

CULTURAL FUSION THROUGH NOLLYWOOD NARRATIVES FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Nollywood industry focuses more on the economic benefits of its exploration of cultural diversity rather than on its potential to enhance cultural fusion for societal transformation. This study examined how indigenous films project cultural themes and narratives to create an understanding of cultural similarities. It identifies socio-cultural elements and symbols that promote cultural identity and integration while minimizing ethno-religious intolerance. The study addresses the knowledge gap on cultural fusion through Nollywood for social transformation. Qualitative research design involving Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and content analysis was adopted to examine the thematic narratives of three indigenous films, *Amina* (Film)-Hausa, *Mmasinachi* (Film)-, and *Jagun Jagun* (Film) produced between 2021 and 2023. The FGD participants were divided into three cohorts of 10 participants each with varied demographics engaging in discussions that yielded subjective perspectives on trends of cultural fusion emanating from selected Kannywood, Igbo, and Yoruba indigenous films (KIY). The combination of FGDs and content analyzes revealed that indigenous films explored indigenous cultural themes and generic narratives. This study demonstrates Nollywood's capacity to drive cultural fusion and social transformation in Nigeria, moving beyond economic focus to foster understanding and cohesion among diverse ethnic groups. Analyzing *Amina*, *Mmasinachi* and *Jagun Jagun* highlights how indigenous films promote cultural identity and reduce ethnoreligious intolerance. The findings underscore Nollywood's role in building a shared national identity, addressing a significant gap in research on cultural fusion through Nigerian cinema.

Key words: Cultural fusion, Nollywood Narratives, Social Transformation, Kannywood, Igbo and Yoruba indigenous films

Introduction

Nigeria's film industry serves as a platform for cultural representation and social engagement within a multicultural society. Nollywood reflects the cultural diversity of the country and projects narratives drawn from numerous ethnic traditions (Adesokan, 2014). Indigenous film sectors such as Kannywood, Igbo, and Yoruba cinema portray distinct cultural expressions while sharing narrative structures and symbolic elements. These films create conditions for cultural fusion. Cultural fusion refers to the blending of cultural symbols, practices, and identities into shared forms capable of fostering social cohesion.

Nigeria contains over 374 ethnic groups and more than 500 languages. This diversity has posed persistent challenges to national unity (Maikanti et al., 2021). Film narratives that depict interethnic interaction and interreligious relationships offer avenues for countering stereotypes and encouraging mutual understanding. Studies identify the role of film in national development and cultural communication (Igbashangev, 2021). Nollywood therefore functions as a medium through which shared cultural symbols and identities circulate across ethnic boundaries.

The expansion of the Nigerian film industry relates to urbanization, digital camera technology, satellite television, and migration (Diop, 2019). These forces encourage interaction between indigenous traditions and external cultural influences. Nigerian films therefore portray both intra-cultural themes such as traditional beliefs, generational conflict, and gender roles, and intercultural themes such as cultural fusion, religious pluralism, and identity negotiation (Imhanobe, 2022). Despite this cultural capacity, public discourse around Nollywood emphasizes economic returns rather than its sociocultural influence.

Nollywood narratives frequently combine traditional and contemporary cultural elements across rural and urban contexts. Such representations encourage audiences to recognize shared values across

ethnic boundaries. The industry therefore possesses capacity to strengthen social cohesion through narratives that promote cultural understanding and national identity (Esan, 2020).

This study argues that cultural fusion in Nollywood remains underexamined as a mechanism for social transformation. Indigenous films from Kannywood, Igbo, and Yoruba traditions contain narrative elements that support cultural integration and mutual respect. Systematic analysis of these films offers insight into how Nigerian cinema contributes to social cohesion and national identity formation.

Statement of Problem

Cultural practices across Nigeria vary significantly across regions and ethnic groups (Alakwe, 2017). Colonial cultural influence introduced forms of Westernization that created limited cultural convergence but did not unify indigenous identities (Imhanobe, 2022). The continued use of the phrase “unity in diversity” reflects this unresolved tension within the Nigerian social structure (Egharevba & Aghedo, 2016).

Social polarization along ethnic and religious lines manifests through intolerance, hate speech, communal conflict, and socioeconomic violence (Odey & Ugar, 2023). Nigeria therefore continues to seek institutions capable of strengthening national cohesion. The film industry, though nationally visible, operates through ethnolinguistic segments such as Kannywood, Igbo, and Yoruba cinema. These segments mirror the broader cultural divisions present within the society.

Indigenous films portray cultural practices such as marriage systems, interpersonal communication patterns, traditional conflict resolution, and communal identity formation. These representations carry strong potential for cultural understanding and social integration. Yet industry evaluation focuses largely on box-office revenue and commercial success rather than sociocultural influence (Kalu, 2017). Scholarly attention also remains

limited regarding the capacity of indigenous films to promote cultural integration and social transformation.

A knowledge gap therefore exists regarding the role of Nollywood narratives in fostering cultural fusion and national cohesion. This study addresses that gap through an examination of indigenous films from Kannywood, Igbo, and Yoruba traditions. The study investigates how cultural narratives, symbols, and themes in these films encourage cross-cultural understanding, reduce ethno-religious tensions, and contribute to the construction of a shared Nigerian identity.

Research Objectives

1. To find out whether kannywood, Igbo and Yoruba indigenous films project related ethnic cultural themes and the key elements within narratives?
2. To determine whether the cultural themes narratives from kannywood, Igbo and Yoruba indigenous films create a globally shared cultural space to enhance cross-cultural understanding and appreciation capable of promoting social transformation?
3. To discover the socio-cultural narratives, symbols that could be promoted as a shared cultural identity and integration?
4. To find the potentials of kannywood, Igbo and Yoruba indigenous films to portray themes that could minimize ethno-religious intolerance among ethnic nationalities?

Research Questions

The following research questions are subsequently applied to the study –

1. How do kannywood, Igbo and Yoruba indigenous films project related ethnic cultural themes and the key elements within narratives?

2. How do cultural themes narratives from kannywood, Igbo and Yoruba indigenous films create a globally shared cultural space to enhance cross-cultural understanding and appreciation capable of promoting social transformation?
3. What are the socio-cultural narratives, symbols that could be promoted as a shared cultural identity and integration?
4. What are the potentials of kannywood, Igbo and Yoruba indigenous films to portray themes that could minimize ethno-religious intolerance among ethnic nationalities?

Review of Related Literature

Conceptual Review

Cultural Fusion in Films

Cultural fusion refers to the blending of cultural elements into a shared cultural form. The process produces a distinct identity where symbols, traditions, and practices from different cultures merge and gain recognition across social and ethnic boundaries (Croucher & Kramer, 2017). Scholars across media studies, sociology, and anthropology examine cultural fusion within multicultural societies where media content shapes collective identity (Bao et al., 2024). Robbins and Dowty (2019) associate cultural fusion with global social interaction driven by economic and cultural exchange. Hooks (2015) examines how racial groups negotiate shared cultural expressions within unequal social structures. Bhabha (2012) identifies processes such as mimicry, interstice, hybridity, and liminality as mechanisms through which cultures interact and produce new meanings.

These perspectives guide the examination of cultural fusion in Nigerian indigenous films. Cultural fusion emerges through interaction between intra-cultural and inter-cultural elements. Intra-cultural elements

refer to practices, symbols, and traditions rooted within a specific cultural group. Inter-cultural elements refer to influences that interact with indigenous practices and produce hybrid cultural forms (Subedi, 2023). This study identifies cultural fusion through narrative components such as symbols, iconography, dialogue, settings, and character representation within indigenous films. Through these elements, cinema introduces audiences to shared cultural realities that promote recognition of diversity while encouraging social cohesion.

Cultural Fusion and Hybridity in Nollywood

Cultural fusion and cultural hybridity represent related processes within Nigerian cinema. Cultural fusion refers to the blending of languages, traditions, and cultural symbols within narratives that cross ethnic boundaries. These narratives produce shared cultural experiences and support national cohesion among diverse audiences (Croucher & Kramer, 2017).

Cultural hybridity refers to the coexistence of indigenous and global influences within a single cultural expression. Hybridity reflects Nigeria's multicultural context and the influence of globalization on cultural production. Nollywood films frequently merge indigenous narratives with global cinematic techniques, producing narratives that appeal to both local and international audiences (Bhabha, 2012).

Both processes contribute to intercultural understanding. Cultural fusion emphasizes unity through shared narrative themes. Cultural hybridity emphasizes negotiation between local authenticity and global cultural influence. Within Nollywood, the interaction of fusion and hybridity enables representation of ethnic diversity while encouraging respect across cultural groups (Subedi, 2023; Imhanobe, 2022). Through these processes, Nollywood narratives contribute to shifts in social attitudes and support national integration.

Nollywood and the Evolution of the Nigerian Film Industry

The term Nollywood refers to the Nigerian film industry and describes films produced in English, pidgin, and indigenous languages. The industry has evolved into a global cultural sector with wide distribution and audience reach (Orlando, 2017). Recent developments in Nigerian cinema emphasize improved production quality and narrative depth while maintaining cultural specificity (Ewing, 2024). This phase of development, often described as New Nollywood, integrates indigenous cultural narratives with modern storytelling techniques that appeal to global audiences (Ryan, 2015).

New Nollywood provides a platform for examining cultural fusion. The industry increasingly integrates narratives from diverse Nigerian ethnic traditions. These narratives contribute to the formation of a national cultural discourse while preserving distinct ethnic identities.

New Nollywood and Neo-Nollywood

New Nollywood and Neo-Nollywood represent contemporary transformations within Nigerian cinema. New Nollywood reflects commercial expansion, global distribution, and higher production standards. The movement integrates indigenous cultural themes with modern narrative structures (Ryan, 2015).

Neo-Nollywood extends this transformation by combining indigenous cultural narratives with global cinematic aesthetics and storytelling practices (Abutsa, 2024). The interaction between these movements produces hybrid cultural narratives that resonate across local and international audiences. Within this framework, cultural fusion operates as a narrative mechanism through which diverse cultural elements merge within film narratives.

The intersection between New Nollywood, Neo-Nollywood, and cultural fusion shapes contemporary Nigerian cinematic discourse. These

developments influence representations of identity, gender relations, and inter-ethnic interaction while contributing to broader social transformation.

Kannywood, Igbo, and Yoruba Indigenous Films

Although Nollywood serves as the umbrella term for Nigerian cinema, the industry consists of multiple indigenous film sectors shaped by cultural, linguistic, and religious influences. These influences include language, cultural symbols, settings, dialogue, and iconography. Each indigenous film sector reflects the traditions and worldview of a specific ethnic community.

Kannywood represents films rooted in Hausa culture and Islamic traditions within northern Nigeria. The sector maintains distinctive narrative structures and cultural motifs which differentiate it from southern Nigerian cinema (Ibrahim, 2019).

Igbo indigenous films derive from Igbo cultural traditions and frequently incorporate Christian and traditional religious practices alongside indigenous language and symbolism. Yoruba indigenous films reflect Yoruba cultural traditions and religious diversity which includes Christianity, Islam, and traditional belief systems. Both sectors employ cultural symbols, settings, and language drawn from their respective communities (Imhanobe, 2022).

Although the terms “Igbowood” and similar labels appear in informal discourse, scholarly literature rarely employs these classifications. The study therefore refers to Igbo and Yoruba indigenous films to distinguish them from the broader Nollywood category (Imhanobe, 2022). The focus on Kannywood, Igbo, and Yoruba cinema reflects their wide audience reach and cultural influence across Nigeria.

Indigenous Narratives in Nigerian Cinema

Kannywood, Igbo, and Yoruba indigenous films provide a platform for examining cultural diversity within Nigerian cinema. Each sector

projects narratives rooted in specific cultural traditions while contributing to broader national discourse. These films portray social institutions such as family, leadership, marriage, religion, and communal relationships (Dairo, 2021).

Through these narratives, indigenous films reinforce cultural identity and transmit cultural knowledge across generations. At the same time, shared narrative structures across these sectors demonstrate Nollywood's capacity to promote cultural integration. The coexistence of distinct yet interconnected film traditions illustrates how Nigerian cinema reflects both cultural diversity and national cultural identity (Dairo, 2021).

Social Transformation

Social transformation refers to sustained change within social structures and cultural practices. Ahmed (2023) defines social transformation as movement from one social condition to another where multiple aspects of social life experience change. While prior scholarship emphasizes political dimensions of social transformation, this study focuses on cultural transformation within Nigerian cinema.

Indigenous films provide cultural narratives that portray social cohesion, cultural integration, and peaceful coexistence. Such narratives include acceptance of religious diversity, intermarriage between cultural groups, and communal conflict resolution. These narrative elements demonstrate how film narratives contribute to the promotion of unity within culturally diverse societies (Dairo, 2021).

Nollywood therefore functions as a cultural platform through which shared values circulate across ethnic boundaries. By integrating indigenous narratives with broader cinematic structures, the industry contributes to cultural dialogue and national identity formation.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts cultural hybridity theory rooted in postcolonial scholarship. Homi K. Bhabha developed hybridity as a central concept in

postcolonial theory (Choudhury, 2016; Milostivaya et al., 2017). Hybridity theory explains how cultural interaction produces new cultural expressions through adaptation and exchange (Ashcroft et al., 2013). In multicultural societies, hybridity produces transcultural identities that incorporate multiple cultural influences.

Applied to indigenous Nigerian films, hybridity theory provides a framework for examining how cultural narratives combine traditional and external influences. This approach enables analysis of how indigenous films construct shared cultural spaces through narrative structures, symbols, and dialogue. The framework also highlights the potential role of cinema in shaping cultural interaction and social cohesion.

Through this theoretical lens, the study identifies narrative strategies that filmmakers employ when representing culturally diverse societies. These strategies provide insights for cultural practitioners and policy makers interested in promoting cultural integration through film.

Limitations

The study focuses on selected intra-cultural and inter-cultural themes represented in indigenous films. Intra-cultural themes include generational conflict, traditional beliefs, and gender roles. Inter-cultural themes include cultural fusion, identity negotiation, religious pluralism, and colonial influence. The study examines these themes within the context of social transformation.

The research does not measure audience effects or the direct influence of film narratives on social attitudes. The study also focuses on films produced between 2021 and 2023. This time frame limits observation of long-term changes in cultural representation within Nigerian cinema.

Language translation presents additional challenges. Indigenous films often contain cultural nuances embedded in language, proverbs, and symbolic expressions. Translation into English may reduce subtle cultural

meanings present in the original dialogue. Despite these limitations, the constructs examined in this study provide a foundation for further research on cultural fusion and social transformation in multicultural societies.

Methodology

The study adopts qualitative design, analyzing Kannywood, Igbo and Yoruba indigenous films to dissect intra-cultural themes that include Generational Conflict and Continuity, Traditional Practices and Beliefs, Gender Roles and Patriarchy, while inter-cultural themes include cultural fusion and identity negotiation, and challenges in maintaining cultural authenticity amidst external influences, Religious Pluralism and Tolerance, Ethnic Identity and Unity, Colonial Influence and Postcolonial Identity, while assessing their roles in social transformation. Through content analysis, this study focuses on intra-cultural, intercultural, symbols, settings, dialogues, characterization. This study explored how cultural fusion in Nigerian films contributes to social transformation. Triangulating data extracted from cultural themes with focus group discussions, participants from diverse backgrounds share insights, ensuring a comprehensive examination of cultural influences on social change.

The study selected 2021, 2022 and 2023 indigenous movies from Kannywood, Igbo and Yoruba indigenous films with the assumption that sixty-four years after independence and with the current level of disunity and intolerance in the country (Dowd, 2016; Elugbaju & Fagunwa, 2023), movies, particularly socio-cultural impactful themes should contain story lines that emphasis cultural fusion while promoting cultural social transformation.

All indigenous films produced in Hausa-Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba languages accessible through google search engine and available on Netflix, a streaming platform and produced between 2021 and 2023 made up the study's population. The study defines its population as a corpus of

indigenous-language Nigerian films (Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba) produced between 2021 and 2023, identified through structured Google searches and verified for availability on the Netflix platform at the time of data collection. Due to the absence of a centralized database and the dynamic nature of streaming catalogues, the population is treated as an open and evolving corpus rather than a finite, countable set (Lomborg, 2020; Venturini et al., 2018). The selection of three movies as sample out of the population was influenced by recommendations, either due to their gross earnings in cinemas or their nominations for the Africa Movie Academy Awards (AMAA). Another rationale for the selection was the study's assumption that an indigenous movie should yield ample cultural elements for analysis to meet the study's objectives.

The study organized three focus groups, each comprising 10 volunteers aged between 18 and 45 years old. Within each group, 3 participants were non-language speakers, while 7 were proficient in the movie indigenous language. The aim was to uncover how both language speakers and non-language speakers perceive and comprehend the diverse cultural subtleties depicted in each film where applicable. All the participants had a minimum of secondary level education and made up of undergraduates, traders, religious priests and artisans who were purposively approached and willing to participate in the focus group discussions. The following pairings were adopted, Cohort 1 watched Kannywood film titled *Amina* [Film] (Ojukwu, 2021) on 5th February at 10 a.m. Cohort 2 watched Igbo film titled *Mmasinachi* [Film] (Okoh & Uyawanne, 2022) on 6th February at 10 a.m. Cohort 3 watched *Jagun Jagun* [Film] (Adebayo & Adebayo, 2023) Each cohort was allowed 5 minutes introspections after watching each movie to allow for a deeper reflections during discussions. Thereafter, each cohort had an average of 30 minutes for discussions

The study subsequently analyzes the 3 indigenous movies selected with subtitles in English to provide an understanding and trends of cultural

fusion emanating from kannywood, Igbo and Yoruba indigenous films. The study dissects cultural themes prevalent in the selected films and how the cultural themes are portrayed and situated withing cultural hybridity where applied to enhance social transformation.

Findings

***Amina* [Film]-FGD**

Participants in the FGD agreed that the movie portrayed a strong northern Nigeria cultural element that convinced the audience about the ethnic origin of the movie's settings. When prompted to give examples as applied in the movie, participants pointed to the local wrestling competition to test 'manhood' and strength, local drums, swords, use of slaves for sport, calabash as drinking gourds, beads for adornment, men head gears for nobles and the influentials to signify wisdom, dignity and authority. The participants were able to identify several narratives that resonated with their cultural backgrounds. They referred to the role played by Amina in leading her people to address the treacherous role played by Madaki in usurping the throne. Mentioned was made of '*Efunsetan Aniwura*' (Ladele & Oyinlola, 2020) and the *Aba* riot led by women (Ndubuwa & Oko, 2022). In addition, participants pointed to the swearing of an oath and blood covenant between Amina, her sister and Aladi, the slave as a universal practice in Nigeria.

Participants agreed that the film depicted events that could easily be understood within any cultural setting because of the theme of sacrificial love, war, deceit and sacrifice. Another significant observation was a participant's reaction that she did not know that there could be forest in the Northern part of Nigeria. Participants observed the symbolic nature of the place as capable of promoting shared cultural identity and integration. Participants pointed out the use of English and Hausa languages in the film as major evidence of cultural hybridity and was further reflected in the movie through the use of Arabic language and reference to Allah amidst traditional religion setting.

***Amina* [Film]-Content Analysis**

Amina's journey promotes female empowerment by questioning conventional gender roles and showcasing the leadership skills and strength of women. Her ascension to the position of queen in a male-dominated society is an empowering illustration of female strength. Despite facing many challenges and hurdles in her journey, *Amina* demonstrates unyielding courage and resilience in the midst of difficulties. The driving force behind her actions and decisions is her commitment to safeguarding her kingdom and its citizens.

Amina's aspiration to be a renowned queen is fueled by her ambition to create a lasting impact on her kingdom and future descendants. She manages the intricacies of being a leader, juggling her own goals with her duties to her community. The movie delves into topics of cultural identity and tradition, specifically in the setting of historic Nigerian culture. *Amina's* leadership is based on the traditions and principles of her community, and she faces the challenge of balancing tradition and advancement while ruling her kingdom.

The film *Amina* explores both intra-cultural and inter-cultural themes that reflect Nigeria's rich cultural landscape while addressing broader societal issues. Intra-cultural themes in the film focus on generational conflict, where younger characters challenge traditional norms surrounding leadership and gender roles. This dynamic echoes a frequent motif in Nigerian cinema, which portrays the struggle between tradition and modernity (Mortimer & Khannous, 2015; Westling, 2023). The conflict between preserving cultural heritage and embracing change resonates with the FGD participants, who relate these portrayals to real-life generational divides. The film also highlights traditional Hausa practices such as martial arts and attire, promoting cultural pride, while addressing the transformations induced by modernization (Gar, 2021; Sani et al., 2023). In terms of gender roles, *Amina* subverts patriarchal structures by featuring a female warrior, thus

contributing to ongoing discussions on gender equity in Nigerian cinema, where increasing emphasis is placed on women's empowerment (Umar, 2013). On the inter-cultural level, *Amina* illustrates cultural fusion, with the protagonist bridging traditional warrior roles with leadership in a diverse society, thus embodying the complex identity negotiation seen in globalized contexts (Johnson, 2020). The film also implicitly addresses religious pluralism, highlighting the coexistence of Islam and indigenous beliefs within Hausa communities, thereby promoting interfaith tolerance, an essential theme in Nigeria's multicultural framework (Gar, 2021). Additionally, by emphasizing indigenous governance, *Amina* offers a counter-narrative to colonial representations of African societies, contributing to postcolonial identity formation (Sani et al., 2023).

The socio-cultural symbols in *Amina*, such as traditional attire and music, reinforce ethnic pride and national unity, mirroring Nigeria's efforts to balance cultural diversity with national cohesion (Imhanobe, 2022). The film's settings, including rural landscapes and marketplaces, contribute to an authentic portrayal of Hausa society, fostering cultural appreciation among diverse Nigerian audiences (Diop, 2019). Moreover, the dialogues, enriched with indigenous proverbs and language expressions, enhance the hybridity in the narrative, promoting linguistic diversity (Dowd, 2016). Ultimately, *Amina* demonstrates Nollywood's potential as a powerful tool for social transformation, fostering unity and cross-cultural understanding in Nigeria's heterogeneous society.

***Mmasinachi* [Film] FGD**

Mmasinachi [Film] represents the traditional and cultural elements of the Igbo society portrayed through love, sacrifice, royalty, dignity, marriage routed in traditions. conflict between tradition and modernization.

Participants discussed the apparent use of traditional Igbo costumes, hairdo, hard work, beads respect for in-law. Observed that the mud houses

lashed with palm thatch represent typical Igbo traditional society. The flamboyant courtship system and chieftaincy titles and respect for royalty made the film a distinct indigenous Igbo film. Participants agreed that the courtship system resonate with other culture in Nigeria. Participants pointed out that the portrayal of the marriage system in Igbo and illuminates how the society organizes itself. The participants agreed that respect and honor for royalty. The movie depicted family relationships and *Mmasinachi* 's challenges really touched me. The movie effectively presents Igbo culture, particularly by depicting traditional ceremonies and rituals. For instance, the parts with the New Yam Festival show a peek into the Igbo people's diverse cultural background.

***Mmasinachi* [Film] Content Analysis**

Mmasinachi, when analyzed within the framework of focus group discussions (FGD) and content analysis, reveals significant insights into the portrayal of cultural fusion and social transformation in Nigerian cinema. The film explores intra-cultural dynamics, particularly generational conflicts, where older generations' adherence to tradition contrasts with younger characters' aspirations for modernity, mirroring broader shifts in Nigerian society (Esan, 2020). Symbolic cultural elements such as traditional attire and ceremonial practices enhance viewers' connection to their ethnic identities, while fostering a shared national heritage (Jedlowski, 2022). The film also bridges local and global cultural spheres, integrating diaspora experiences and modern themes, thereby creating a transnational cultural space (Campelo et al., 2018). Furthermore, *Mmasinachi* fosters cross-cultural understanding, depicting inter-ethnic relationships that challenge stereotypes and promote empathy, in line with Adesokan's, (2014) Gray's (2023) findings on Nollywood's role in enhancing cultural appreciation. It also addresses ethno-religious intolerance, promoting unity through community rituals and conflict resolution, aligning with Tsika's

(2017) emphasis on Nollywood's potential to foster national integration. The film's exploration of gender roles and societal norms presents a critique of patriarchy, contributing to social transformation. In portraying cultural hybridity, *Mmasinachi* highlights the fusion of indigenous and global influences, offering a nuanced reflection on Nigeria's evolving cultural landscape.

***Jagun Jagun* [Film] FGD**

Jagun Jagun [Film] (The Warrior) provides an insight into the thematic construction of a warrior life style and experiences in Yoruba land.

The participants were able to identify and relate with the Yoruba cultural elements deployed in the movie. Participants mentioned mud houses with thatched roofings, Ogundiji's warrior uniform laced with cowries shells and charms, wild animal hides, ancestral crown, dane guns, mode of greetings, calvings, charms, royalty, throne, horses, royal beads etc. as examples of Yoruba indigenous themes depicted in the film. Participants who were not Yoruba mentioned the use of supernatural powers such as when Gbotija, the son of Lagbayi commanded 'Igi Ose'-the baobab tree that fell on its part to rise, use of calabash, horses in battles, oath swearing, swords as elements within the narratives that resonated with their cultural background. Participants agreed that the depiction of hand fights, love themes, forests, royalty, destructive nature of war, cave paintings on walls, the influence of the colonialists through the mention of white men provision of guns contribute to shared cultural space on a global scale. The participants agreed that the movies has socio-cultural narratives capable of promoting cultural identity and integration through its depiction of peaceful co-existence and family life. Cultural hybridity was depicted through the imposing building that was of European design at the beginning of the movie and the reference to the existing trade practice between the Europeans and the Yorubas, battle strategy that reflected European styles. Additionally, the film depicted

cultural borrowings, such as the use of camels, which are not traditionally part of Yoruba culture. However, the predominant use of horses, along with the depiction of cowries by Ogundiji as symbols of wealth and warrior status, accurately represented Yoruba cultural practices. The inclusion of symbols, such as guns, charms, warfare, and animal sacrifices, highlighted shared cultural experiences among different ethnic groups in Nigeria, according to participants' perspectives. Regarding participants' observations, some expressed concerns about cultural inaccuracies, such as the portrayal of Chinese cultural elements in certain scenes. However, common themes such as land disputes, farming, and themes of love were recognized as prevalent across Nigerian cultures. The film effectively captured these themes, such as the depiction of conflicts over land and scenes illustrating love and sacrifice among characters. In response to inquiries about the film's reflection on issues of ethno-religious intolerance, participants offered perspectives suggesting that the film primarily focused on respecting authority figures rather than promoting religious intolerance.

***Jagun Jagun* [Film]-Content Analysis**

Amina's journey promotes female empowerment by questioning conventional gender roles and showcasing the leadership skills and strength of women. Her ascension to the position of queen in a male-dominated society is an empowering illustration of female strength.

Despite facing many challenges and hurdles in her journey, Amina demonstrates unyielding courage and resilience in the midst of difficulties. The driving force behind her actions and decisions is her commitment to safeguarding her kingdom and its citizens.

Amina's aspiration to be a renowned queen is fueled by her ambition to create a lasting impact on her kingdom and future descendants. She manages the intricacies of being a leader, juggling her own goals with her duties to her community. The movie delves into topics of cultural identity and

tradition, specifically in the setting of historic Nigerian culture. Amina's leadership is based on the traditions and principles of her community, and she faces the challenge of balancing tradition and advancement while ruling her kingdom.

Jagun Jagun offers a significant depiction of intra-cultural and inter-cultural themes, making it an insightful case study for understanding cultural dynamics in contemporary Nigerian society. The film focuses on Yoruba traditions, rituals, and societal structures, capturing the tension between tradition and modernity. In particular, its portrayal of Yoruba spirituality, ancestral worship, and community life provides a window into the cultural fabric of the ethnic group. These depictions resonate strongly with Yoruba audiences, where generational conflicts over tradition are common, with younger generations questioning the relevance of ancestral rites in modern contexts (Ladele & Oyinlola, 2020). Beyond the Yoruba context, Jagun Jagun also creates a shared cultural space by introducing universally relatable themes like family loyalty, power struggles, and identity crises. These themes, embedded in a distinctly Yoruba setting, offer international viewers an entry point into African culture, fostering intercultural awareness (Olugbenga & Ayinla, 2017). The film's engagement with cultural hybridity, as characters navigate traditional values in the face of globalization, reflects broader societal issues where cultural identity is constantly negotiated. Additionally, Jagun Jagun subtly addresses Nigeria's ethno-religious tensions. By illustrating conflict between rival ethnic and religious groups, the film offers a reflection of the nation's struggle with unity, suggesting that cultural understanding and negotiation are essential for overcoming divisive tensions (Ashaolu, 2017). In this way, the film highlights the importance of preserving cultural heritage while adapting to the pressures of modernization.

Focus Group Discussion: Thematic Analysis

The study analyses FGD data through thematic coding aligned with the research questions. Three dominant themes emerge across the cohorts.

1. Recognition of Shared Cultural Symbols

Participants across the three cohorts identify recurring symbols such as calabash, traditional attire, oath-taking, and royal insignia. These symbols appear across Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba contexts. The paper observes convergence in symbolic meaning despite ethnic variation. Participants interpret these elements as markers of authority, identity, and continuity. This indicates the presence of a shared symbolic system within Nigerian cultures.

2. Cross-Cultural Interpretability of Narratives

Non-language speakers demonstrate comprehension of core narratives such as sacrifice, leadership, conflict, and loyalty. Visual storytelling and performative elements enable interpretation beyond linguistic boundaries. The paper finds that narrative accessibility supports intercultural understanding. This aligns with the objective on global cultural space.

3. Cultural Hybridity and Narrative Blending

Participants identify hybrid elements such as mixed language use, religious coexistence, and foreign material culture. Examples include Arabic expressions in Hausa settings and European architectural symbols in Yoruba narratives. The paper interprets these as indicators of cultural hybridity. Participants perceive these elements as realistic reflections of contemporary Nigerian society.

4. Gender and Power Reconfiguration

Participants highlight female leadership in *Amina* and evolving gender roles across films. The paper finds that these representations challenge traditional patriarchal structures. This theme connects with broader discourse on social transformation.

5. Limited Engagement with Ethno-Religious Tolerance

Participants acknowledge coexistence of belief systems but report limited explicit narrative focus on tolerance. The paper identifies this as a gap in narrative construction. This finding directly addresses research question four.

The FGD findings demonstrate convergence across cohorts in interpreting cultural symbols and narratives. The paper concludes that indigenous films facilitate symbolic familiarity, narrative accessibility, and cultural negotiation across ethnic groups.

Discussion

Projection of Ethnic Cultural Themes and Narrative Elements

The study reveals that *Amina* (Kannywood) prominently reflects Hausa-Fulani culture through ancestral rites, traditional martial practices, and male-dominated leadership structures, with *Amina*'s role challenging gender norms. This aligns with Mortimer and Khannous (2015), who assert that generational and gender conflicts in Nigerian cinema often challenge traditional norms. *Mmasinachi* (Igbo) showcases culturally significant rites, such as the New Yam Festival and traditional chieftaincy structures, embodying values of familial duty and cultural pride. Likewise, *Jagun Jagun* (Yoruba) explores Yoruba spirituality and heroism, weaving themes of loyalty and ancestral worship that resonate with Yoruba audiences (Gar, 2021). These films highlight how each ethnic group's distinct cultural practices contribute to a broader Nigerian cultural narrative, fulfilling the study's goal of showcasing the varied ways indigenous films project ethnic identities and narratives.

Creation of a Globally Shared Cultural Space

The films examined create cross-cultural spaces by embedding themes universally relatable to audiences, such as honor, power struggles,

and resilience, thus appealing to both local and international viewers. For example, *Amina* balances Hausa traditions with globally relevant narratives of female empowerment, while *Jagun Jagun* frames Yoruba warrior ethics in a way that resonates with global audiences through themes of loyalty and sacrifice (Diop, 2019). Similarly, *Mmasinachi* addresses family and social hierarchies, mirroring cultural nuances recognizable across various societies. By presenting narratives that interweave indigenous Nigerian themes with relatable universal concepts, these films contribute to a globally shared cultural experience, advancing intercultural understanding as suggested by Campelo et al. (2018).

Promotion of Socio-Cultural Narratives and Symbols for Shared Identity

The films employ symbols like the Hausa calabash (in *Amina*), Igbo kola nuts (in *Mmasinachi*), and Yoruba warrior charms (in *Jagun Jagun*) to underscore cultural pride and shared heritage. Such symbols serve as unifying markers that enhance national identity, aligning with Egharevba & Aghedo's (2016) views on symbols' power to bridge ethnic divides in Nigeria. Additionally, language usage—Hausa in *Amina*, Igbo in *Mmasinachi*, and Yoruba in *Jagun Jagun*—reinforces linguistic diversity, supporting Nigeria's national identity as an amalgam of cultures, as observed by Dowd (2016). These socio-cultural symbols and narratives foster unity, providing the basis for promoting a shared cultural identity across ethnic groups.

Potential to Minimize Ethno-Religious Intolerance

While the study found that *Jagun Jagun* and *Amina* depict ethnic tensions and rivalries, they fall short of directly addressing themes of ethno-religious tolerance. However, their emphasis on shared values and cultural cohesion suggests an underlying potential to mitigate social divisions. The fusion of Islamic references in *Amina* with indigenous Hausa spiritual elements illustrates religious coexistence, promoting subtle interfaith

tolerance (Gar, 2021). This approach aligns with Johnson (2020), who argue that cultural narratives in cinema can challenge stereotypes and reduce biases indirectly by presenting nuanced inter-ethnic relationships. Though more explicit messaging on ethno-religious tolerance is recommended, these films contribute to the discourse on unity by fostering empathy and cultural appreciation.

The study set out to unravel the potentials of indigenous-themed movies to contribute to social transformation through cultural fusion portrayed in kannywood, Igbo and Yoruba indigenous films (KIY) movies narratives and thematic considerations. Relying on the set objectives and research questions; the study examines how indigenous films projected related ethnic cultural themes within generic narratives. From the findings, the movies discussed used indigenous themes, such as wars, courtship and marriage, rivalry, royal hood stepped in local traditions, settings, costumes, language and symbols within the local communities to tell Nigerians indigenous stories. The above findings agreed with Johnson (2020) and Tsika (2017) in their exposition of the creation of Nigerian film genres. However, this finding was contradicted by the findings of Thomas, (2017) and (Odedina, 2021) by their claim of the overriding influences of melo drama and supernatural on Nollywood thematic considerations.

Also, KIY created global shared cultural space through the divergent cultural themes and narratives projected in the selected movies based on the participants' positions. The participants in the FGD were able to identify and relate with various cultural elements and narratives, different from their cultural backgrounds. These globally shared cultural space included battle fields theatrics, use of royal costumes, blood covenants, love, sacrifice, courtship and marriage etc. The foregoing agreed with the position of Merengwa (2023) on the evolution of themes in Nigerian cinema.

In addition, the study identified various socio-cultural narratives and symbols that could be promoted as a shared cultural identity for the purpose

of the integration of the Nigerian society. Such socio-cultural narratives and symbols include the need to elevate women to leadership positions and to give them the freedom to excel in their chosen careers. The above agreed with John et al. (2020) that posited that the socio-cultural elements in Nollywood could be strengthened through the recognition of the pivotal roles women play in the society (Kayode et al., 2022; Osakpolor, 2021).

However, the study was unable, through the three films analyzed and subjected to FGD, to identify themes and narratives that could minimize ethno-religious intolerance among ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. The study addresses a critical knowledge gap in the discourse on Nigerian cinema by examining the role of indigenous films in fostering social transformation through cultural fusion. By shedding light on the cultural complexities within Nigeria's film industry, the research aims to contribute to a broader understanding of how cultural narratives can shape societal dynamics and foster a more inclusive national identity.

Conclusion

The paper examines cultural fusion in indigenous Nigerian films through content analysis and focus group discussions. The analysis shows that Kannywood, Igbo, and Yoruba films project distinct cultural systems through symbols, language, and narrative structures. At the same time, the films present shared themes such as leadership, sacrifice, family relations, and conflict. These shared elements support cross-cultural recognition among audiences.

The paper finds that visual storytelling and symbolic representation enable interpretation across linguistic groups. Participants identify cultural meanings beyond their ethnic background. This supports the claim that indigenous films contribute to a shared cultural space. Evidence also shows the presence of cultural hybridity through language mixing, religious coexistence, and external influences within narratives.

The study identifies gender representation as a key site of transformation, with films presenting shifts in traditional power relations. However, the analysis shows limited explicit engagement with ethno-religious tolerance. Cultural coexistence appears in narrative form, but without strong thematic emphasis on conflict resolution across religious divides.

The paper concludes that Nollywood serves as a medium for cultural integration through narrative convergence, symbolic familiarity, and hybrid representation. Indigenous films contribute to national identity formation, but require stronger narrative focus on social cohesion and tolerance.

Recommendations

1. Film makers should integrate explicit themes of ethno-religious tolerance into narratives. Storylines should address intergroup conflict and resolution within Nigerian contexts.
2. Film producers should strengthen cross-cultural storytelling by combining symbols, languages, and practices from multiple ethnic groups within single narratives.
3. Policy institutions should support indigenous film production through funding tied to themes of national integration and cultural cohesion.
4. Film regulators should encourage scripts that promote shared national identity while preserving cultural specificity.
5. Researchers should adopt mixed methods designs to measure audience reception and attitudinal change linked to cultural fusion in films.
6. Future studies should expand sample size beyond three films to improve generalizability across Nollywood sectors.
7. Scholars should develop standardized frameworks for analyzing cultural fusion and hybridity in African cinema.
8. Film education programmes should incorporate training on cultural representation and social responsibility in storytelling.

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