



COMPARING CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES IN *BRITTANY RUNS A MARATHON OF HOLLYWOOD* AND *SIZE 12 OF NOLLYWOOD*

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Abstract

*This study compares the unique approaches utilized by Hollywood and Nollywood screenwriters in developing characters. It fills an identified gap in studies by identifying these approaches, especially between Hollywood and Nollywood. Hinged on Stuart Hall's Representation Theory and utilizing the Thematic Analysis method, this study analyzes the character development approach of the protagonists in *Brittany Runs a Marathon* and *Size 12*. Findings reveal that while both industries share similarities in that they evoke empathy and promote character transformation, they differ in their approaches. Hollywood is tilted towards individual psychological realism, while Nollywood focuses on expressions that are performative, cultural, and moralistic. Also, the unique approaches in constructing protagonists further reveal that representations can take on varying approaches, hence reinforcing Hall's position that representations are contextual. The study therefore recommends screenwriters' training to promote authentic and unique character development and further research into character development approaches in different film industries.*

Keywords: Character, Character Development Approach, Representation Theory, Hollywood Film, Nollywood Film

Introduction

In comparing character development approaches between Hollywood and Nollywood films, it becomes evident that both industries employ various methods to create multidimensional characters that evolve throughout the narrative. Hollywood films often focus on intricate backstory exposition, allowing viewers to understand the motivations and complexities of the characters. On the other hand, Nollywood films frequently emphasize the emotional depth of characters, showcasing their inner conflicts and growth through relational dynamics (Azeez, 2019). While Hollywood tends to prioritize individual character arcs, Nollywood often integrates communal values and societal influences into character development. Despite these differences, both industries strive to engage audiences through relatable and compelling characters that



undergo significant transformations over the course of the story, ultimately contributing to the overall impact of the film (Haynes, 2000).

In crafting compelling screenplays, how the characters evolve and grow throughout the story is of great importance, yielding dynamic arcs that draw in viewers. The concept is referred to as Character development. Film industries of different countries approach character development in varying ways. In Hollywood, filmmakers and screenwriters often weave character development into the plot, showing how complex human nature is, and always improving traditional storytelling (Bordwell, 2005; Field, 2005). Nollywood character development, on the other hand, focuses on cultural values, lessons on morality, and important societal messages that viewers can easily relate with (Igwe, 2014; Alamu, 2010). In spite of the differences in approach, both industries incorporate some form of character development into their storytelling. This study seeks to compare these approaches.

Objective of Study and Scope

The objective of this paper is to study the unique approaches of character development in Hollywood films and Nollywood films by screenwriters. It juxtaposes a Hollywood film and a Nollywood film, both produced in the year 2019. Both films belong to the drama and comedy genres. The study deploys the thematic analysis to understudy and compare the films *Brittany Runs a Marathon* (Hollywood) and *Size 12* (Nollywood).

The approach is useful in identifying unique approaches to character development, which will hopefully guide screenwriters in sculpting more convincing characters. The paper serves as an additional building block to the already existing body of knowledge in screenwriting and character development, specifically. It will also assist screenwriters, filmmakers, and scholars to comprehend better how character development in different genres is approached.

Theoretical Framework

The Representation Theory formulated by Stuart Hall anchors this study. The theory suggests that the representation of people or events is not of a single, true identity, but instead has several ways it may be represented (Hall, 1997). This study adopts this theory because it is suitable for explaining the study's aim of identifying the different approaches to character development in Hollywood and Nollywood.

Literature Review

Felski (2019) states that a character is a fictional person within a story. However, we usually recognize it in the main characters of a story, human personalities that are familiar to us. According to Field (2005), the protagonist is the central character who drives the story forward, while the antagonist opposes the protagonist's goals. Supporting characters provide depth and context to the story, and minor characters add authenticity and richness to the narrative (Field, 2005).



Character development is a concept used by screenwriters to describe the process of creating dynamic characters that transform as the story's plot unfolds. Hunter (1994, p. 71) insists that "fine screenwriting comes down to the characters". Balossi (2014) considers character development to be the creation of a fictional character that possesses qualities and traits that are distinctive. It refers to how the attitudes, personalities, and life views of a character evolve as the story progresses. This is evident from the dynamic characters that grow.

Character development seen through the eyes of a filmmaker is composed of several aspects, which basically include screenwriting and working with actors to bring the character development into a live experience. But the main development starts when you think of a character and start to script his or her characteristics and introduce them to the world of the story. So the concept starts with screenwriting. Character development in film is a multifaceted process that involves creating complex, multidimensional characters with compelling arcs, motivations, internal conflicts, and relationships (Yang and Qin, 2024). By exploring these various aspects of character development, filmmakers can engage audiences on an emotional level, drive the narrative forward, and create memorable and impactful storytelling experiences.

Character development comes in two parts: internal (motivations, goals for the character's actions) and external (the transformative experiences, struggles, and hurdles that reveal the character) (Helleman, 2024). Character development in screenwriting is the foundation of every great and memorable character. To become a professional screenwriter, you have to master the craft of developing characters and their arcs.

The historical overview of character development in Hollywood films showcases a significant evolution over time. In the early days of cinema, characters were often depicted in a more stereotypical and one-dimensional manner, serving specific plot functions rather than possessing depth or complexity. However, as the medium matured, filmmakers began to emphasize the importance of character growth and arc in storytelling. Characters became more nuanced, grappling with internal conflicts, moral dilemmas, and personal growth throughout the narrative. This shift allowed audiences to form deeper emotional connections with on-screen personas, leading to more engaging and impactful storytelling. The trajectory of character development in Hollywood films reflects broader cultural shifts and the increasing sophistication of audience expectations.

The evolution of character development in Nollywood films has been a fascinating aspect to study over the years. In the past, Nollywood characters were often one-dimensional, embodying stereotypes and lacking depth. However, with the industry's growth and exposure to global cinematic trends, there has been a noticeable shift towards more complex and nuanced character portrayals. Characters in modern Nollywood films are now more multidimensional, with evolving arcs that mirror real-life complexity. This shift has not only enhanced the quality of storytelling but has also contributed to a more engaging and immersive viewing experience for audiences. Through the exploration of characters' inner conflicts, motivations, and growth trajectories, Nollywood filmmakers can create narratives that resonate on a deeper level with viewers, ultimately adding layers of richness and authenticity to their films (Okadigwe, 2020).



Empirical Studies

Different studies were reviewed to understand existing research in this area to ultimately identify a research gap. The following are some of these studies. *The evolution of film genres: A comparative analysis of Hollywood and Bollywood*, a study by Davids (2023) explores how film genres influence the nature of characters in films. The study employs a critical analysis methodology and compares Hollywood films with those of Bollywood. Findings show that the genre of a movie tends to direct the nature of the characters. For instance, in an action film, the main character will have combat skills that thrill the viewers. While the focus of Hollywood films is on complex, psychological characters, Bollywood's focus is on heroic characters with larger-than-life personalities. The study is limited in its comparison by not fully capturing the underlying specific cultural contexts of each industry. The findings might not be generic to all Hollywood and Bollywood films since the focus was on a specific period and genres. Also, the study is limited to Hollywood and Bollywood, excluding other industries across the world.

Chen (2022) looks at the character development in Hollywood from a sociocultural angle, which in this case is race, and the Chinese culture is in focus, showing how Chinese movie characters and stories in Hollywood have positively evolved over the years, in part due to improved storytelling and character development. He explains that the cultural background of each character and story plays a role in its proper development and interpretation. He studied over 10 movies in Hollywood, such as *Gone With The Wind*. The film is limited in its cultural representation by focusing on Chinese culture. There is a need for a more diverse cultural perspective. The study utilized the qualitative approach, which might not give more comprehensive findings. Employing the quantitative approach could provide insights into patterns and trends in character development.

The study by Zarawaki et al (2023), *Character development of Estella/Cruella in Cruella*, aimed at identifying the character development of the two characters Estella and Cruella in the film. The study revealed that internal conflict within Cruella was used to develop the character. Another factor was the external factor, which is the relationship with Estella. The study discovers the power or role of conflict in shaping an innocent character into a villain and from a villain into a hero. The research is, however, limited in scope as it focuses only on a single film, *Cruella*, therefore making it non-generalizable. Comparing character development in various films and genres would provide more robust insight into how conflicts shape characters in different contexts.

Analyzing the traits of the main characters in the Top Gun Maverick movies by Inelsa (2023) takes a look at the character development in *Top Gun*, and reveals how the dynamic characters are developed. The researcher employs the use of literary analysis to study the main character in the movie, *Top Gun: Maverick*, played by Tom Cruise. Findings show that the main characters significantly evolve, and highlight the relevance of mentorship in shaping the development of characters. The study is limited by focusing on a single film, not allowing for generalizability to other films. Another limitation is the use of literary analysis as a methodology, as it might be subjective. Interpretation of characters and how they transform might become greatly influenced



by the researchers' personal perspectives. Therefore, a comparative analysis of character development across several films would give a more comprehensive result. Also, literary analysis could be mixed with a quantitative approach to make findings more grounded.

According to Gospel and Nkemakonam (2023), in their research *Nature Nurture Dichotomy in a Selected Nollywood Film*, Nollywood films neglect the aspects of nature and nurture in developing movie characters. This greatly affects the quality of character development because it leads to the characters not looking realistic or convincing in the storyline. They conducted a study on the movie *Nimbe*, which they described as the best attempt Nollywood has made towards proper character development using the nature-nurture theory. They made use of the content analysis methodology in addition to Emile Zola's theory of naturalism in the research. The findings of this study indicated that movies neglecting nature and nurture tend to produce characters that are less defined in their roles. This study fails to look at how characters are developed holistically and only focuses on the nature (natural traits) and nurture (their interactions with their environment) in character development, thus failing to give a robust perspective.

According to Eder (2015), character development in Hollywood movies is greatly influenced by the nature of the character in question. He conducted a study to uncover the relationship or influence on character nature or purpose based on the following types: artefacts shaped on audiovisual information, fictional beings possessing certain features, philosophical symbols, and products of sociocultural issues. He deployed the case study methodology in which he used about 10 movies as subjects. Findings of his study indicated the various character types based on each classification. The researcher does a good job in having a sample size of 10 films, but only focuses on Hollywood and not on other industries. This reveals a gap to be filled in terms of comparative analysis of character development across different industries, and looking at different character types.

Thrash (2022) takes a look at the issue of stereotypes in character development for movies. She is of the view that when it comes to black people in the USA and minorities in other countries, there is a need to create more nuanced characters that show the individual uniqueness of the human person, despite whatever negative or positive stereotypes are labelled on them. Her research was based on the case study methodology, sampling over 20 movies. Data was also gathered from the public using a questionnaire. Her findings show that a majority of poll participants said they preferred watching movies that had minority characters but were free from stereotyped typecasts. The movie is tilted towards studying blacks in the USA, which means it is not generalizable. This creates a gap in research on character development across cultures and identities from different industries. Also, the representation of diverse cultures through character development is another gap to fill.

Pratiwi (2021) is concerned with the question of how character development is affected by the scriptwriter's use of three features of a character, namely the physiological, psychological, and sociological. The research data were collected using the documentation technique, which involved gleaning from library books, while the descriptive method was employed. The animated



movie, *Brave* was the case study. The research results showed that the main character was dynamic in nature, based on the three features mentioned earlier. Thus, when writers take note of the physiology, psychology, and sociology of a character, they get well-developed movie characters. The study is limited in sample by focusing on just a single film, *Brave*. There is therefore a need to do a comparative analysis of character development, considering the three features of physiology, psychology, and sociology of the character.

According to Giwa (2014), character development in Nollywood movies is greatly influenced by the societal norms of the environment or culture of the society being portrayed. She conducted a study to uncover the relationship or influence of cultural norms on character development. She deployed the content analysis methodology in which she used five films as subjects. Findings of his study indicated the way the cultural and societal norms depicted in each movie shaped the casting and characterization of the movie characters. This study is limited in scope because it only focuses on Nollywood films. An observable gap is the need to conduct a cross-cultural study across different film industries. Also, an analysis can be conducted on different Nollywood films produced over different periods to observe the emergence of a grounded theory that will better explain character development in Nollywood.

Alamu (2010) posits that many Nollywood movies have issues with their narratives and style, and that most of them are not creative in telling their stories. He studied a collection of movies and film producers, such as Akande and many others, using a critical analysis methodology. He argued that most Nollywood movies are highly predictable as they stick to very worn-out storylines, such as witch doctors helping a villain to destroy the life of an innocent person. As the author argued, this negatively affects character development as the characters are stereotyped without any distinguishing or unique features. His findings show that the narrative and style of the movie give direction to how the characters are depicted to create characters that break from the regular mould and give new perspectives to storytelling and acting. The limitations of the study include its non-generalizability by focusing strictly on Nollywood films. Also, the research did not expand its inclusivity criteria to capture the various cinematic approaches of Nollywood and the period of production of the films. Therefore, observable research gaps include the need to study a wider range of Nollywood films and the need for a cross-cultural comparison.

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

This study utilizes the Thematic Analysis, a Qualitative research method. Thematic analysis was chosen because it is regarded as an appropriate method for identifying themes from various types of data mines such as films, texts, and interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Ryan & Bernard, 2000).

Thematic Analysis was used to identify elements that make up characters in the selected Hollywood and Nollywood films: Hollywood – *Brittany Runs a Marathon* and Nollywood - *Size 12*. Data from both industries were analyzed to address the research question. The units of analysis are the Protagonists from each film. A coding sheet and notebook were used for data collection through observation of characters and plots of the films.



The study used the MAXQDA qualitative analysis application for code identification and subsequent analysis. The emergent themes from the codes identified were presented in layers. Layer one revealed themes identified from both characters under study in each film, while layer two revealed generic themes from the Hollywood and Nollywood Films. The coding system was used to categorize data, which underwent the coding process for themes to emerge. Below is a presentation of the themes that emerged from the data (from *Brittany Runs a Marathon* and *Size 12*):

Data Presentation and Analysis

Brittany Runs a Marathon (Hollywood Film)

Synopsis:

Brittany Runs a Marathon is a 2019 Comedy/Sport Film Directed by Paul Downs Colaizzo. It is a story about Brittany Forglar (protagonist), a plus-sized woman, who, after an upsetting appointment with her doctor, sets out to shed some weight by running to gain public affirmation and self-confidence. With the help of her newfound friends, she embarks on constant training and eventually battles inertia, self-doubt, and her foil character friend (Gretchen) to run the New York City Marathon. The film was produced under Big Beach and Picture Films, and features Jillian Bell, Alice Lee, Jennifer Dundas, Utkarsh Ambudkar, and others in the cast.

Results:

Presented below are the individual thematic breakdowns for the protagonist (Brittany arranged in themes and subthemes.

Table 1: Themes from *Brittany Runs A Marathon*

Protagonist (Brittany)	
Theme	Subthemes
Theme 1: Self-Worth and Body Image as catalysts for change	
	Brittany's initial insecurity about her body affects every part of her identity. At 06:08, while in a club, a guy suggests to her, "You can rest your knees on these," giving her a handkerchief. Her countenance changed.
	Encounters with doctors, mirrors, and romantic rejection highlight her shame. At 04:21, she tells the Doctor, "I feel like you're sorta slinging labels at me all of a sudden..." At 13:00, she goes outside for a run, then sees a reflection of herself, touches her belly, and runs back inside in shame.
	Obesity is framed as both inherited and socially judged. At 05:13 the doctor tells her "A lot of people struggle



	with their weight because of thyroid issues and genetic predispositions and in many cases they're heavy but healthy."
Negative Case	Initially, Brittany's weight loss intention was driven by fear of health risk. At 10:54, she tells the instructor, "I need to get a tiny bit healthier."
Theme 2: From Self-Sabotage to Self-Discipline	
	Brittany's journey from junk food and self-deprecation to running, resisting alcohol, and eating healthier.
	She sets progressive goals: At 17:47, she sets out and says, "one block...one block", then it becomes a 5K, then a marathon
	Lapses occur, but her arc trends toward agency over impulse. At 28:08, "I'm a runner now," she tells Gretchen.
Negative Case	
Theme 3: Craving Validation and Overcoming Social Isolation	
	She uses humor to mask pain and seeks approval from friends and strangers. At 06:35, she screams, "I'm the funniest person she knows." At 10:57, "Doc says I'm a big fat pig," she jokes to the fitness trainer.
	Develops healthier friendships (e.g., at 21:02, she joins Catherine's running group)
	Conflict with old friends symbolizes shedding toxic relationships. 44:11–46:57
Negative Case	Validation seeking through comparison. At 25:21 at the 5K start line, in anxiety, Brittany scans the bodies of other runners in her group and second-guesses herself.
Theme 4: Emotional Vulnerability and Resilience	
	Emotional lows: sobbing alone (14:00), slamming doors (14:53), anger outbursts, to bonding with others (28:30), and romantic progress (52:07; and 58:39)
	Resilience is reflected in Brittany's repeated attempts despite failures and relapses. (e.g., at 27:27 she takes a pill and hits the club and returns in the morning vomiting, yet she insists she is a runner, and returns to run)
Negative Case	At 45:48, she argues with Gretchen, and it distresses her; she faces identity collapse and flashbacks, etc., and then lashes out at Gretchen.



Theme 5: Reinventing Identity through Action	
	Transformation is reflected in behavior (waking early, jogging seen at 22:55-23:35, and working two jobs as seen at 38:16 and 42:27)
	Language shifts: less cursing, more encouragement. "We don't have to win it, we just have to finish it" (28:21) "Come on. Don't you want to be a part of something epic?" (28:48)
	External appearance mirrors internal growth (e.g., wearing tight jeans confidently at 50:39 and mini-gown at 1:05:06)
Negative Case	1:02:58 she slights Gretchen and her boyfriend, "But on the inside I will always be who I always was." 1:10:37, she engages in vulgarity after getting injured. "I'm gonna be a girl who is stupid enough to think that she could turn her life around instead needs a fucking seat belt extender..."

Table 1 shows themes, subthemes, and negative cases that emerged from data collected from the thematic analysis of the Protagonist (Brittany) from the film *Brittany Runs a Marathon*.

Theme 1: Self-Worth and Body Image as Catalysts for Change

In the character development of Brittany, her transformation is mainly sparked by her confrontation with body image anxiety, and not external threats, unlike traditional Hollywood arcs. Her main battle is with her size and sense of self-worth.

Theme 2: From Self-Sabotage to Self-Discipline

Brittany's change from a lifestyle of self-sabotage is grounded in the small, difficult victories over inertia, and not a magical one-swoop transformation. This realism of gradually building self-discipline gives the development authenticity.

Theme 3: Craving Validation and Overcoming Social Isolation

True character growth occurs when Brittany learns to validate herself rather than chasing approval. She grows out of gaining validation from others and overcomes a lonely, isolated lifestyle to begin to do things for herself because she wants to, and has a new motivation.

Theme 4: Emotional Vulnerability and Resilience



Brittany's emotional spectrum is central to her development. Character growth is shown through her emotional awareness and mastery. She learns to have control over her emotions and not be swayed.

Theme 5: Reinventing Identity through Action

After overcoming inertia, Brittany overhauled her persona through action. She doesn't merely 'change', she revamps her identity through deliberate effort, embracing community and perseverance.

Size 12 (Nollywood Film)

Synopsis: *Size 12* is a comedy/drama film released in 2019. It is the story of Ijeoma (protagonist), an overweight lady, whose fiancé, Jide (antagonist), constantly taunted and body shamed her over her size, which eventually led to her affectionate relationship with another man, her dietician (Mike). As Ijeoma (IJ) and Mike planned to get married, Jide, out of jealousy, kept haunting and threatening them, and went ahead to scheme to disrupt the wedding, but a tip-off to the police by his neighbor, Toke, led to his arrest. The cast of the film includes Chioma Nwosu, Uzor Arukwe, Eddie Watson, and Mary Lazarus, and it was directed by Toke Alake and produced by Mary Lazarus.

Results:

Table 2: Themes from *Size 12*

Protagonist (IJ/Ijeoma)	
Theme	Subthemes
Theme 1: Body Image as Battleground	
	IJ's self-worth is constantly challenged by Jide's verbal abuse, e.g., "fat", "bloated", "elephant waist". At 02:17 - 04:45
	Her desperate efforts to lose weight by ordering tummy tuckers, excessive exercising, and dieting highlight an internalized ideal tied to external validation. See at 26:00
Negative Case	07:22 orders fufu at restaurant, not bothering about body shame momentarily
Theme 2: Transformation Through Resistance	
	IJ transitions from passive and soft-spoken, "Baby, I didn't intend to tear it" (at 04:25) to assertive and confrontational, "Leave my fiancé alone or I'll break



	your legs” (at 53:22).
	Her confrontations with both Jide and Toke mark key empowerment milestones.
Negative Case	33:37 Momentarily reverts to her calm demeanour, softly saying “Baby”.
Theme 3: Affirmation as a Catalyst for Change	
	Mike, the dietician, plays a crucial role in IJ’s emotional healing. His affirmations, “You’re not fat; you’re thick,” help IJ reframe her identity (at 41:36-41:44).
	She smiles, laughs, and gradually regains confidence in herself - emotionally, socially, and physically. At 45:08, she smiles easily to Mike’s affirmation of her in the car.
Negative Case	At 51:00, overwhelmed in emotions, she recounts Jide’s negative comments to her “elephant waist”, showing that self-acceptance can be fragile.
Theme 4: Cultural Identity and Gender Norms	
	IJ expresses deep concern about failing to meet traditional expectations (e.g., being unable to cook, being compared to other women). This is evident at 30:44, she yells at Toke, “Now you want him to complain about my cooking.” 52:46 “I am tired of him using your body as a yardstick to measure my life.”
	Yet her final rejection of Jide also marks a break from patriarchal cultural obedience. She liberates herself from Jide’s patriarchy, “I will rather have Mike’s lies than your brand of suicidal truths” (1:01:37).
Negative Case	At 31:38, she confronts Jide, “What does my weight have to do with you going and eating a neighbour’s food? Or did you also tell her I don’t know how to cook?”
Theme 5: Emotional Reclamation and Closure	
	By the final scenes, IJ refuses to reconcile with Jide despite his apologies and desperate pleas. At 1:06:40 - 1:07:05 “Which marriage? Ah ah...”
	She chooses herself and her well-being, culminating in a marriage to Mike. At 1:30:36, the policewoman calls IJ, “Madam, you can go ahead with your wedding.”



Negative Case	1:20:58 shows some lingering fear of Jide. “I am scared...those are my personal things...he could use them for anything.”
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Table 2 bears themes, subthemes, and negative cases developed from data of the protagonist (Ijeoma) and antagonist (Jide) from the film *Size 12*.

The following themes are derived from the protagonist, IJ:

Theme 1: Body Image as Battleground

IJ's character arc begins in psychological captivity to societal and relational body standards. Most of her motivations are driven by the perception she receives of her body. That becomes a source of major conflict for her.

Theme 2: Transformation Through Resistance

Though IJ had been very submissive in her relationship with Jide, her character development becomes evident as she gradually resists his suppression and manipulation of her. This arc reflects a feminist Nollywood narrative, where there is liberation from oppressive expectations, emotional, and psychological abuse.

Theme 3: Affirmation as a Catalyst for Change

Positive reinforcement serves as an antidote to years of emotional degradation. While Jide subjugated IJ through scathing words, Mike uses words of affirmation to build her self-confidence and sense of worth.

Theme 4: Cultural Identity and Gender Norms

Ijeoma's character embodies a tension between cultural conformity and self-defined womanhood. She reveals that there is a cultural expectation of society, but then a liberated woman should define her concept of who a woman should be.

Theme 5: Emotional Reclamation and Closure

IJ's arc shows a complete emotional reclamation of the character. She navigated from being a victim of abuse and manipulation to becoming a victor, and from being silenced to becoming more assertive and expressive.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Unique Approaches to Character Development in Hollywood and Nollywood

Table 3: A comparison of character development approaches in the two film industries

Approaches in Hollywood	Approaches in Nollywood
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Use of Transformation Arcs and Psychological Depth	Cultural/Communal anchorage
Individualism and covert significance	Dramatic Expressions, Dialogues, and Expositions
Genre-Driven Consistency	Moral Framework

Approaches in Hollywood

The Hollywood film adopted character development arcs grounded in psychological realism and individualism. The protagonist character underwent internal evolution through emotional catharsis, agency, and redemption. This arc is marked by internal conflict, subtle narrative cues, and transformation driven by personal choice. Drawing from the themes identified, the following approaches emerged:

Use of Transformation Arcs and Psychological Depth: Hollywood screenwriters craft their characters, particularly the protagonists, in such a manner that they undergo complex emotional and internal arcs. Brittany, in *Brittany Runs a Marathon*, goes through several challenges that build her self-worth. She begins with insecurity and self-sabotage, evolving through self-discipline and emotional vulnerability.

Individualism and covert significance: Screenwriters in Hollywood develop characters in subtle ways, utilizing nuanced dialogue, implicit meaning, and visual metaphors. The run of Brittany serves as an identity.

Genre-Driven Consistency: Also, screenwriters ensure that their character development is consistent with the expectations of the story's genre and the role of the character. In *Brittany Runs a Marathon*, the character arc of Brittany is crafted to reflect her funny, comedic personality.

Approaches in Nollywood

Nollywood screenwriters employ culturally saturated, dialogue-rich, and emotionally expressive approaches to character development. These characters are developed within relational and cultural frameworks, often prioritizing emotional expression and social belonging over internal introspection. Therefore, the themes identified lead to the emergence of the following approaches:

Cultural/Communal anchorage: In Nollywood stories, characterization and character development are influenced by community, culture, and family. In *Size 12*, the protagonist Ijeoma (IJ) is portrayed as an obedient fiancée who is conscious of the patriarchal (superior) role of her fiancé over her.

Dramatic Expressions, Dialogues, and Expositions: Characters are developed to be dramatic in their performances, dialogues (inclusive of monologues), and their outbursts. In *Size 12*, Ijeoma vividly expressed her emotions, evolving from emotional victimhood to empowered self-definition through confrontation and affirmation.



Moral Framework: Nollywood screenwriters design characters to be didactic or to possess redemptive arcs. In *Size 12*, the consequences of infidelity and striving to live up to societal expectations are evident.

Discussion of Findings

The theoretical framework that underpins this work is the Representation Theory by Stuart Hall. According to the theory, meaning is not fixed. Hall (1997) posits that there is no single identity or way that people or events can be represented. He suggests that representation is how meaning is produced and exchanged in culture.

Therefore, in making films, the screenwriter can choose the actions, traits, and behaviours that represent the character or its development. This implies that characters are represented as determined by the screenwriter. Utilizing this theory as a lens for this study provides a foundation to understand and interpret how characters in the Hollywood and Nollywood industries are constructed along ideological and cultural lines.

In relation to this study and its findings, character development is a representational act that encodes ideological and cultural meanings for audiences to decode through their social and historical positioning. Therefore, Hollywood or Nollywood screenwriters can develop unique approaches in developing characters that represent their worldview in terms of culture and actions.

From the findings of this study, it is revealed that character development in Hollywood is hinged on introspection, psychological realism, individualism, and transformation arcs that are internal involving emotional catharsis, agency, and sometimes redemption. Characters are fashioned to be agents of personal change and to reflect autonomy and the pursuit of self-realization (Zey & Windmann, 2022). Protagonists go through emotional and psychological growth by navigating personal conflicts.

In *Brittany Runs a Marathon*, Brittany's character development into a fitness-driven one represents self-discipline as moral capital. This agrees with the neoliberal wellness culture of Lupton (2014) and Maguire (2008). Brittany's body image is crafted to be a metaphor for self-worth. Her transformational arc represents cultural codes of independence, effort, and redemption. In line with the Representation Theory, these characters are encoded with symbols (agency, freedom, and self-realization) that represent individualistic culture (Hall, 1997). Therefore, the character development of the Hollywood character is symbolic and representative of freedom, personal growth, and inner conflict resolution.

In Nollywood, screenwriters usually create characters that are culturally saturated, with rich dialogue spiced with expressive mannerisms. Characters prioritize emotional expression and are relational and less introspective. This study clearly reveals that character development in Nollywood is centered around moralism and community. This makes protagonists to be constructed within social relationships, and the expectations of them are examined against what the community sets.



In *Size 12*, the character development of Ijeoma shows her transforming through confrontations that are external rather than through internal psychological change. Ijeoma's arc shows a transformation that is a product of communal influence, rather than through an internal process alone. This is proved by her external conflicts visible in the film that relate to body image, patriarchy, and social judgment. This shows that the character arcs in Nollywood are consistent with the ethos of African storytelling, grounded in orality, performance, and clear moral themes (Barber, 2000; Ernest-Samuel & Uduma, 2019). There is often a moral or spiritual catharsis that characters experience, which draws them back to the expectations of the community, thus representing cultural ideals through performance of rhetoric and expressive dialogue (Okome, 2007; Haynes, 2016). Therefore, in contrast to Hollywood's internalized individual arcs, Nollywood characters are developed within the nexus of social obligation, morality, and identity.

In summary, the approach taken by Hollywood in character development is mostly symbolic and introspective, while Nollywood leans on externalized moral performance alongside communal representation. This variance supports Hall's (1997) Representation Theory that posits that meaning is not universal, but is shaped by cultural interpretations.

Implications of the Findings

This study's findings bear implications of import:

It provides frameworks for screenwriters, filmmakers, communication and media scholars to understand the narrative mechanisms that would appeal to their specific audiences. Also, it is a contribution to cross-cultural studies in film by showing that differing representational codes influence the manner in which stories are communicated, as well as determine how audiences interpret and understand the motivations, the identities, and the values of characters. This highlights the cultural bifurcation between Hollywood and Nollywood approaches in character development, which reflect the unique contexts (socio-cultural, historical, and cinematic) of each industry.

Conclusion

The findings therefore demonstrate the representational nature of character development in Hollywood and Nollywood, which are being shaped by different cultural codes, narrative traditions, and ideological contexts. While both industries are similar in the fact that they arouse empathy and reveal character transformation, they differ in their approaches. Hollywood is tilted towards individual psychological realism, and Nollywood is focused on expressions that are performative, cultural, and moralistic.

Hinging on Hall's Representation Theory, this study shows the non-neutral nature of character and reveals it as a symbolic site for cultural negotiation. The study also reveals that meaning is not universal, and not objective, but is instead culturally mediated and decoded based on the context (Hall, 1997). Also, the unique approaches in constructing protagonists, pacing, crafting dialogue and narrative arcs further reveal that representations can take on varying approaches,



hence reinforcing Hall's position that representations are driven by contexts of power dynamics and hierarchy.

Based on empirical evidence from this research, Hall's framework, which demonstrates how character representation is culturally specific and can be decoded differently (Hall, 1997), is validated. This shows how Stuart Hall's Representation Theory is still very significant in cross-cultural media analysis. Screenwriters, in both industries, encode ideological meanings in character traits, arcs and narrative structures, allowing for audiences to decode based on their cultural and social contexts, thus giving varying interpretations.

Generally, findings from this research substantiate the Representation Theory and build on it. Through this cross-cultural film analysis, character development is revealed to be a dynamic process through which cultural, ideological, and identity meanings are constructed, negotiated, and communicated.

Recommendations

Establish Cultural Representation Guidelines: It is necessary to have clear guidelines for inclusive and authentic representation of cultural identities. The framework should be specific about how character change and growth are variously depicted and in a nuanced manner.

Screenwriting Workshops: Training should be provided for screenwriters to improve their skills in developing complex characters, incorporating cultural nuance, and promoting authentic storytelling.

Cross-Industry Collaborations: Avenues should be created to foster cultural exchange, innovation, and blending of approaches through collaborations between Hollywood and Nollywood.

Further comparative studies: More studies should be conducted to compare unique approaches of character development across other film industries.

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