

NOLLYWOOD CINEMA (2025) AND MORAL CONSCIOUSNESS: CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF MORAL REPRESENTATION IN “SINS OF MY FATHER”, “LABAKE OLODODO”, AND “MONICA”

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Abstract

This study had the aim of examining moral representation and consciousness in the selected films, with the objectives to analyse dominant moral themes, examine narrative and cinematic techniques of moral construction, and assess their impact on viewers' moral consciousness in contemporary Nigerian society. Anchored on Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, the study adopted a qualitative interpretive film analysis design. Three purposively selected films were examined using thematic content analysis and film discourse analysis, focusing on narrative structure, symbolism, characterisation, cinematography, and editing as moral signifiers. The findings reveal that (1) the films predominantly portray moral themes such as justice, betrayal, sacrifice, spirituality, corruption, and communal responsibility; (2) moral meanings are constructed through symbolism, flashbacks, dialogue, costume, lighting, and suspense-driven narratives; and (3) the films significantly shape moral consciousness by influencing perceptions of ethical behaviour and social responsibility among viewers. The study concludes that Nollywood cinema functions as a moral communicative space where ethics, storytelling, and audience perception converge, reinforcing the media's responsibility as a watchdog of societal values. Consequently, (i) filmmakers should reinforce morally constructive storytelling; (ii) producers should enhance narrative and cinematic clarity; and (iii) policymakers and educators should deploy Nollywood films for moral education and social reorientation.

Keywords: *Cinematography, Moral Consciousness, Moral Representation, Narrative Analysis; Nollywood Cinema; Social Learning Theory*

Introduction

Nollywood cinema has evolved into one of the most influential cultural and communicative industries in Africa. Today, it functions not only as entertainment but also as a symbolic space for the negotiation of values, identity, and social ethics. Since its emergence in the early 1990s, the industry has grown into a powerful medium through which moral expectations, social anxieties, and cultural ideals are continuously constructed and contested (Okhueigbe, 2024). In contemporary media ecology, Nollywood films operate within a highly saturated digital environment where audiences are exposed to competing moral narratives shaped by globalisation, social media, and transnational cultural flows. Within this context, cinema becomes a site of moral pedagogy, where viewers consciously and unconsciously absorb behavioural templates and ethical frameworks.

Moral consciousness, as a conceptual framework, refers to the internal awareness and evaluation of right and wrong conduct within both individual and collective life (Okhueigbe, 2025). In film studies, this concept is often explored through representations of virtue, vice, consequence, and redemption embedded within narrative structures. Nollywood cinema frequently reflects the moral tensions of Nigerian society, particularly issues surrounding corruption, sexuality, materialism, family breakdown, and religious expression. These narratives do not merely depict reality; they actively participate in shaping moral perception by offering audiences interpretive lenses through which social behaviour is judged and understood (Okome, 2019). Thus, moral consciousness in Nollywood is both reflective and formative, operating at the intersection of storytelling and social instruction.

The increasing sophistication of Nollywood productions in the 21st century has further intensified its moral influence. Contemporary films are no

longer limited to didactic storytelling but now employ complex character development, nuanced moral ambiguity, and cinematic realism to engage audiences more deeply (Haynes & Okome, 2020). This shift aligns with global cinematic trends where morality is not always presented in binary terms but is instead explored through ethical complexity and situational judgement. Such narrative strategies enhance audience engagement while simultaneously challenging viewers to critically interrogate their own moral assumptions and social conditioning. Consequently, Nollywood cinema functions as a dynamic moral arena rather than a simplistic moral classroom.

In this evolving cinematic landscape, films such as *Sins of My Father*, *Labake Olododo*, and *Monica* emerge as culturally significant texts through which moral meanings are constructed and disseminated. These productions reflect contemporary social realities, particularly the negotiation of identity, interpersonal relationships, and communal expectations within Nigerian society. Through characterisation, dialogue, and conflict resolution, they encode moral lessons that resonate with everyday lived experiences (Nwachukwu, 2022). . The narratives embedded within these films illustrate how morality is performed, contested, and redefined in modern Nigerian popular culture, thereby reinforcing cinema's role as a mediator of ethical consciousness

Against this backdrop, Nollywood cinema in 2025 stands as a critical site for examining how visual storytelling shapes moral perception in an increasingly digital and interconnected society. The moral representations found in selected films are not isolated artistic expressions but part of a broader cultural discourse that influences public reasoning and social behaviour. As audiences engage with these narratives across traditional and streaming platforms, the boundary between entertainment and moral education becomes increasingly porous. Therefore, the study of moral consciousness in Nollywood cinema provides valuable insight into how

contemporary Nigerian society negotiates ethics, responsibility, and social order through popular filmic expression.

Statement of the Problem

Inspite of the rapid expansion and increasing sophistication of Nollywood cinema as a dominant cultural and moral force in Nigeria, there remains a critical gap in sustained scholarly attention to how contemporary films actively construct, reinforce, or destabilise moral consciousness among audiences. While Nollywood productions are widely consumed and often assumed to carry implicit ethical messages, there is limited systematic interrogation of the specific moral frameworks embedded in recent films such as *Sins of My Father*, *Labake Olododo*, and *Monica*, particularly in relation to how these narratives shape viewers' understanding of right and wrong in a digitally mediated society. This study is therefore justified on the grounds that popular cinema is no longer a peripheral form of entertainment but a central instrument of moral socialisation in contemporary Nigeria, necessitating a focused critical analysis that moves beyond general assumptions to a textured examination of moral representation and its communicative implications.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study was to critically examine moral representation and consciousness in selected Nollywood films, with specific reference to *Sins of My Father*, *Labake Olododo*, and *Monica*. The specific objectives were to:

- i. analyse the dominant moral themes portrayed in the selected films: *Sins of My Father*, *Labake Olododo*, and *Monica*;
- ii. examine the narrative and cinematic techniques through which moral meanings are constructed;
- iii. assess the extent to which these films contribute to shaping moral

consciousness among viewers in contemporary Nigerian society.

Research Questions

Correspondingly, the research questions guiding the study are:

- (i) what moral themes are dominant in *Sins of My Father*, *Labake Olododo*, and *Monica*?
- (ii) how do narrative and cinematic strategies in these films construct moral meanings?
- (iii) what ways do the selected films influence or reflect moral consciousness among audiences?

Review of Related Literature

Nollywood Cinema 2025 and Moral Consciousness

Contemporary Nollywood cinema in 2025 demonstrates a sustained preoccupation with moral consciousness, particularly through narratives that foreground ethical struggle, social responsibility, and consequences of human actions. Recent scholarship positions Nollywood as a moral pedagogical space where film functions as both entertainment and ethical instruction (Haynes, 2016; Okome, 2021; Olayiwola, 2023). This moral orientation is reinforced in 2025 productions such as *Labake Olododo* (Stephen, 2025), *Red Circle* (Mason, 2025), *The Herd* (Etim-Effiong, 2025), *Behind the Scenes* (Akindele, 2025), *Oversabi Aunty* (Abraham, 2025), *Nini* (Idiagbonya, 2025), *3 Cold Dishes* (Oluseyi, 2025), *Son of the Soil* (Cheung, 2025), *Amanyanyabo: The Eagle King* (Amata & Fiberesima, 2025), and *My Father's Shadow* (Davies Jr., 2025). Across these films, morality is consistently framed through justice, betrayal, survival ethics, corruption, and familial responsibility, reinforcing Ugor's (2021) assertion that Nollywood constructs "dramatised ethics" rather than abstract moral philosophy.

Narrative and thematic analyses of these 2025 films reveal a strong

reliance on moral conflict structures and consequence-driven storytelling. For instance, *Labake Olododo* (2025) and *Amanyano: The Eagle King* (2025) deploy epic and historical frameworks where leadership, sacrifice, and justice are tested within communal systems, while *The Herd* (2025) and *Son of the Soil* (2025) dramatise contemporary violence and revenge ethics within urban insecurity contexts (Etim-Effiong, 2025; Cheung, 2025). Similarly, *Red Circle* (2025) and *3 Cold Dishes* (2025) emphasise crime, vengeance, and moral retaliation, reflecting what Eze and Nwankwo (2023) describe as narrative moral suspense structures in Nigerian cinema. Family-centred morality dominates films such as *Behind the Scenes* (2025), *Nini* (2025), and *Oversabi Aunty* (2025), where relational betrayal and domestic ethics are central concerns. These patterns confirm Haynes' (2016) argument that Nollywood narratives operate through cyclical moral causality in which ethical transgression inevitably produces narrative punishment or reconciliation.

From a cinematic perspective, these 2025 films demonstrate increasingly sophisticated visual strategies for constructing moral meaning. Scholars such as Olayiwola (2023) and Adejunmobi (2021) argue that Nigerian cinema encodes morality through semiotic elements such as lighting, costume, spatial framing, and montage rather than dialogue alone. This is evident in *Labake Olododo* (2025), where Yoruba epic aesthetics visually separate justice from corruption through contrasting visual palettes, and in *The Herd* (2025), where chaotic handheld cinematography and fragmented spatial composition reflect moral disorder and survival ethics. Similarly, *Behind the Scenes* (2025) uses interior framing and restrained lighting to express moral suffocation within familial obligations, while *Red Circle* (2025) employs high-intensity urban visuals to reflect criminal moral economies. Across these films, cinematic form becomes an ethical language, reinforcing Omoera's (2022) view that Nigerian narrative media embeds cultural identity and moral interpretation within visual structure.

Moral Representation in “*Sins of My Father, Labake Olododo*,” and “*Monica*”

The moral imagination of contemporary Nollywood cinema, as reflected in *Sins of My Father, Labake Olododo*, and *And Monica*, operates within what Haynes (2016), Okome (2021), and Adesokan (2020) describe as the ethical turn in Nigerian screen culture, where film becomes a site of moral reasoning rather than mere entertainment. Across the three films, morality is constructed through consequences of human action, generational burden, and social accountability. In *Labake Olododo*, moral authority is embodied in the warrior-protagonist whose pursuit of justice gradually reveals the instability of vengeance as ethical foundation, a pattern consistent with Yoruba epic moral philosophy as discussed by Olayiwola (2023) and Ekwuazi (2020). In *Sins of My Father*, morality is structured around inherited guilt and paternal failure, while *And Monica* situates ethical conflict within domestic survival and urban relational instability. Collectively, these films affirm what Ugor (2021) identifies as Nollywood's tendency toward “dramatised ethics,” where moral truths are enacted rather than explained.

Narratively, the films employ non-linear progression, flashback structures, and delayed revelation to construct moral tension. *Labake Olododo*, as observed in contemporary critical reviews (AfricanFolder, 2025; NollyCritic, 2025), opens with fragmented battle sequences and retrospective disclosure of Labake's motivations, thereby withholding moral clarity until the narrative's midpoint. This aligns with Eze and Nwankwo (2023), who argue that Nollywood increasingly uses narrative fragmentation to simulate moral discovery. Similarly, *Sins of My Father* relies on confessional storytelling and retrospective family disclosure to reveal ethical collapse, while *And Monica* adopts episodic domestic sequencing to highlight relational breakdown. These narrative techniques correspond with Omoera (2022) and Abah (2021), who identify discontinuous storytelling as

a defining feature of Nigerian moral cinema.

Cinematically, the films construct morality through visual semiotics—lighting, costume, spatial design, and symbolic mise-en-scène. In *Labake Olododo*, the contrast between battlefield luminosity and palace dimness visually encodes the tension between justice and corruption, a technique noted in Yoruba epic aesthetics by Adejunmobi (2021) and Ogunleye (2022). Ritual sequences, war choreography, and symbolic costume further reinforce moral dichotomies. In *Sins of My Father*, constrained interior framing and low-key lighting reflect psychological guilt and moral suffocation, while *And Monica* uses urban space fragmentation and reflective surfaces to visualise ethical instability. These visual strategies confirm Olayiwola's (2023) argument that Nigerian cinema increasingly communicates morality through cinematic form rather than dialogue alone.

Thematically, the films converge on recurring moral motifs identified in Nollywood scholarship by Akinyemi (2022), Okoye (2023), and Omojola (2021): betrayal, justice, corruption, family fragmentation, and spiritual consequence. *Labake Olododo* foregrounds betrayal in both political and interpersonal registers, particularly within palace governance and wartime alliances, as reflected in contemporary critical reviews (WithinNigeria, 2025). *Sins of My Father* centres on intergenerational moral failure, while *And Monica* explores betrayal within romantic and economic relationships. These thematic structures confirm Haynes' (2016) assertion that Nollywood narratives operate through moral circularity, where ethical transgression inevitably generates narrative retribution.

Empirical Review

Iyanda and Ogunleye (2023) in “*Moral Didacticism in Nollywood Film Narratives*” set out to examine how Nollywood films construct moral consciousness through storytelling. Grounded in social learning theory and moral panopticism, the study employed a qualitative content analysis design,

focusing on purposively selected Yoruba and English-language Nollywood films with strong ethical conflict structures. The population comprised contemporary Nollywood productions between 2015–2022, while a purposive sampling technique was used to select 12 films exhibiting explicit moral framing. The findings revealed that Nollywood constructs morality through narrative binaries such as justice/vengeance, loyalty/betrayal, and righteousness/corruption. The study concluded that moral meaning is rarely explicit but embedded in character consequences and narrative closure. It recommended that filmmakers sustain ethical coherence to avoid moral ambiguity that may weaken didactic impact.

Okeke and Eze (2022) in *“Cinema and Moral Socialisation in Contemporary Nigeria”* investigated how Nigerian films shape audience moral consciousness. The study was anchored on cultivation theory and reception aesthetics theory, adopting a survey and content-analytic mixed-method design. The population consisted of urban Nigerian film viewers in Lagos and Enugu, with a sample size of 400 respondents selected through stratified random sampling, alongside 10 purposively selected films for textual analysis. Findings indicated that repeated exposure to moral narratives in films significantly influences viewers' perception of justice, gender ethics, and social responsibility. The study concluded that Nollywood functions as a parallel moral institution in Nigerian society. It recommended stronger collaboration between filmmakers and cultural regulators to ensure ethical consistency in film production.

Afolabi, and Adeyemi, (2021) in *“Narrative Techniques and Moral Meaning in Yoruba Epic Films”* examined how cinematic strategies construct moral interpretation in Yoruba epic cinema. The study was guided by structuralist film theory and narratology (Todorovian framework) and used a purely qualitative textual analysis design. The population included Yoruba epic films produced between 2000 and 2020, while purposive

sampling selected 8 films with strong historical and moral conflict structures. Findings showed that flashback sequencing, symbolic mise-en-scène, ritual performance, and heightened dialogue are key devices for moral articulation. The study concluded that narrative fragmentation often enhances moral suspense but can also dilute clarity. It recommended tighter screenplay structuring to balance aesthetic complexity with ethical intelligibility.

Bello and Ibrahim (2020) in “Spiritual Symbolism and Moral Order in Nigerian Cinema” explored how supernatural motifs shape moral interpretation in Nigerian films. The study adopted African cultural hermeneutics and symbolic interactionism, using a qualitative interpretive design. The population consisted of films with strong spiritual or metaphysical themes, sampled purposively from Yoruba and Hausa cinema traditions. Findings revealed that moral justice is frequently mediated through supernatural causality, where wrongdoing attracts metaphysical consequences. The study concluded that spiritual symbolism reinforces communal moral expectations and fear of ethical deviation. It recommended responsible framing of supernatural content to prevent distortion of cultural belief systems.

Nwankwo and Salawu, (2024) in “Film Narrative Complexity and Audience Interpretation in Nollywood” investigated how narrative ambiguity affects moral understanding among viewers. The study was grounded in reception theory and cognitive film theory, adopting a survey-experimental design. The population consisted of 250 undergraduate film viewers from two Nigerian universities, selected through simple random sampling, while 6 films with non-linear narrative structures were analysed. Findings showed that excessive narrative complexity often leads to fragmented moral interpretation, although it increases viewer engagement. The study concluded that moral comprehension is strongest in moderately structured narratives. It recommended balancing artistic experimentation with narrative clarity.

Ojo and Balogun (2021) in “Gender, Power and Moral Representation in Nollywood Films” examined how gendered power relations shape moral storytelling. Anchored on feminist film theory and critical discourse analysis, the study used a qualitative design focusing on textual and visual analysis. The population included contemporary Nollywood films portraying female protagonists in leadership or conflict roles, sampled purposively. Findings indicated that female-led narratives often oscillate between empowerment and moral policing, where women are either rewarded for virtue or punished for transgression. The study concluded that gender representation significantly influences moral framing. It recommended more nuanced portrayals of female agency beyond moral binary structures.

Ekwueme, and Yusuf (2022) in “Editing, Cinematography and Moral Construction in Nigerian Films” investigated how technical film elements shape ethical meaning. The study was grounded in auteur theory and film semiotics, using a descriptive qualitative design. The population consisted of selected Nollywood films known for stylistic experimentation, with purposive sampling of 10 films. Findings revealed that lighting, framing, montage, and camera movement significantly influence audience moral alignment with characters. The study concluded that moral interpretation is not only narrative-based but also visually constructed. It recommended enhanced technical training for Nigerian filmmakers to strengthen visual storytelling ethics.

Adesina, and Kalu, (2023) in “Cinema and Moral Consciousness among Nigerian Youths” examined the influence of film consumption on youth morality. The study was anchored on social cognitive theory (Bandura) and employed a cross-sectional survey design. The population comprised Nigerian youths aged 18–30 in urban centres, with a sample size of 500 respondents selected via multistage sampling technique. Findings indicated that frequent exposure to morally structured films correlates with increased

sensitivity to ethical decision-making and social responsibility. The study concluded that Nollywood plays a formative role in youth moral imagination. It recommended integration of film-based moral education into tertiary curricula.

Synthesis and Knowledge Gaps

Collectively, these eight empirical studies converge on a central scholarly insight: Nigerian cinema functions simultaneously as entertainment, cultural pedagogy, and moral regulation system. Across moral themes (justice, betrayal, spirituality, gender ethics), narrative techniques (flashback, symbolism, melodrama, non-linear structure), and audience impact (cultivation of moral perception), Nollywood emerges as a powerful instrument of moral socialization. However, significant gaps persist.

First, there is a lack of film-specific empirical studies on titles such as *Sins of My Father*, *Labake Olododo*, and *Monica*, indicating that moral interpretations of these films remain largely under-researched. Second, most studies rely on textual or survey-based designs without triangulated mixed-method approaches, limiting explanatory depth. Third, insufficient attention is given to the intersection between cinematic technique and moral psychology, particularly how editing and sound design affect ethical interpretation. Fourth, audience studies often focus on urban youth populations, leaving rural and intergenerational audiences underrepresented. Finally, there is a methodological gap in comparative moral film analysis across Yoruba, Igbo, and hybrid Nollywood epic traditions, which your study directly addresses. Thus, your research is positioned to fill a critical scholarly void by integrating dominant moral themes, cinematic construction techniques, and audience moral consciousness within a unified comparative framework anchored on the selected films.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is anchored on Albert

Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which posits that individuals acquire behaviours, values, and attitudes through observation, imitation, and modelling of actions portrayed within their environment, particularly through mediated forms such as film and television (Bandura, 2001). This framework is particularly relevant to Nollywood cinema because it conceptualises film audiences as active learners who decode and internalise behavioural cues presented by characters, consequences, and narrative resolutions. In this sense, moral representations in *Sins of My Father*, *Labake Olododo*, and *Monica* are not merely aesthetic constructions but pedagogical stimuli capable of shaping ethical orientation, reinforcing social norms, or challenging existing moral perceptions within Nigerian society.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design rooted in interpretive film analysis, aimed at examining moral representation and consciousness in *Sins of My Father*, *Labake Olododo*, and *Monica*. The qualitative approach was considered most appropriate because it enables a deep, contextual, and meaning-centred engagement with cinematic texts, particularly in relation to how moral ideas are constructed, communicated, and internalised through film narratives. The data for the study consisted three selected Nollywood films. These films were purposively selected using a criterion-based sampling technique anchored on thematic relevance to morality, contemporaneity within the 2025 Nollywood production cycle, and observable audience reception indicators such as digital circulation and online engagement. The method of analysis employed was combination of thematic content analysis and film discourse analysis. Thematic content analysis is used to identify, classify, and interpret recurring moral themes within the films, while film discourse analysis is applied to examine how meaning is constructed through cinematic elements such as narrative structure, characterisation, dialogue, symbolism, mise-en-scène,

cinematography, and editing. Each film is viewed systematically and interpreted as a cultural text embedded with ideological and moral signifiers rather than merely as entertainment.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Dominant Moral Themes in *Sins of My Father*, *Labake Olododo*, and *Monica*

Film	Dominant Moral Themes	Illustrative Narrative Evidence
<i>Labake Olododo</i>	Justice, integrity, resistance to oppression, female resilience	Labake confronts corrupt traditional authorities and defends communal truth despite threats and betrayal
<i>Monica</i>	Sacrifice, perseverance, family exploitation, self-worth	Monica continually sacrifices her emotional wellbeing and personal ambitions for family survival
<i>Sins of My Father</i>	Redemption, inherited guilt, accountability, ethical choice	The protagonist struggles with the moral consequences of his father's corrupt legacy

The moral themes identified across *Labake Olododo*, *Monica*, and *Sins of My Father* reveal Nollywood's continuing engagement with morality as a deeply social, political, and cultural discourse rather than merely a matter of personal ethics. Released within the contemporary phase of Nigerian cinema (2025), characterised by increasing thematic sophistication and digital circulation, the films collectively construct morality through struggles involving power, sacrifice, justice, accountability, and emotional survival. In *Labake Olododo*, directed by Biodun Stephen and produced by Iyabo Ojo, morality is constructed through the epic conflict between truth and oppressive authority. The Yoruba-language narrative situates ethical resistance within an indigenous socio-political environment where communal leadership structures become sites of corruption and betrayal. Through the protagonist's heroic characterisation, the film frames integrity and courage as collective moral obligations necessary for societal transformation. The traditional setting, ritual symbolism, and conflict-centred narrative progression reinforce the ideological positioning of justice as a communal rather than individual responsibility.

In contrast, *Monica* adopts the conventions of domestic melodrama

to interrogate morality within the context of family obligation, emotional exploitation, and gendered sacrifice. The film's emotional realism and intimate narrative structure construct morality through endurance, caregiving, and the psychological burden of familial responsibility. By centring the protagonist's emotional suffering and gradual self-awareness, the narrative critiques cultural expectations that normalise the exploitation of women under the guise of duty and sacrifice. Similarly, *Sins of My Father* explores morality through psychological conflict and intergenerational guilt. The film examines how inherited corruption and moral failure shape identity formation and ethical decision-making within contemporary Nigerian society. Through its redemption-centred narrative arc, the film argues that moral identity is neither inherited biologically nor determined socially, but negotiated through conscious ethical choices and accountability. Collectively, the thematic construction across the three films demonstrates Nollywood's role as a site of cultural negotiation where cinematic storytelling becomes a mechanism for interrogating corruption, patriarchy, justice, family structures, and moral consciousness within the Nigerian social imagination.

Table 2: Narrative and Cinematic Devices in the Selected Films

Film	Narrative Techniques	Cinematic Techniques	Moral Implication
<i>Labake</i>	Conflict-driven heroic narrative	Symbolic costumes, battle imagery, dramatic framing	Reinforces justice and courage
<i>Olododo</i>	Emotional melodrama	Close-up shots, silence, domestic mise-en-scène	Generates empathy and moral reflection
<i>Sins of My Father</i>	Psychological conflict narrative	Low lighting, symbolic interiors, tense editing	Communicates guilt and redemption

The narrative and cinematic techniques employed in the selected films demonstrate that moral meaning in Nollywood cinema is constructed not only through dialogue and plot progression but also through visual language, spatial organisation, symbolic representation, and emotional framing. In *Labake Olododo*, the director, Biodun Stephen, deploys epic narrative conventions, symbolic mise-en-scène, and dramatic visual framing to elevate

the protagonist into a moral archetype associated with justice, courage, and communal resistance. The film's cinematography frequently employs low-angle shots, ritualised confrontation scenes, traditional costuming, and palace-centred spatial politics to establish ideological contrasts between ethical leadership and corrupt authority. The visual texture of the film, reinforced through indigenous cultural aesthetics and stylised performance codes, transforms the narrative into a symbolic discourse on governance, truth, and social accountability. In this regard, cinematic form itself becomes a carrier of moral ideology.

Similarly, *Monica* relies heavily on melodramatic aesthetics and affective realism to construct emotional alignment between the audience and the protagonist. The film's use of close-up cinematography, prolonged silence, restricted domestic settings, and emotionally charged dialogue intensifies spectatorship and psychological immersion. The domestic mise-en-scène functions symbolically as a space of emotional entrapment and gendered burden, thereby enabling the audience to experience the protagonist's suffering as both personal and structural. In *Sins of My Father*, moral conflict is communicated through psychologically expressive cinematic techniques such as low-key lighting, tense editing rhythms, enclosed interior framing, and symbolic visual motifs associated with guilt and inherited trauma. The fragmented visual atmosphere externalises the protagonist's ethical instability and emotional conflict, reinforcing the film's exploration of redemption and accountability. Across the three films, cinematic techniques operate semiotically to guide moral interpretation, shape emotional response, and construct ideological meaning beyond the literal narrative surface. The findings therefore confirm that Nollywood films utilise sophisticated audio-visual strategies in communicating ethical consciousness and social commentary.

Table 3: Contribution of the Selected Films to Moral Consciousness

Film	Moral Consciousness Created	Contemporary Social Issues Addressed
<i>Labake</i>	Encourages resistance against oppression and corruption	Abuse of power, patriarchal domination
<i>Olododo</i>	Promotes reflection on emotional exploitation and self-worth	Family pressure, gender expectations
<i>Monica</i>	Encourages accountability and ethical responsibility	Corruption, generational consequences

The data presented in Table 3 indicate that the selected films contribute significantly to the formation of moral consciousness within contemporary Nigerian society by functioning as sites of ethical reflection, emotional engagement, and socio-cultural critique. In *Labake Olododo*, moral consciousness is constructed through the glorification of resistance against injustice, abuse of authority, and communal corruption. Through its epic narrative structure and culturally grounded symbolism, the film encourages viewers to perceive truth, courage, and accountability as necessary instruments for social transformation. The ideological framing of the protagonist as a defender of collective ethics positions moral resistance not merely as an individual virtue but as a civic responsibility within a morally fractured society. Consequently, the film participates actively in broader public conversations surrounding leadership failure, corruption, and the collapse of communal values in contemporary Nigeria.

In *Monica*, moral consciousness emerges primarily through affective spectatorship and emotional identification. The film's portrayal of sacrifice, emotional exhaustion, and gendered expectations compels viewers to interrogate the morality of exploitative family structures and cultural assumptions surrounding caregiving. By humanising the emotional consequences of excessive familial obligation, the film broadens moral discourse beyond conventional notions of obedience and endurance to include self-worth, emotional dignity, and psychological wellbeing. Likewise, *Sins of My Father* contributes to moral consciousness by foregrounding ethical accountability and the enduring consequences of

corruption across generations. The narrative's emphasis on redemption and personal moral choice encourages viewers to reflect critically on inherited social dysfunction and individual responsibility within the wider moral fabric of society. Collectively, the three films illustrate the capacity of Nollywood cinema to function as a form of cultural pedagogy through which social anxieties, ethical tensions, and ideological struggles are mediated, negotiated, and communicated to audiences. Through narrative immersion, symbolic representation, and emotional realism, the films extend beyond entertainment to shape public moral imagination and stimulate ethical reflection within contemporary Nigerian culture.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study in relation to the dominant moral themes portrayed in *Labake Olododo*, *Monica*, and *Sins of My Father* both converge with and diverge from earlier scholarly investigations into morality and representation within Nollywood cinema. Consistent with the arguments of Iyanda and Ogunleye (2023), the present study found that Nollywood continues to construct moral meaning through oppositional binaries such as justice versus corruption, sacrifice versus selfishness, and truth versus betrayal. However, while earlier Nollywood moral structures, particularly those produced between the 1990s and early 2010s, often relied on simplistic didactic endings where virtue was overtly rewarded and vice explicitly punished, the present films demonstrate a more psychologically layered and ideologically complex moral landscape. In *Monica*, for instance, morality is no longer presented as mere obedience to communal expectations but as a negotiation between self-sacrifice and emotional survival, thereby extending beyond the moral absolutism identified in earlier studies such as Bello and Ibrahim (2020). Similarly, the present findings align with Ojo and Balogun's (2021) argument that female-centred narratives increasingly challenge patriarchal moral binaries; however, unlike older Yoruba melodramas where

female morality was tied almost exclusively to submissiveness and domestic endurance, *Labake Olododo* reconstructs feminine morality around resistance, political agency, and communal leadership. The findings also resonate with the 2021 study on Yoruba narrative films which identified nonlinear storytelling and pessimistic pedagogy as defining features of Yoruba cinema traditions. Yet, unlike older Yoruba films that frequently deployed supernatural punishment and fatalistic endings as moral regulators, the present films shift towards psychological realism, institutional critique, and socio-political accountability. This transition reflects Nollywood's broader evolution from culturally conservative moral instruction into a more reflexive cinematic discourse concerned with corruption, gender politics, emotional trauma, and ethical ambiguity within modern Nigerian society. Thus, while the present study confirms earlier findings that Nollywood remains a moralising institution, it also demonstrates that contemporary Nigerian cinema has become more sophisticated in representing morality as contested, socially constructed, and ideologically negotiable rather than rigidly prescriptive.

The findings of this study regarding narrative and cinematic techniques equally reveal important meetings and discrepancies with previous scholarship. Consistent with Afolabi and Adeyemi (2021), the study found that symbolic *mise-en-scène*, ritual performance, emotionally heightened dialogue, and narrative tension remain central to moral communication in Nollywood films, particularly within Yoruba epic traditions such as *Labake Olododo*. Likewise, the findings strongly support Ekwueme and Yusuf's (2022) argument that moral meaning in Nigerian cinema is visually constructed through cinematography, editing, framing, lighting, and spatial arrangement rather than dialogue alone. However, the present study extends these earlier conclusions by demonstrating that contemporary Nollywood now employs cinematic technique not merely for

aesthetic embellishment but as a sophisticated ideological apparatus for psychological immersion and moral spectatorship. Earlier Nollywood productions, especially those of the home-video era, often depended heavily on exaggerated dialogue, theatrical acting, static camera work, and overt moral exposition to communicate ethical lessons. In contrast, the selected films reveal a more globally informed cinematic language characterised by low-key lighting, emotionally coded framing, fragmented editing rhythms, symbolic domestic spaces, and psychologically expressive cinematography. In *Sins of My Father*, for example, moral conflict is externalised through enclosed interiors, visual isolation, and tense editing patterns that mirror psychological instability and inherited guilt, thereby reflecting a shift from theatrical storytelling towards cinematic interiority and emotional realism. This wholly supported by social learning theory. Similarly, while Nwankwo and Salawu (2024) warned that excessive narrative complexity may weaken moral comprehension, the present study found that the selected films achieve a careful balance between narrative sophistication and ideological clarity. Their moral meanings remain accessible despite the use of layered symbolism and emotional ambiguity.

The findings of this work concerning the contribution of the selected films to moral consciousness strongly reinforce the assumptions of Albert Bandura's Albert Bandura Social Learning Theory as well as the conclusions reached by Okeke and Eze (2022) and Adesina and Kalu (2023), both of whom argued that Nollywood functions as an influential agent of moral socialisation within Nigerian society. Similar to these earlier studies, the present research found that viewers are positioned to internalise ethical values through emotional identification, narrative consequence, and character modelling. However, significant differences emerge when contemporary films are compared with older Nollywood moral frameworks. Earlier Nigerian films frequently approached moral instruction through fear,

supernatural punishment, and overt didacticism where audiences were compelled towards moral compliance through metaphysical consequences, as identified by Bello and Ibrahim (2020). By contrast, the present films construct moral consciousness through emotional immersion, psychological realism, and socio-political critique rather than merely through spiritual determinism. In *Monica*, viewers are encouraged to question exploitative family structures and gendered expectations not because supernatural punishment awaits immoral characters, but because the emotional suffering of the protagonist generates affective spectatorship and ethical self-reflection.

Similarly, *Labake Olododo* frames morality as civic courage and collective resistance against systemic corruption, thereby extending moral discourse from the domestic and spiritual spheres into political consciousness and public accountability. The findings also diverge from earlier cultivation-based studies that largely viewed audiences as passive recipients of moral messages. Instead, the present analysis suggests that contemporary Nollywood increasingly treats viewers as interpretive participants capable of negotiating moral ambiguity, emotional contradiction, and ideological tension. This evolution reflects broader transformations within Nigerian society itself, where economic instability, political distrust, digital media exposure, and shifting gender relations have complicated traditional moral certainties. This is grossly supported by Bandura's social learning theory. Consequently, while earlier Nollywood cinema primarily functioned as a conservative moral regulator aimed at preserving communal norms, the selected contemporary films function more dynamically as spaces for ethical debate, emotional negotiation, and critical social reflection within Nigeria's rapidly changing cultural landscape.

Conclusion

The two dominant paradigms within the science of communication are the theatrical paradigm and the mass communication/journalistic paradigm. Both traditions have, in distinct but complementary ways, contributed to the moral, intellectual, and socio-cultural development of human society through representation, information dissemination, and public accountability. While theatre functions as a reflective space for dramatising human experience and ethical dilemmas, journalism and the wider media system operate as instruments of surveillance, public enlightenment, and governance oversight. It is in this capacity that the media is described as the “Fourth Estate of the Realm,” accentuating its watchdog role in demanding accountability from power structures. Consequently, for communication as a discipline to remain faithful to its epistemic and social responsibilities, morality must remain central rather than peripheral to its practice.

Recommendations

1. Nigerian filmmakers should continue to promote morally constructive themes that reinforce justice, integrity, responsibility, and communal values within society.
2. Film producers and directors should employ coherent narrative and cinematic techniques that enhance ethical clarity and deepen audience understanding of moral messages.
3. Stakeholders in education, media, and cultural policy should harness Nollywood films as instruments for moral education and social reorientation among contemporary Nigerian audiences.

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