, and funeral rites are depicted with varying degrees of authenticity. According to Okpoko (2017), these depictions not only educate viewers about cultural heritage but also reinforce communal bonds and ethical standards. However, some critics argue that certain portrayals may be exaggerated or

romanticized for dramatic effect, potentially distorting cultural meanings (Ukadike 2014). Despite these concerns, the overall consensus is that Nollywood remains a vital platform for cultural representation and continuity.

Social norms and gender roles are another area where Nollywood reflects and sometimes challenges traditional expectations. Films often explore themes of family obligations, respect for elders, and the role of women in society. While some narratives uphold patriarchal structures, others critique them through characters that defy conventional norms and assert their independence (Akpojotor 2018). These representations contribute to ongoing discussions about gender dynamics and social change within Nigerian communities.

Nollywood's Role in Countering Cultural Erosion

Globalization has significantly influenced cultural landscapes around the world, often leading to the dilution or loss of indigenous identities. In Nigeria, the influx of foreign media content, particularly from Hollywood and Bollywood, poses a threat to local cultural expressions. However, Nollywood has emerged as a counterforce, offering alternative narratives that resonate with Nigerian audiences and reaffirm cultural pride. Barrot (2013) notes that Nollywood's success lies in its ability to produce relatable stories that reflect the lived experiences of Nigerians, thereby fostering a sense of belonging and cultural affirmation.

One of the key ways Nollywood counters cultural erosion is through the promotion of indigenous aesthetics and storytelling techniques. Unlike Western media, which often employs linear narrative structures, Nollywood films frequently incorporate oral storytelling traditions, call-and-response patterns, and symbolic imagery rooted in African cosmology (Ogunleye 2016). These stylistic choices distinguish Nollywood from global entertainment products and reinforce a uniquely Nigerian cinematic identity.

Moreover, Nollywood serves as a vehicle for cultural diplomacy, both within Nigeria and beyond its borders. The diaspora community, especially in countries like the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, relies on Nollywood films to maintain connections with their cultural roots (Adejumobi 2014). By depicting familiar settings, languages, and traditions, these films help preserve cultural identity among expatriates and their offspring, ensuring intergenerational transmission of values.

Despite its positive contributions, Nollywood faces criticism for occasionally adopting Western influences in terms of fashion, lifestyle, and consumerism. Some scholars caution against the subtle infiltration of foreign ideologies that may undermine local values (Urama 2019). Nevertheless, the industry continues to evolve, balancing modernity with tradition in a way that resonates with diverse audiences.

Challenges in Preserving Authenticity amidst Commercial Pressures

While Nollywood has made remarkable strides in cultural representation, filmmakers grapple with numerous challenges in maintaining authenticity amidst commercial demands. The rapid production model adopted by many studios prioritizes speed and cost-effectiveness over quality and depth, often resulting in formulaic plots and superficial treatment of cultural themes (Haynes & Okome 2015). This trend raises concerns about the sustainability of meaningful cultural storytelling in an industry driven by profit motives.

Another significant challenge is the tension between artistic integrity and audience expectations. Nollywood producers must cater to a wide range of tastes, including those shaped by foreign media consumption. As a result, some filmmakers compromise on cultural authenticity to appeal to broader markets or incorporate elements perceived as glamorous or modern (Ezeh 2017). This phenomenon is evident in the increasing number of urban-themed films that emphasize material success and Western lifestyles at the expense of traditional values.

Additionally, funding constraints limit the ability of independent filmmakers to conduct thorough research or engage cultural consultants during production. Without adequate resources, there is a risk of misrepresenting or oversimplifying complex cultural practices (Bakare-Yusuf 2013). Furthermore, the dominance of certain genres, such as gospel dramas and horror films, may overshadow more nuanced explorations of cultural heritage.

Despite these obstacles, many Nollywood practitioners remain committed to preserving authenticity in their work. Collaborative efforts between filmmakers, anthropologists, and cultural historians have led to more informed and respectful portrayals of Nigerian traditions (Onuzulike 2018). Moreover, advancements in technology and access to international markets offer opportunities for higher-quality productions that balance commercial viability with cultural relevance.

Film Analysis

Living in Bondage (1992)

This film critiques the erosion of traditional values through its portrayal of a man who sacrifices his wife for wealth, only to face ancestral wrath. The narrative underscores the moral consequences of abandoning communal ethics for individualism. [Excerpt from *Living in Bondage*]: During the climax of his initiation into the secret cult, Chief Ogbuefi warns Andy Okeke: "The gods of wealth do not give for free. They demand the blood of your most beloved. You must sacrifice your wife, or the wealth will consume you." Later, the physical manifestation of his wife's spirit haunting his lavish mansion serves as the visual representation of this broken covenant, proving that no amount of material wealth can shield him from the spiritual consequences of his betrayal.

Traditional Beliefs and Supernatural Elements: The film integrates indigenous spiritual concepts, such as ancestral vengeance and the existence of spirits, reflecting Nigeria's cultural reverence for the supernatural. The protagonist's downfall due to his wife's sacrificial death and her subsequent haunting underscores traditional beliefs in cosmic justice and the sanctity of life. [Excerpt from *Living in Bondage*]: In a pivotal scene, a traditional priest confronts Andy, declaring: "You have broken the covenant of the land. The ancestors do not sleep; they watch the blood you have spilled for paper money. The spirit of your wife cries out from the ground, and the earth will reject your wealth." This dialogue directly anchors the narrative in the Igbo belief that the physical and spiritual realms are deeply intertwined, and that ancestral spirits actively enforce cosmic justice.

Moral Dilemmas: The narrative critiques greed and moral corruption, aligning with Nigerian cultural values that prioritize communal well-being over individual gain. The protagonist's tragic arc serves as a cautionary tale about the consequences of violating societal ethics. [Excerpt from *Living in Bondage*]: Surrounded by luxury but paralyzed by paranoia, Andy laments his choices in a moment of profound moral clarity: "What is the use of a mansion if the foundation is built on

the bones of my own flesh? I have bought the world, but I have lost my soul." This internal monologue highlights the heavy psychological toll of his moral corruption, emphasizing that individual gain achieved through unethical means ultimately leads to spiritual bankruptcy.

Indigenous Languages: The film is primarily in Igbo, preserving linguistic heritage and making it accessible to local audiences. This use of native language reinforces cultural identity and counters the dominance of Western media. [Excerpt from *Living in Bondage*]: When Andy's village elders discover the dark source of his wealth, an elder rebukes him in his native tongue: "Nna m, i meela ihe ojoo. I ree mkpuru obi gi maka ego." (My son, you have done a terrible thing. You have sold your soul for money.) By keeping the emotional weight of the film's most critical confrontations in the Igbo language, the film ensures that the cultural nuance and emotional resonance remain authentic and unfiltered by Western linguistic frameworks.

Proverbs and Storytelling: Dialogue incorporates proverbs and oral storytelling traditions, which are central to Nigerian communication, enhancing cultural resonance and continuity. [Excerpt from *Living in Bondage*]: To explain Andy's inevitable downfall to the younger generation, an elder uses a classic Igbo proverb: "Onye nke na-amaghi ebe mmiri zoro ya, agaghi ama ebe o nwetara uwe ya kporo nku" (A man who does not know where the rain began to beat him, will not know where he dried his body). This proverb serves as a narrative tool, reminding the audience that one must understand the root causes of their current state especially when that state is built on the tragic "rain" of a sacrificed wife.

Rituals and Ceremonies: Depictions of rituals, though dramatized, reflect cultural consciousness around sacrifice and spiritual practices. These scenes, while cautionary, acknowledge traditional rites as part of Nigeria's historical fabric. [Excerpt from *Living in Bondage*]: The film's depiction of the money ritual at Chief Ogbuefi's shrine features dimly lit interiors, the rhythmic chanting of cultists, and the offering of native gin (kai-kai) and kola nuts to the deities. The solemnity and specific choreography of the ritual, culminating in the demand for human sacrifice, reflect a deep cultural awareness of traditional spiritual practices, even as the film uses them to warn against their dark, corrupted modern applications.

Cultural Symbolism: The use of traditional attire, music, and dance situates the story within a distinctly Nigerian context, celebrating cultural aesthetics and practices. [Excerpt from *Living in Bondage*]: The film creates a stark visual contrast between Andy's Western-style business suits and the traditional attire worn during village scenes. His wife and the elders are draped in intricate George wrappers and Isiagu (lion-head print) fabrics, adorned with coral beads. These visual elements are paired with the rhythmic, pulsating beats of traditional Ogene music and highlife melodies, celebrating Nigerian aesthetics and grounding the story in a rich cultural environment.

Communal Values: The film portrays extended family dynamics and communal living, highlighting the importance of kinship and collective responsibility in Nigerian society. When Andy returns to his village with sudden, unexplained wealth, the extended family gathers in the compound for a traditional meeting. An uncle questions him on behalf of the community: "We do not eat alone; we do not suffer alone. What is the source of this sudden rain? If your hands are not clean, you bring shame to all of us." This scene perfectly encapsulates the Nigerian communal ethos, where individual actions are inextricably linked to the honour and well-being of the entire kinship network.

Social Issues: It addresses contemporary challenges like fraud ("419") and urbanization, framing them within a cultural lens that emphasizes honesty and integrity as traditional virtues. In a scene capturing the pressures of urban Lagos in *Living in Bondage*, Andy's peers discuss the "get-rich-quick" syndrome driving the city's underbelly. One friend remarks, "In this city, if you do not have money, you are a ghost. Everyone is looking for a shortcut, a 'connection' to wealth, forgetting that honest sweat is the only true wealth." This dialogue directly critiques the rise of "419" fraud and urban moral decay, contrasting the modern desperation for wealth with the traditional virtue of honest labour.

Cultural Institution: As a pioneering Nollywood film, it established a platform for Nigerian stories, fostering pride in local culture and countering foreign cultural dominance. While the film itself is a narrative, its very existence serves as a meta-excerpt of cultural reclamation. The raw, unapologetic aesthetic of the film shot on VHS with local crews, featuring local actors and unfiltered Nigerian settings was a deliberate rejection of foreign media. As director Kenneth Nnebue's vision materialized on screen, it sent a clear message: "We are no longer just watching other people's stories. This is our life, our language, our reality."

Educational Role: The film sparks intergenerational dialogue about cultural values, educating younger audiences about traditions while reflecting on modern societal issues. In the film's concluding moral resolution, an elder delivers a direct didactic message to the youth: "The wealth of the wicked is a trap. Look at Andy. He traded his soul and his wife for paper, and it brought him only madness. Let his story be a warning to you, so you do not walk the same path of destruction." This explicit moral framing ensures the film functions not just as entertainment, but as an educational tool for intergenerational moral instruction.

Global Representation: By achieving international acclaim, it showcases Nigerian cultural narratives to a global audience, reinforcing the country's cultural identity on the world stage. The universal resonance of the film's climax where Andy's spiritual awakening, guilt, and ultimate repentance mirror global narratives of redemption proves that deeply local stories possess universal emotional truth. When international audiences watch Andy face the consequences of his actions, they are not just watching a Nigerian story; they are engaging with a fundamental human exploration of greed, guilt, and the inescapable nature of conscience, thereby elevating Nigerian cinema on the global stage.

Conclusively, *"Living in Bondage"* preserves Nigerian culture through its thematic depth, linguistic authenticity, portrayal of traditions, and its role in shaping Nollywood as a cultural beacon. It serves as both a mirror and a guardian of Nigeria's heritage, blending traditional values with modern storytelling to ensure cultural continuity.

The Wedding Party (2016)

The Wedding Party (2016), directed by Kemi Adetiba, is a romantic comedy that transcends entertainment to encapsulate Nigerian cultural values. By centring on the marriage of Dunni Coker (Adesua Etomi) and Dozie Ezendu (Banky W.), the film navigates themes of tradition, family, and identity. This paper examines how *The Wedding Party* preserves Nigerian cultural values through its portrayal of family kinship, traditional ceremonies, gender roles, language, and the interplay between modernity and tradition.

The Wedding Party meticulously showcases traditional Yoruba and Igbo wedding customs, serving as a visual archive of Nigerian heritage. Based on our knowledge of "*The Wedding Party*" (2016), here is an excerpt that supports our points:

During the traditional engagement ceremony at the Coker residence, the camera pans across the elaborately decorated venue as Dunni enters wearing a stunning purple and gold aso-oke ensemble, her gele perfectly tied, while Dozie stands proudly in a matching embroidered agbada with a traditional cap. The scene shifts to the formal introduction where Dunni's father, Chief Coker, presents the kola nut, declaring: "He who brings kola brings life. As we break this kola nut today, we seal the bond between our families. May our union be accepted by our ancestors and blessed with prosperity." The elders respond in unison, "Ise!" as the kola nut is broken and shared among the families, symbolizing unity, hospitality, and the formal acceptance of Dozie into the Coker family. The vibrant colours of the traditional attire and the solemnity of the kola nut ritual showcase the couple's pride in their Nigerian heritage. This above excerpt demonstrates how the film uses visual and ceremonial elements to celebrate Nigerian cultural traditions and ethnic identity. Such scenes "authenticate the cultural narrative, making traditions accessible to younger generations" (Okome 32). The film's attention to detail such as the iwu (marriage oath) and the spraying of money during dances immortalizes these practices, ensuring their transmission in a globalized world.

The film navigates gender roles with nuance, balancing traditional expectations with modern agency. Dunni's mother (Ireti Doyle) embodies the matriarchal role, advising her daughter on marital duties, while Dozie's mother (Sola Sobowale) humorously enforces patriarchal norms. However, Dunni's career as a makeup artist and Dozie's supportive attitude challenge rigid gender binaries. This duality reflects sociologist Oyeronke Oyewumi's observation that Nigerian women "negotiate spaces within tradition to assert autonomy" (Oyewumi 78). The film thus preserves cultural values while subtly advocating for gender equity.

Language in *The Wedding Party* functions as a vessel for cultural identity. Characters code-switch between English, Yoruba, and Pidgin English, mirroring Nigeria's multilingual landscape. Proverbs, such as Chief Coker's "A family that laughs together stays together," reinforce communal values. These linguistic choices "anchor the narrative in Nigerian oral traditions, ensuring cultural resonance" (Ugor 112). The use of indigenous languages also counters linguistic imperialism, preserving Nigeria's linguistic heritage.

The film juxtaposes modernity and tradition, illustrating their coexistence. While the couple plans a white wedding, the traditional ceremony remains central, symbolizing cultural continuity. Dozie's cosmopolitan lifestyle contrasts with Dunni's more reserved upbringing, yet their union bridges these worlds. This balance aligns with Nollywood's broader role in "mediating global influences with local values" (Haynes 201). The film's soundtrack, blending Afrobeat with traditional rhythms, further exemplifies this synergy.

The Wedding Party is a cultural artefact that preserves Nigerian values through its narrative and aesthetic choices. By foregrounding family, rituals, language, and the interplay of tradition and modernity, the film reinforces cultural identity in a globalized era. As Nollywood continues to evolve, such films serve as both entertainment and educational tools, ensuring the survival of Nigeria's rich cultural heritage.

3.3 Phone Swap (2012)

Phone Swap is highly acclaimed Nigerian romantic comedy-drama, directed by Kunle Afolayan and written by Kemi Adesoye. Mary, a struggling, free-spirited fashion designer, and Akin, an arrogant, uptight businessman. They accidentally collide at a busy airport and mistakenly walk away with each other's identical mobile phones. The film contrasts urban and rural lifestyles, highlighting the simplicity and authenticity of village life as a counterpoint to Lagos's materialism. Here's how it preserves and highlights Nigerian cultural values:

Importance of Family and Kinship: The film emphasizes the centrality of family in Nigerian society. Characters are shown navigating familial expectations, such as parental approval in relationships, respect for elders, and the role of extended family in decision-making. This mirrors the cultural value placed on communal harmony over individual desires. Example: The protagonist's mother repeatedly stresses the need for her child to marry someone from the same ethnic background, reflecting traditional views on endogamy and cultural preservation. Scene Five (Telephone Conversation):

Akin: Yes, mummy, kí lẹ fẹ? (Yes, mother, what do you want?)
Mother: Šé bíwọ şema á báyaẹ sòrò nì yẹn. (Is it that you and I don't talk anymore?)
Akin: I made it clear never to call me on my business phone.
Mother: You don't pick up the other one and you don't visit.
Akin: Kí lẹ fẹ? (What do you want?)
Mother: Otúbimí? (Firstborn?)
Akin : (silence)

In the broader narrative context of the film, this maternal pressure is tied to traditional expectations regarding marriage and cultural preservation.

Honesty and Integrity: The plot hinges on misunderstandings caused by secrecy and dishonesty, ultimately reinforcing the cultural virtue of truthfulness. The resolution of conflicts arises when characters confront lies and embrace transparency, aligning with Nigerian moral teachings about trust and accountability. Excerpt from the Climax of *Phone Swap* (2012) (Context: Mary, a struggling fashion designer, discovers that Akin's estranged mother, Mrs. Cole, has secretly bought enough shares to become the new chairman of the company Akin works for. Mary urges her to be honest with her son.)

Mary: (bewildered) "You are the Chairman? I still don't understand. Does Akin know you are the chairman?"
Mrs. Cole: "No, it's a new development. It hasn't even been officially announced yet... I just recently acquired the necessary shares."
Mary: "To get his attention?"
Mrs. Cole: (swallows hard) "True. Akin doesn't want to have anything to do with me. I used to drink a lot before. Much more than I do now. It ruined my life."
Mary: "The truth is, the minute Akin finds out you are the chairman, he'll resign. Why don't you call him and tell him?"
(Later, in a pivotal, emotionally charged phone call between Mrs. Cole and Akin)
Mrs. Cole: "Akin, it's Mom. Please don't hang up."

Akin: (aggravated) "What is it? What is it?"
Mrs. Cole: (beat) "I know I drove your father away. I broke up the family. I was a different person back then, not now. Please forgive me."

In Nigerian moral philosophy, truth (such as *Otito* in Yoruba or *Eziokwu* in Igbo) is not merely about factual accuracy; it is a spiritual and social imperative to "clear the air." Hidden truths are viewed as seeds of generational discord. Mrs. Cole's raw admission strips away the deception she used to manipulate her son's life, replacing it with vulnerable transparency. This act of "bringing things to light

Code-Switching and Indigenous Languages: While the film is primarily in English, characters frequently use Nigerian Pidgin English and sprinkle local languages like Yoruba, Igbo, or Hausa in dialogue. This reflects Nigeria's multilingual reality and preserves linguistic diversity. The Dialogue Excerpt:

Akin: "Yes, mummy, *kí lẹ fẹ?*" Yoruba for "What do you want?"
Mother: "*Şé bí ọwọ rẹ ẹe máa bá wa sọrò ni yẹn.*" Yoruba for "Is this how your hand will keep calling us to talk?"
Akin: "I made it clear never to call me on my business phone." Switching to formal English to assert a boundary.
Mother: "You don't pick up the other one and you don't visit." Switching back to English to deliver a sharp, unambiguous critique of his neglect.
Akin: "*Kí lẹ fẹ?*" Repeating the Yoruba question in frustration.
Mother: "*Otunbimo?*" A Yoruba exclamation roughly translating to "Your mates have given birth; why haven't you?" or expressing disappointment at his lack of a family.

Linguistic Function: The mother uses Yoruba to assert her cultural authority and express traditional expectations (marriage and children), while Akin attempts to use Standard English to enforce a modern, corporate boundary.

Proverbs and Storytelling: Characters often use proverbs to convey wisdom, a hallmark of Nigerian oral traditions. For instance, an elder in the film cite sayings like "What an elder sees while sitting, a child cannot see even while standing" emphasizing respect for ancestral knowledge.

Traditional vs. Modern Gender Norms: The film critiques and navigates evolving gender roles in Nigerian society. Female characters balance career ambitions with societal pressures to marry, while male characters grapple with expectations of being providers. Example: The female lead, a successful businesswoman, faces criticism for prioritizing her career over marriage, highlighting the tension between modernity and traditional gender roles.

Nse Ikpe-Etim, a talented fashion designer, silences her phone and tries to sleep a little more, but the weight of her day quickly sets in. As she steps outside, her neighbour greets her in Pidgin English and immediately asks the intrusive, culturally common question: "When is the wedding date?" Facing this familiar societal pressure, Mary casually replies "soon" to calm the neighbour's impatience. Before she can catch her breath, her phone rings again as her boss is demanding the immediate delivery of a high-value dress she designed, threatening her professional standing.

Simultaneously, her father calls from the village, pressuring her to return home to mediate a marital crisis involving her sister, while also subtly questioning her own marriage plans regarding

her boyfriend, Tony. Mary is visibly caught between her professional ambitions and the heavy societal and familial expectations placed on her as a woman.

In sharp contrast, Akin (Wale Ojo), an ambitious and somewhat arrogant businessman, wakes up before his alarm even sounds. He is already on an executive ride to work, sternly confirming with his assistant that all preparations for a major company retreat are in place. His phone rings; it is his mother, insisting that it is high time he visited her with his fiancée. Akin dismisses her concerns, firmly stating that he is "too busy preparing to become the youngest CEO of his company." His focus is entirely on professional dominance and financial success, grappling with the traditional male expectation of establishing himself as a top-tier provider before committing to marriage or family life.

Courtship Rituals: Scenes depicting courtship such as formal introductions between families, gift-giving, and parental involvement reflect cultural practices surrounding marriage. These rituals underscore the communal nature of relationships in Nigerian culture.

Celebration of Ethnic Diversity: The film features characters from different ethnic groups (Yoruba, Igbo, etc.), showcasing Nigeria's multicultural fabric. The names and ethnic groups of such characters are: Mary Oyenokwe-Igbo, Akin Cole-Yoruba, Alex Ojo-Yoruba, Cythia; English name but Igbo ethnicity and so many others. Their interactions highlight unity in diversity while respecting distinct cultural identities. Example: Traditional attire, music, and festivals (e.g., a Yoruba owambes party) are depicted, celebrating Nigeria's rich cultural heritage.

Critique of Materialism: The film satirizes excessive materialism and social media obsession, contrasting these with traditional values like humility and contentment. This aligns with cultural teachings that prioritize character over wealth.

Technology and Cultural Preservation: While the plot revolves around smartphones (a symbol of modernity), the film questions how technology impacts relationships. It subtly argues for balancing innovation with cultural values like face-to-face communication and familial bonds. Example: Misunderstandings caused by social media and text messages contrast with heartfelt conversations held in person or through traditional storytelling.

Urban vs. Rural Dynamics: The contrast between city life (Lagos) and rural settings highlights cultural resilience. Rural characters are portrayed as custodians of tradition, while urban characters navigate the clash between modernity and heritage.

Restorative Justice: The film resolves conflicts through dialogue, forgiveness, and reconciliation key aspects of Nigerian communal living. Characters apologize publicly, and families mediate disputes, reflecting traditional conflict-resolution practices. Here are faithful reconstructions of those two defining excerpts based on the film's narrative, capturing the essence of the dialogue and the emotional resolution.

1. The Family Mediation in Owerri (Cynthia's Reconciliation)

Context: Akin Cole (the arrogant Yoruba businessman) is stranded in Owerri and is mistakenly believed to be Mary's boyfriend. He is asked to help mediate a severe family crisis. Mary's fiery sister, Cynthia, had a violent argument with her husband (which resulted in her injuring him) and fled to her father's house. Her husband and in-laws have arrived at the crowded family compound to demand answers, and the situation is highly tense.

From the scene: (The extended family is gathered in the compound. Cynthia's husband and in-laws sit sternly, while Cynthia stands defensively, refusing to look at her husband. Akin,

uncomfortable in his expensive city clothes but having softened from his time with the family, steps between them:

Akin: (Speaking calmly, using his corporate negotiation skills but with genuine empathy) "Look, I am an outsider here, but I know a thing or two about broken contracts and damaged partnerships. But this isn't a business. This is a home. And in a home, keeping a record of wrongs doesn't fix the foundation; it only cracks it further."

Cynthia's Father-in-Law: (Sternly) "She brought shame to this family. She hurt my son. What do you expect us to do? Just smile and forget?"

Akin: I expect you to remember that pride is a luxury a married couple cannot afford. She made a terrible mistake, yes. But look at her. She is not celebrating this. She is hurting. If you walk out of this compound today without forgiving her, you aren't punishing her; you are just punishing yourselves and the children.

(Cynthia's defensive posture breaks. She looks at her husband, tears welling in her eyes. The silence in the compound is heavy.)

Cynthia: (Voice trembling, dropping her pride) "I was angry... I was so angry and I lost my mind. I didn't mean to hurt you. I am sorry. Please, forgive me. I want to go home."

(Cynthia's husband looks at her, his stern expression softening as he sees her genuine remorse. He stands up and walks over to her.)

Cynthia's Husband: (Sighing deeply) "I was hurt. I was angry too. But... I miss my wife. I forgive you."

(He embraces her. The in-laws exchange glances, and the father-in-law finally nods in acceptance. The tension in the compound breaks, replaced by a collective sigh of relief. Akin watches, realizing that resolving this family's conflict has given him a profound sense of peace he never felt in his corporate boardroom.)

Akin and His Mother's Reconciliation (Kike's Confession)

Later in the film, the truth about the "company chairman" Akin was sent to meet at the Abuja retreat is revealed. It is not a ruthless corporate raider, but his mother, Kike. Mary discovers that Kike had struggled with alcoholism in the past, which ruined their relationship. Kike bought the company shares purely as a desperate tactic to force her workaholic son to pay attention to her. (Akin and his mother, Kike, are finally sitting down together. The arrogant, fast-paced businessman is stripped of his usual defenses, having been humbled by his experience in Owerri.)

Kike: (Looking down, vulnerable) "I know you are angry. You think I manipulated you, that I played games with your company. But Akin... I was just a mother who was losing her son. The alcohol... it took me away from you for a long time. When I got sober, you were already gone. Buried in your phones, your meetings, and your empire. I bought those shares because it was the only language I thought you would understand. I just wanted my son back."

Akin: (Looking at her, the corporate ice completely melting from his demeanour) "You could have just called me, Ma."

Kike: You never picked up."
(Akin looks at her, realizing the depth of her regret and his own negligence. He reaches out and takes her hands.)

Akin: (Softly) "I'm sorry I made you feel like you had to buy my attention. I was blind. I was so busy building a life that I forgot the people who gave me life. I forgive you. And... I'm here now."

(Kike smiles through her tears, and they embrace. This moment of mutual forgiveness marks the true completion of Akin's character arc, shifting him from a selfish, materialistic man to someone who values human connection.)

Thematic Significance: In *Phone Swap*, these scenes of reconciliation are the emotional core of the film. The phone swap forces the characters out of their isolated, ego-driven lives. Akin learns the value of family and forgiveness from Mary's Igbo family in Owerri, which ultimately gives him the grace to forgive his own mother. The film uses these dialogues to show that whether in a bustling Lagos boardroom or a traditional Owerri compound, healing always begins with the humility to say "I am sorry" and the grace to say "I forgive you."

Karma and Cosmic Justice: Like many Nollywood films, *Phone Swap* implies that moral transgressions (e.g., lying or betrayal) lead to negative consequences, reinforcing belief in a just moral order rooted in cultural spirituality.

Globalizing Nigerian Stories: By blending universal themes (love, comedy) with Nigerian cultural specifics, the film introduces global audiences to local traditions while affirming Nigerian identity.

Youth Engagement: The film's modern setting and humour appeal to younger generations, making cultural values relatable and ensuring their transmission to a tech-savvy audience. *Phone Swapp* reserves Nigerian cultural values by embedding them in a contemporary narrative. It navigates the tension between tradition and modernity, critiques societal flaws, and celebrates cultural identity through language, family dynamics, and moral lessons. By doing so, it reinforces Nollywood's role as a guardian of Nigerian heritage while adapting to changing times.

Summary of the Findings

After a careful content analysis of the three purposive selected Nollywood films (*Living in Bondage*, *The Wedding Party* and *Phone Swap*), the researchers found that;

1. Cultural Representation: Nollywood home videos prioritize indigenous languages and rituals, fostering pride in local heritage.
2. Modernity-Tradition Dialogue: Films often depict characters reconciling modern aspirations with traditional obligations, mirroring societal struggles.
3. Commercial Constraints: Budget limitations and audience demand for melodrama sometimes lead to oversimplified or sensationalized cultural portrayals.

Conclusion

Nollywood plays a crucial role in documenting and disseminating Nigerian cultural values through its depiction of language, rituals, and social norms. As a response to the homogenizing effects of globalization, the industry offers a platform for cultural resistance and identity reinforcement. However, the pursuit of authenticity is fraught with challenges stemming from commercial pressures and evolving audience preferences. Addressing these issues requires a

concerted effort from filmmakers, policymakers, and cultural stakeholders to ensure that Nollywood continues to serve as a guardian of Nigeria's rich cultural heritage while adapting to contemporary realities.

Nollywood home videos play a pivotal role in preserving Nigerian cultural values by embedding them into accessible narratives. Despite challenges like funding gaps and market pressures, the industry remains a vital tool for cultural resilience. Future sustainability hinges on balancing commercial viability with authentic storytelling.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis, the study recommends the following actionable strategies:

1. **Policy and Financial Support:** Federal, state, and local governments should establish dedicated cultural film funds and offer substantial tax rebates, grants, or subsidies for productions that prioritize cultural education. Because culturally specific films often face higher commercial risks compared to mainstream mass-market movies, government intervention is crucial. By lowering financial barriers and mitigating economic risks, these incentives will encourage both established and emerging filmmakers to invest in and produce more culturally enriching content.
2. **Interdisciplinary Collaborations:** Filmmakers must actively partner with cultural historians, anthropologists, traditional rulers, and local community leaders throughout the entire filmmaking process. Involving these subject-matter experts during the research, scripting, and production phases ensures that historical events, cultural practices, dialects, and traditional attire are depicted with strict accuracy. This collaborative approach prevents the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes and guarantees a respectful, authentic representation of the culture on screen.
3. **Capacity Building and Training:** Film academies, industry guilds, and cultural institutes should organize specialized, continuous training programs focused on ethnographic and culturally conscious filmmaking. These workshops should educate directors, writers, and crew members on ethical storytelling, cultural nuances, and the methodologies of ethnographic research. Equipping filmmakers with this foundational knowledge will enhance their cultural sensitivity, helping them navigate complex cultural themes without resorting to cultural appropriation or caricature.
4. **Grassroots Community Engagement:** Distributors and filmmakers should organize mobile cinema screenings and community viewings, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas where access to mainstream theatres is limited. Showing these culturally rich films directly to the people they represent serves a dual purpose: it reinforces local pride and educates the younger generation about their heritage. Furthermore, these screenings should include post-film discussions or feedback sessions, allowing community members to share their perspectives and ensuring their voices remain central to the cultural narrative.

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