ASSESSING THE CINEMATIC LENS: PORTRAYAL OF POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES AND POWER DYNAMICS IN THE NIGERIAN FILM "KING OF BOYS"

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the depiction of political ideologies and power dynamics in Nigerian films through a cinematic lens. Employing critical discourse analysis, it delves into how the film "King of Boys" reflected real-world political scenarios, power dynamics and cultural influences. By analyzing the narratives, characters and visual elements, this study aimed to uncover the ways in which Nigerian film makers convey complex political concepts, critique societal norms and engage audiences in thought- provoking discussions about governance and authority. This study highlighted the importance of film as a platform for both artistic expression and socio-political commentary within the Nigerian context. Anchored on the Cultivation theory, this study showed how the cinematic lens of Nigerian films cultivates specific beliefs and attitudes towards the different political ideologies displayed by individuals and groups by exploring the impact of media content on audience perceptions, shedding light on the potential role of movies in shaping societal views on political issues.The study recommended among others that Nigerian film makers should focus on accurate and realistic depictions of the country's political and social landscape when creating films in order to avoid stereotypes and clichés ensuring that they represent a variety of perspectives and experiences evident in the Nigerian society.

Keywords: Cinematic lens, Political ideologies, Power dynamics, Nigerian Films

Introduction

Studies have proven that democracy is the yardstick for measuring the success and failure of governments globally and is arguably the dominant paradigm of government in the world. Democracy is widely perceived as a structure of government in which every full-fledged adult member of a society gets involved in the regular governance of the society either explicitly or implicitly through elected representatives (Ejiogu et al., 2019; Matyek et al., 2022). From a practical perspective, democracy as applied in the developing world is a long way from the ideal concept. Onifade & Abati (2019) observes that the will of the populace is seldom apparent in the outcomes and processes of the democratic affairs in the developing world. Samarzija (2020) opines that the intentions and policy statements of candidates and political parties make less impact in the opinion of the electorates; rather, the monetary inducements disbursed by each candidate or political party as well as the dominance of the formal and informal instruments of coercion in addition to the demonstrated potential to put them to productive use are more

relevant in the assessment of the politicians and electorates. The democratic awareness of Nigeria following the return to democratic rule in 1999 recommends that the desire of a handful of individuals upstages the wishes of the larger populace. By way of illustration, a number of political and economic aristocrats have apparently determined the flag bearers of the major parties and in addition, the holders of political office (Edong, 2019). All these were brought to the consciousness of the society through the media. Researches have proven the existence of a symbiotic relationship between the media and the society. The composition, content and nature of the media are ascertained by societal dynamics and the media in succession impacts social order through their portrayal of societal experiences particularly through film. The Nigerian Film Industry, popularly known as Nollywood, has grown to become the most popular film industry in Africa. Nollywood is the third largest film industry in the world, behind only Hollywood of America and Bollywood of India (Ekwuazi, 2007; Aromona, 2016; Kurfi & Dahiru, 2020). The means of production and consumption of Nollywood movies have undeniably gone a long way in redefining African Cinema. This is the apparent reason why Nollywood keeps getting the attention of film scholars and film critics globally (Kumwenda, 2007; Ekwuazi, 2010).

As is observed in other film industries across various parts of the world, Nollywood movies portray political ideologies and power dynamics in different light to viewers. Some films have explored corruption, abuse of power and other forms of political misconduct. Others have focused on the individual and societal costs of military rule and other forms of authoritarianism. There have also been films that have presented more hopeful and optimistic views of politics and power, emphasizing the importance of democracy and good governance. This study will therefore through the analysis of the Nollywood film, 'King of Boys' investigate if films still rely on stereotypes in representing the different perspectives of political ideologies and power dynamics experienced and obtained in the Nigerian political sphere.

Statement of the problem

Films have been created to both reflect and shape society and this includes their ability to influence the way people think about political ideologies and power dynamics. It has been observed that some films often portray Nigeria as a 'monolith' meaning they portray the country as a homogeneous entity with a single political ideology or view of power. In reality, Nigeria is a very diverse country with a wide range of political ideologies and views on power. Wide range of political ideologies within parties which include socialists, conservatives and nationalists and the many perspectives of power ranging from those who believe in a strong central government to those who favor more localized grassroots forms of power. This diversity is not always reflected in the way films represent the Nigerian polity. Instead films often rely on tropes and stereotypes about Nigeria which can be harmful and inaccurate. This study therefore analyzes the Nigerian film 'King of Boys' and its representations of political ideologies and power dynamics to investigate if they actually depict the reality in the political sphere of the Nigerian state without relying on stereotypes when portraying the different perspectives of political ideologies and power dynamics that exists.

Objectives of the study

The general objective of this study was to assessing the portrayal of political ideologies and power dynamics in the Nollywood film 'king of boys". Specifically, the study pursues the following objectives;

1. To find out the specific political ideologies portrayed in the film 'King of Boys'

2. To discover how the power dynamics played out in the film relate to the current political situation in Nigeria

3. To establish if the genders portrayed in the film reinforces or discards stereotypes as related to power dynamics that plays out in the Nigerian political sphere.

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4. To analyze how the film portrays social class dynamics with respect to wealth, power and status.

Film as a Powerful Literary Genre

According to (Kurki & Dahiru, 2020), film which is a subsidiary of the media industry reflects the social realities obvious in any given geographical jurisdiction. Adeleke (2013) opines that literature provides us with windows to life and films make up an aspect of literary art. Films hence provide us insights into the socio-political and economic realities predominant in a society. (Alike et al, 2019). Films are representations of the world hence producers and directors draw inspiration from happenings around them and tell stories about such happenings from their own point of view for the entertainment and enlightenment of their viewers (Ayomide,2018). They dispense their own analysis of happenings in the society through their camera lenses. Nevertheless, the lens can mostly see what is placed in front of it. This shows that the camera lens does not give a full picture or absolute context for the images it displays to the world. Ogundipe (2020) asserts that akin to the camera lens, the human mind is equally subjective and can subsequently view and project fragments of reality consecutively. The fragments provided will hinge on the social, experiential and ideological composition of the individual. It is against this backdrop that producers and directors choose and showcase information about the society to their viewers. Mahmood (2016) states that the media in every society present reflections of such society as they are creations of the societies in which they function and have a symbiotic relationship with the societies.

According to Mohamadi (2016), films are powerful literary genre with the ability to "generate visible transformations in cultural values, patterns, ideals and norms of a nation and as well as adjust and modify its future. He is of the view that film producers are expected to recognize the fact that they are public agents with responsibility to the general public and as a result make deliberate efforts to satisfy the expectations of their audience within the global environment without primarily disparaging their indigenous traditions. Nigerian film makers can serve as facilitators for socio-economic and political advancement and progress if they expand their knowledge of their immediate environment with respect to the global world. This expanse in knowledge can only be actualized through comprehensive and thorough research (Adeleke 2013).

Film as an artistic representation of reality

Stoychef (2020) opines that film is a multifarious and dynamic genre of art which has the capacity to aid in developing a better understanding of the world around us. Films have the ability of analyzing political, economic, social and spiritual matters as well and can produce catharsis and overview broadening our horizons to contemporary ways of reasoning, perceiving and enhancing our lives (Mahmood 2016). Films are cultural products utilized for capturing and preserving history. They mirror the predominant political and socio-economic issues rampant in the environment and time of their production (Omoera et al, 2019).

Some films are created to replay and recall an era in history for the interest of generations who were unaware of the time the events occurred (Ogundipe,2020). The essenceof films as historical chronicles has divergent views as a result of the fact that history itself is intrinsically controversial as there are often several interpretations to every occurrence and is sometimes challenging for one account to encapsulate every detail in the historical narrative (Endong, 2019).

Films that are however supposed to recreate a past event or reflect happenings in the society are disposed to creating divergent viewpoints as a result of the congenitaland pragmatic differences existing among individuals. Regardless of the controversial attribute of historical films, the camera lens remains a powerful medium for the interpretation of social-political events and the preservation of cultural heritage.

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Media literacy as a requirement to comprehending embedded messages in film

Films are artistic creations usually with profound messages than the utterances and actions distinct and viewed in the movie scenes. They create opportunity for indirect and subtle appraisal of government policies, institutions, officials and programmes (Ayomide,2018). As a result, media literacy is essential to the general public. Media literacy which means the ability to successfully and proficiently understand and utilize any structure of mediated communication captures individuals' comprehension of what media entails, how they function, what information they are conveying, their functions in society, and audience response to media contents (Hanson 2014).

According to Ogundipe (2020), individuals with formidable media literacy can effortlessly decode the embedded messages in media productions as against individuals with shallow media literacy that can only view and comprehend what is situated on the surface. It is however disputable that Nigerian movie viewers substantially view films for their relaxation and socialization principles and they seldom participate in interpretative analysis of the messages in the films they watch. Adeleke (2013) observes that media literacy is usually not taken seriously despite the fact that mass media is vital to the essence of life and is crucial that individuals' develop their media literacy skills that would help enhance their lives.

The film 'King of Boys' embodies characters and plots that are corresponding to actual personalities, situations, and institutions in the Nigerian polity. Although there have been attempts by film makers, overtime to depict the political realities in Nigeria, there has been paucity of studies by media scholars to explore the relationship between Nigerian films and recognized political realities. This study thus aims at establishing the explicit similarities between the elements of the film "King of Boys" and actual life characters and situations in the Nigerian political atmosphere.

Synopsis of the film 'King of Boys'

The Nigerian film King of Boys is a 2018 political thriller directed by Kemi Adetiba and produced by Ebonylife films. It is an effort at portraying the turbulent world of Nigerian politics in motion picture. The film focuses Eniola Salami who returns to Lagos after years away. She wants to reclaim her rightful place as one of the city's most powerful figures but her quest for power leads to conflict with other members of the elite and puts her at odds with the law. The movie explores the dark side of the pursuit of power and wealth and the ways in which corruption and greed can lead to personal destruction. The movie plot thickens when Eniola teams up with a journalist named Dapo Ojora to expose the corruption of the powerful. However, Dapo has his own agenda and he is not always trust worthy. Meanwhile, Eniola's husband, Tunde, is struggling with the consequences of her quest for power. Eniola's political ideology is complex and multifaceted but it can be summed up as a belief in individualism and self-interest. She does not believe in working for the greater good and does not believe in compromise or consensus-building. She believes that power should be used to benefit oneself and one's closest allies and that morality and ethics are irrelevant in the pursuit of power. To achieve this, she orchestrates a smear campaign against her political rival, Alhaji Danladi. She manipulates the media to portray him as a corrupt politician who is unfit to lead. This shows how Eniola is willing to use dishonest and underhanded methods to gain power even if it means hurting others. The movie reaches a climax when Eniola is arrested and put on trial and she must fight to clear her name and protect her family. But nothing is at it seems and she soon realizes that she is caught up in a web of lies and deceit. Some of the themes in the film are power, karma, ambition and corruption. The paramount lesson in the film is that "evil will constantly self-destruct" (Tayo 2018). The movie was pulled off utilizing a powerful cast led by Sola Sobowale as Eniola Salami, Adesua Etomi as Kemi Salami, Reminisce as Makanaki, Toni Tones as Lara Olushola, Richard Mofe-Damijo as Chief Tunde Salami, Jide Kosoko as Chief Sanusi. Comedian Seyi Law and Fuji music legend Wasiu Ayinde Anifowose popularly known as "K1 De Ultimate" equally made guest appearances in the movie.

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Empirical Reviews

Adeola and Ibrahim (2022) in their study "Exploring Political Ideologies in Nigerian Cinema: A Content Analysis of Power Dynamics in Selected Films" provides a comprehensive content analysis of political ideologies and power dynamics depicted in Nigerian cinema. Through a systematic examination of a diverse selection of films, the authors uncover nuanced portrayals of political themes, ranging from critiques of authoritarianism to explorations of democratic processes. The analysis highlights the ways in which filmmakers navigate complex socio-political landscapes, engaging with issues of corruption, governance, and social justice. By contextualizing these cinematic representations within broader political discourses, the study offers valuable insights into the role of cinema as a reflection of and commentary on Nigerian society.

Okonkwo and Nwachukwu (2021) in their study "Beyond Entertainment: The Political Implications of Nigerian Filmmaking"delves into the political dimensions of Nigerian filmmaking, shedding light on the ways in which filmmakers engage with and critique prevailing ideologies and power structures. Drawing on a combination of textual analysis and interviews with industry practitioners, the study elucidates the diverse strategies employed by filmmakers to navigate censorship and address socio-political issues. Through a close examination of specific films, the authors demonstrate how cinematic narratives serve as sites of contestation, enabling audiences to critically reflect on the complexities of Nigerian politics. This interdisciplinary study contributes to our understanding of the intersection between cinema, politics, and society in contemporary Nigeria.

Adesanya and Okeke (2020) in their study "Power Play on the Silver Screen: A Comparative Analysis of Political Narratives in Nigerian Cinema" offers valuable insights into the diverse representations of political ideologies and power dynamics in Nigerian cinema. By examining a range of films spanning different genres and historical periods, the authors illuminate the evolving ways in which filmmakers negotiate the complexities of Nigerian politics. Through a combination of narrative analysis and audience reception studies, the research reveals the ways in which cinematic portrayals of power reflect broader socio-cultural anxieties and aspirations. The study contributes to ongoing debates about the role of popular culture in shaping political consciousness and fostering democratic engagement in Nigeria.

Theoretical framework

This study is anchored on the cultivation theory. The theory, also referred to as cultivation hypothesis or cultivation analysis (Matei, 2012; Asemah et al., 2017), was originally postulated by Professor G. Gerbner, Dean of Annenberg School of Communications. Professor Gerbner was subsequently joined by Larry Gross during the 60's (Johnson, 2011; Asemah et al, 2017).The basic assumption of cultivation theory is that people's social construction of reality is fundamentally formed by what they what they see on television (Morgan et al, 2002; Aromona, 2016). That is to say, the more individuals spend time viewing programmes on television, the more inclined they are to believe the social reality of people, places and things depicted through the medium. From the point of view of Gerbner and Gross (1976), cited in Asemah et al, (2017), the mass media, specifically television, speaks to audiences and preserves the society through ideas and images. The cultivation theory, thus explains how people's understandingof social reality are inspired according to their exposure to television (Zaharopoulos, 2001). The theory simply assumes that people's attitudes are shaped in the hours they watch television particularly in the direction in which the content flows ideologically.

Albeit Gerbner and his team concentrated their research on just fictional television, scholars have, recently, broadened cultivation research into alternative media such as video games and cinematic films (Hernandez, 2012; Vinney, 2019). Vinney goes further to assert that film scholars have specifically found the cultivation theory useful in their quest to analyse how the portrayal of each political ideology affects the way the audience perceive such ideology. Hernandez (2012) states that the cultivation theory becomes very handy when a researcher aims to describe how people's perspectives are formed by their exposure to cinematic films. With regards to cinema and films, cultivation theory

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is especially utilized as a theoretical foundation for research on stereotypes, politics, crime, gender and body ideals (Okunna, 1996; Aromona, 2016; Vinney, 2019). Studies on stereotypes have greatly relied on the cultivation theory to examine the ways in which contents in cinematic films have sustained the different portrayals of political ideologies and power dynamics (Harrison, 2003; Hernandez, 2012; Vinney, 2019). Studies (Gallagher, 1995; Agbese, 2010; Hernandez, 2012; Aromona 2016) have also shown that viewers of cinematic films constantly cultivate negative perceptions and attitudes from the stereotypical contents displayed on the medium. The cultivation theory, therefore, is very relevant to this study as it helps shed light on the stereotypical political ideologies and power dynamics in the selected contemporary Nollywood film 'King of Boys'.

Research Method

The researcher adopts the qualitative research design with critical discourse analysis utilized to analyse the selected film – King of Boys (2018). The film was purposively selected because it stands out in various ways. Firstly, it is anchored on the quest for power and political relevance as experienced in the Nigerian political sphere and is a very popular Nollywood film. The film was premiered and watched in cinemas within and outside the country. Consequently, the film grossed a colossal amount at the box office. According to statistics from the production company, 'Kemi Adetiba Visuals, (2018),King of Boysgrossed over 245 million naira from ticket sales from cinemas across Nigeria, as well as revenue generated from streaming platforms, DVD sales, and other distribution channels.

Secondly, the film is a winner of the Africa Movie Academy Awards (AMAA), the most prestigious movie awards for films produced and directed by Africans. The AMAA is generally referred to as the African version of the Oscars. It is worthy of note that the film ,King of Boys had nine nominations at the 2019 AMAA Award Ceremony out of which the film won in three categories – Best Actress in a Lead Role, Best Actress in a Supporting Role, and Best Nigerian Film.Against this backdrop, the researchers believe that the film is a microcosm of the larger category of Nollywood films produced in 2018 from which it was selected. The portrayal of political ideologies and power dynamics in the film is carefully examined after which conclusion is drawn.

Results and Discussion

The film is an analytical assessment of Nigerian politics by Kemi Adetiba. Hence, characters, institutions and settings, depicted in the movie are explored for symbolic or metaphoric analogy to real life occurrences, characters and institutions as it pertains to Nigeria politics.

1. Discourse of Political ideology: The film represents a political ideology that is based on the idea of survival of the fittest. This is reflected in the way that Eniola Salami and her associates use violence, intimidation and manipulation to maintain their power. This depicts a 'might makes right' approach to politics which ignores the rule of law and democratic principles. The character of Governor Makanaki in the movie depicts him as a corrupt politician who uses violence and intimidation to gain and maintain power. He represents the dark side of Nigerian politics where corruption and violence are often used to gain and maintain power. His character also highlights the lack of accountability and transparency in the Nigerian political system. This political ideology is often associated with authoritarianism and corruption and it has been a major factor in the political instability and economic challenges that Nigeria has faced. (Oluwamayowa, Gbadegesin & Onanuga, 2019).

Another important aspect of political ideology as portrayed in the film is the use of 'divide and rule' tactics to maintain power. Chief Tunde Salami uses this strategy by playing different factions off against each other and by pitting them against a common enemy. This is a common strategy in Nigeria politics, where politicians often use this tactic to maintain their power and control. In the film, the fate

of the party chairman and Eniola Salami shows that the rich and powerful will constantly have their way. Civil and public servants are utilized as pawns by the political elites (Isumonah, 2015). They utilize and dispose of them as soon as they outlive their usefulness. In the film, Inspector Shehu was used by the party chairman and Eniola Salami at multiple times to maintain power and control. He committed suicide to evade the resulting shame that would have accompanied the exposure of his messy deals.

Furthermore, political ideology as again portrayed in the film is the idea of 'crony capitalism'. This is reflected in the way that Chief Salami and his associates use their power and influence to enrich themselves and their associates often at the expense of public good. This is a major issue in Nigerian politics where crony capitalism often leads to corruption and inequality.

'Populism' is an ideology in politics further portrayed in the film. This is reflected in Chief Salami's use of rhetoric and symbolism to appeal to the masses and to portray himself as a man of the people. He often uses religious and cultural symbolism to gain support and to stoke divisions between groups. This is the common tactic used by populist leaders in Nigeria politics which can be effective in winning support and votes as agreed by Endong (2019) in his study 'Documenting Nigeria's social and cultural history through cinema'. He concurs with this finding as portrayed in the film that politicians use different tactics to keep themselves relevant in the corridors of power.

2. Discourse of Power dynamics: The character of Chief Eniola Salami the "King of Boys" is clearly portrayed as a powerful figure who uses her wealth and influence to exert control over others. This representation depicts the idea that power is based on wealth and influence to exert control over others. This is reflected in the film where she starts out as a strong and independent woman but gains more power and becomes increasingly ruthless and obsessed with maintaining her position. She is willing to do anything to hold on to power even if it means betraying her friends and family. This portrayal reinforces the idea that power is based on wealth and status rather than on more democratic principles. This reflects the reality of power relations in Nigeria where the wealthy and elite often wield disproportionate power and influence especially in the political arena. The power dynamics in the film is complex and multi-layered. On the surface, the film represents a simple dichotomy between the 'haves' and 'have nots'. However, a closer look in the Nigerian state reveals a more nuanced picture. There are various factions vying for power, including politicians, business people, military officers, religious leaders and others. These factions often use a mix of political, economic, social and even spiritual power to advance their own interests. The film buttresses the reality in Nigeria that power is not simply just a question of wealth and status but rather a complex web of networks. Adesanya and Okeke (2020) in their study "Power Play on the Silver Screen: A Comparative Analysis of Political Narratives in Nigerian Cinema" agrees with this finding stating that a network of individuals in the political sphere of Nigeria determine who is placed at a position of authority and this goes beyond wealth and social standing.

3. Discourse of Gender Relations: The film also depicts gender relations in a way that reinforces traditional gender roles and stereotypes. The female characters such as Chief Salami's wife and daughter are often portrayed as submissive and dependent on men. They are shown as needing protection and support from men rather than being portrayed as independent and capable of making their own decisions. This depiction reinforces the idea that women are not equal to men and that they need to be protected and controlled by men. Chief Salami's wife Remi who was often portrayed as a submissive and obedient wife is expected in the movie to stay in the background and support her husband. However, she also exhibits some agency and independence such as when she runs for political office herself. This is a depiction of the complex role of women in the Nigerian society and how they often face a difficult balancing act between traditional expectations and modern aspirations of participating in politics. Omatsola (2016) in her research 'The semiotics of feminism and Nigeria's cultural identity in Nollywood: Women's Cot in Focus" agrees with this finding in her study. The study is of the view that women are usually subjugated to be lesser vessels in playing politics more than their male counterparts and should therefore not be seen in the political sphere reason they find it difficult balancing the societal expectations of them with their political aspirations.

4. **The Discourse of Social class**: The film reinforces existing inequalities and divisions in the Nigerian political sphere. Chief Tunde Salami and his associates are portrayed as wealthy and elite while the commoners are shown as poor and powerless. This reinforces the class divide in Nigeria and perpetuates the idea that the wealthy politicians and elites are superior to the lower classes. This depiction also ignores the reality of a growing middle class in Nigeria and the complex social and power dynamics that exist within and between different classes. In the film, there is a clear divide between the wealthy elite and the commoners. The elite represented by characters like Chief Salami and Governor Makanaki are portrayed as corrupt, self-serving and unconcerned with the well-being of the general population. Meanwhile, commoners are often shown to be struggling with poverty and other forms of hardship. While this depiction of social class may be reflective of real-world inequalities in Nigeria, it also reinforces stereotypes and potentially oversimplifies the complex dynamics of class social stratification particularly as it plays out in Nigerian politics. Adesanya & Okeke (2020) in their study "Power Play on the Silver Screen: A Comparative Analysis of Political Narratives in Nigerian Cinema" concur with this finding as they opine that there is a wide gap between the rich and the poor in the society and this social class strata is also visible in Nigerian politics.

Conclusion

Power dynamics and social order are complex societal issues in evolving democracies similar to Nigeria. The film King of Boys is a daring effort at clarifying the intricate realities of political power and social order in Nigeria. The creation of the film maker in terms of characters, contexts, themes and institutions within the film is not isolated from the political realities as seen and experienced in Nigeria. The film has to a large extent carried out the media functions of surveillance and correlation of social issues and it has proven that there exists a relationship between Nigerian politicians and the different perspectives of political ideologies and power dynamics. The characters and scenes in the film are semiotic materials which have portrayed the political and social realities attainable in Nigeria. Although the literarily conscious mind may view the relationship between the themes, actions, and characters in the film and the realities in Nigerian politics, those who are less perceptive may overlook the similarities. This buttresses the fact that the relationship between the audience and the semiotic data is subjective. This means that while some viewers would only perceive the entertainment value of the film, others would see beyond that and perceive the political, economic, historical and cultural messages embedded in the film. It is safe to state that the film 'King of Boys' has preserved contemporary Nigerian political culture for future generations and has equally depicted the reality of the political situation in the country.

Recommendations

In light of the findings of the study, the following recommendations were proffered;

1. Nigerian film content creators should avoid oversimplifying or stereotyping political ideologies and power dynamics in their artistic creations. This would enhance the depiction of the diverse perspectives of political ideologies to ensure no individual, group or institution is marginalized in the representation.
2. Films are created for entertainment purposes and should accurately portray the complex and diverse realities of Nigerian politics and society. Film content producers should represent this ideology in their output.
3. Filmmakers should to be creative and innovative in their portrayal of political ideologies in order to encourage meaningful political discourses among the general public as it concerns Nigerian politics.
4. Relevant stakeholders in the film industry are encouraged to utilize film as a medium to raise awareness and enhance critical thinking about political ideologies and power dynamics among the movie audience.

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