Political Narratives and Democratic Communication in Contemporary Nollywood Film

Prof. Dr. Innocent Paschal Ihechu
Department of Mass Communication, Abia State University, P.M.B. 2000 Uturu, Nigeria

Abstract

The Nigerian film industry, popularly known as Nollywood, has increasingly emerged as an important platform for political commentary and democratic communication across Africa. Contemporary Nollywood films frequently dramatise issues such as political corruption, leadership struggles, electoral manipulation, and civic responsibility, thereby transforming film narratives into communicative spaces for public reflection on governance. This study examined how political narratives are constructed in contemporary Nollywood films and how these narratives contribute to democratic communication. The analysis was anchored on Political Communication Theory, Framing Theory, and Agenda-Setting Theory to explain how cinematic narratives shape interpretations of governance and political accountability. Using qualitative textual analysis, the study analysed selected politically themed films – *King of Boys, Your Excellency, and 4th Republic* – to interrogate the representation of political institutions, power relations, and democratic processes. Findings revealed that contemporary Nollywood films framed political leadership largely through narratives of power contestation, systemic corruption, and institutional weaknesses, while simultaneously highlighting citizens' aspirations for credible leadership and democratic reform. The films employed satire, conflict-driven storytelling, and symbolic characterisation to critique political practices and stimulate audience reflection on democratic values. It was concluded that Nollywood films function as a significant communicative medium for interpreting political realities and encouraging democratic consciousness among audiences. It is therefore recommended that filmmakers should intentionally incorporate more nuanced portrayals of democratic participation and civic responsibility to strengthen film's potential as a tool for political education and intra-African dialogue on governance.

Keywords: Nollywood; Political Narratives; Democratic Communication; Film Studies; Intra-African Dialogue