

**THE USE OF RITUAL FOR POWER AND REVENGE IN NIGERIAN FILMS;  
“LAKATABU” AS A CASE STUDY**

**BY**

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BENIN CITY.**

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF  
THEATRE ARTS, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN  
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ARTS.**

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## **DECLARATION**

This project is based on a study undertaken by me, IYAGBAYE Favour Iziegbe in the Department of Theatre Arts, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin. Arts. All ideas and opinions presented are the result of my own research; where the perspectives of others have been used have been properly acknowledged.

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## CERTIFICATION

This research was carried out by IYAGBAYE FAVOUR IZIEGBE in the Department of Theatre Arts under my supervision.

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Prof. (Mrs.) J. E. Abbe  
*Project Supervisor*

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Date

## **DEDICATION**

This research work is specifically dedicated to God Almighty, the giver of life, knowledge and wisdom and, To my lovely mother.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to begin by expressing my profound gratitude to God Almighty for His grace, wisdom, and unfailing guidance throughout the course of this project. His blessings and strength made this work possible.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study explores the use of ritual as a tool for power and revenge in Nigerian films, focusing on *Lakatabu*. Nollywood, rooted in Nigeria's cultural and spiritual realities, often portrays ritual as a means of negotiating authority and resolving conflict. Through analysis of the film's plot and themes, the research examines how these representations mirror societal beliefs while raising ethical concerns about the filmmaker's role. The study further highlights Nollywood's continuity with Theatre Arts, showing how performance—on stage and screen—shapes cultural memory, morality, and identity.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

Film, as a cultural product, has always reflected the values, beliefs, aspirations, and anxieties of the society that produces it. In Nigeria, Nollywood has emerged since the 1990s as one of the most productive film industries in the world, producing between 2,000 and 2,500 films annually and ranking second only to Hollywood and Bollywood in terms of output (Britannica, 2022; Oxford Business Group, 2016; Sociostudies, 2013). Beyond its sheer volume, Nollywood consistently explores themes rooted in the socio-cultural and spiritual realities of Nigerian communities (Haynes, 2016; Okome, 2007). Among these themes, ritual, power, and revenge have remained particularly significant, with ritual in particular serving as a recurring narrative device in both Yoruba and English-language productions (Asiegbu, 2017; Oha, 2014). The representation of ritual in Nigerian films is not merely for entertainment; it functions as a mirror to the audience's understanding of traditional practices, spiritual beliefs, and the dynamics of power within society (Afolabi, 2014; Alawode, 2013).

Ritual practices are central to many African societies, where they often serve as symbolic acts that mediate between the physical and spiritual worlds. In traditional African cosmology, rituals could be performed for protection, prosperity, healing, fertility, power acquisition, or vengeance. Nollywood films, especially those produced

between the late 1990s and early 2000s, have popularized these practices by portraying them in dramatic narratives that combine moral lessons with cultural spectacle. The film *Lakatabu* is a quintessential example of how ritual is represented as both a tool for power acquisition and a means of executing revenge.

The fascination with ritual in Nollywood cannot be divorced from the broader Nigerian socio-political context. Nigeria is a country marked by socio-economic inequality, political instability, corruption, and the struggle for survival. Within this reality, Nollywood films often dramatize the extremes to which individuals can go to secure power or retaliate against injustice. The ritual motif, therefore, becomes a narrative device through which audiences can confront and negotiate their fears, hopes, and moral dilemmas.

Scholars such as Haynes (2016) and Adejunmobi (2007) have argued that Nollywood's representation of ritual reflects both continuity and distortion of African cultural practices. On one hand, Nigerian films preserve aspects of African cosmology by showcasing ritual acts; on the other hand, they sensationalize these practices for commercial appeal, often reducing them to instruments of greed, destruction, and vengeance. In this sense, the film text becomes a cultural battlefield where tradition, modernity, morality, and entertainment intersect.

Thus, the study of *Lakatabu* provides an entry point for interrogating how Nollywood constructs narratives around ritual, particularly in relation to the twin themes of power and revenge. This project seeks to analyze how ritual is represented in *Lakatabu*, the

cultural meanings embedded in such portrayals, and their broader implications for Nigerian society.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Over the past three decades, Nollywood has been criticized for its heavy reliance on ritual and occult themes. Critics argue that films like *Lakatabu* exaggerate ritual practices, thereby promoting superstition, fear, and negative stereotypes about African spirituality (Okome, 2010). Others contend that these films misrepresent ritual as solely destructive, ignoring its positive cultural and religious functions. The overemphasis on ritual for power and revenge has also raised questions about Nollywood's role in shaping public perception of morality, culture, and governance.

Despite the popularity of ritual-themed films, scholarly attention has largely focused on Nollywood as an industry, its economic growth, or its global circulation. There is relatively limited research that offers a close textual analysis of individual films like *Lakatabu* to examine how ritual is represented and to what effect. Furthermore, while ritual has been studied as a trope of power acquisition in Nollywood, its dual role as both a means of empowerment and an instrument of revenge has not been adequately interrogated.

This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by analyzing *Lakatabu* as a case study of how ritual is deployed within the narrative structure of Nigerian films to serve as both a source of power and a weapon of revenge. The problem of the study is thus the lack of detailed scholarly analysis of how ritual operates as a complex cultural symbol in

Nollywood narratives.

### **1.3 Aims/Objectives of the Study**

This study seeks to examine the use of ritual for power and revenge in Nigerian films with a focus on “Lakatabu” The specific objectives are to:

1. Analyze how ritual practices are represented in the film “Lakatabu”
2. Examine the role of ritual in the pursuit of power within the narrative.
3. Investigate how ritual functions as an instrument of revenge in the film.
4. Explore the socio-cultural implications of Nollywood’s portrayal of ritual.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

To guide this study, the following research questions are raised:

1. How is ritual represented in the film “Lakatabu”
2. What role does ritual play in the pursuit of power within the film?
3. In what ways does ritual function as an instrument of revenge in “Lakatabu”?
4. What cultural meanings and implications are embedded in Nollywood’s portrayal of ritual?

### **1.5 Scope of the Study**

This study focuses exclusively on the film “Lakatabu” as a case study of ritual, power, and revenge. The analysis will be limited to scenes that depict ritual practices, and

interpretation will be guided by cultural and semiotic theories. While other Nigerian films also explore ritual themes, they are beyond the scope of this research.

Limitations may include the subjective nature of film analysis, which depends on interpretation, as well as the availability of secondary sources directly related to Lakatabu. However, the study will draw on broader Nollywood scholarship to contextualize findings.

## **1.6 Values/Significance of the Study**

This study is significant in several respects. Academically, it contributes to the growing body of scholarship on Nollywood by providing a close textual analysis of “Lakatabu”, a film that has received little critical attention despite its popularity. By focusing on ritual as a narrative device, the study adds to discussions in film studies, cultural studies, and African traditional religion, culturally the study highlights how Nollywood mediates between tradition and modernity by dramatizing ritual practices for contemporary audiences. Understanding this dynamic is crucial for evaluating how films shape cultural memory and identity. Culturally, the study highlights how Nollywood mediates between tradition and modernity by dramatizing ritual practices for contemporary audiences. This dynamic is crucial for evaluating how films shape cultural memory and identity within Nigerian society. Nollywood itself draws heavily from the traditions of Nigerian stage performance and travelling theatre. Historically, theatre practitioners such as Hubert Ogunde and Duro Ladipo dramatized ritual, morality, and power struggles on stage, creating a performance culture that later

influenced the thematic and stylistic direction of Nollywood (Ekwuazi, 2001; Adesanya, 2000). By studying ritual in Nollywood, this research therefore contributes to Theatre Arts scholarship by showing how the screen medium has adapted theatrical traditions into a cinematic form while continuing to perform the cultural work of negotiating belief, morality, and identity.

Practically, the study is significant for filmmakers, scriptwriters, theatre practitioners, and cultural critics. Just as stage directors and playwrights must consider how to responsibly dramatize ritual and belief systems for live audiences, Nollywood filmmakers face the challenge of balancing entertainment with ethical and cultural responsibility. By interrogating how ritual is portrayed on screen, this research offers insights into the responsibilities of Nollywood—and by extension, Nigerian theatre—in shaping societal perceptions of morality, power, and spirituality.

Furthermore, the study provides useful reflections for policymakers, educators, and religious leaders concerned with the moral implications of popular culture. Theatre has historically been a forum for moral instruction and social critique, and Nollywood as its cinematic extension continues this role on a larger scale. Thus, understanding the interplay between ritual, power, and revenge in Nigerian films enriches not only film studies but also the field of Theatre Arts, reinforcing the central role of performance—whether on stage or screen—in cultural expression and social development.

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## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **2.1 Nollywood Evolution and Representation of Ritual**

Ritual, in the context of this research, is approached not merely as a religious act but as a performative and symbolic practice which, within African epistemologies, is believed to effect real transformations in social, political, and spiritual domains. Victor Turner (1969, p. 183) defines ritual as a “stereotyped sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects, performed in a sequestered place, and designed to influence supernatural entities or forces.” His perspective foregrounds ritual as both repetitive and efficacious a view which resonates with the dramaturgical nature of Nollywood cinema, where ritual actions are preserved, re-enacted, and circulated as visual texts that function didactically and affectively.

John Mbiti’s (1990, p. 1) classic assertion that “Africans are notoriously religious” underscores the ubiquity of ritual practices across African societies. Ritual is not peripheral but central to African cultural life, shaping birth, initiation, marriage, governance, death, and even acts of social retribution. Within Nigerian films, ritual is frequently dramatized through images of shrines, masquerades, invocations, blood sacrifices, or symbolic items such as amulets and talismans. These are not arbitrary

cinematic devices; they draw from shared cosmological repertoires that Nigerian audiences recognize, even if they approach them with ambivalence or skepticism.

Nigerian scholars emphasize that the representation of ritual in film functions as both entertainment and moral pedagogy. According to Ogunleye (2004), ritual in Nollywood is “spectacularized for cinematic consumption yet always tethered to moral consequences,” meaning that characters who use ritual for destructive purposes are eventually punished. Okome (2010) adds that the repeated staging of ritual in Yoruba cinema reflects deep-seated anxieties about modernity, wealth acquisition, and spiritual vulnerability. Thus, ritual in film is both a mirror of cultural belief and a cautionary tale.

As for Power, It extends beyond the conventional definitions of political office or economic influence. It is understood in Foucauldian terms as a distributed and productive capacity, enacted and reified through symbols, discourses, and practices (Foucault, 1980). Within the Nigerian cinematic imagination, power frequently manifests through ritual bargains, supernatural compacts, enchanted amulets, or sacralized authority derived from deities and ancestral forces.

Nigerian scholars such as Ekwuazi (2007) and Haynes (2016) have highlighted how cinema serves as a discourse of power where traditional cosmologies intersect with modern crises of governance. Ritual thus becomes a technology of power, a means by which marginalized individuals or disenfranchised groups attempt to alter their socio-political standing, albeit often with dire consequences.

Revenge on the other hand is conceptualized as a form of social redress enacted outside formal juridical channels. When institutional justice fails or is inaccessible, characters in Nigerian films frequently resort to supernatural means to exact vengeance. In the cultural imaginary, revenge becomes both a personal catharsis and a symbolic restoration of moral order—though, as Nollywood narratives insist, it usually leads to tragic downfall.

Ekwuazi (2007) notes that the Nollywood revenge motif is “a displaced articulation of the populace’s frustration with a corrupt and ineffectual justice system.” Similarly, Okoye (2015) observes that the substitution of ritual for institutional justice reflects the distrust of formal structures and the enduring belief in spiritual causality.

The theme of revenge in Nigerian film often carries a didactic undertone. As Ogunleye (2004) observes, revenge carried out via occult means is never permitted to triumph in the long run; cinematic justice ensures that such acts are punished, reinforcing communal moral codes. Okome (2010) and Adejunmobi (2002) argue that this narrative strategy functions as a cultural pedagogy warning audiences of the futility and dangers of seeking vengeance through illegitimate spiritual channels.

Together, ritual, power, and revenge form a triadic framework for analyzing Lakatabu. Ritual is the means, power is the outcome, and revenge is the motivation. Within Nigerian cinema, these elements are rarely neutral; they are laden with moral, spiritual, and social implications. By clarifying these concepts, this study situates its analysis within broader African epistemologies and Nollywood’s narrative traditions,

ensuring that the discussion of ritual in Lakatabu is not isolated but understood as part of a wider cultural discourse.

The Nigerian film industry, popularly known as Nollywood, is widely acknowledged as one of the most productive and culturally significant cinematic movements in the world. Though the term itself emerged externally, Nollywood has come to embody a complex cultural economy, one that fuses indigenous storytelling traditions with modern production and distribution practices. The need to situate films like Lakatabu within this continuum necessitates a careful review of Nollywood's definition, its historical evolution, and the distinctions between Old and New Nollywood.

The definition of Nollywood remains contested because of its hybridity and fluidity.

Ekwuazi (2007, p. 23) argues that Nollywood should be understood as “the collective film practice in Nigeria, regardless of medium, financing model or distribution outlet, because its identity is defined by its rootedness in Nigerian cultural realities.” Similarly, Okome (2010, p. 4) emphasizes Nollywood's informality, describing it as “a network of production and consumption practices anchored in urban markets and everyday Nigerian lives.” For Ogunleye (2004, p. 18), Nollywood is not just an industry but also “a cultural movement where film becomes the people's mirror, expressing anxieties, aspirations, and contradictions of Nigerian society.” These perspectives highlight the fact that Nollywood is not only an economic sector but also a cultural institution that reflects and shapes Nigerian social realities. International

commentators often simplify Nollywood by equating it with sheer volume, but Nigerian scholars insist that its identity must be understood from within Nigerian epistemologies.

The evolution of Nollywood is described and understood when looked at from two perspectives of old (1992-2000) and new (Mid2000-Present) Nollywood. The emergence of Nollywood is often linked to the video film revolution of the early 1990s. According to Okome (2007, p. 37), *Living in Bondage* (1992) “announced the possibility of a commercially viable video film industry that could thrive outside the formal cinema system.” Adesokan (2011, p. 102) describes this period as one of “cultural insurgency,” where marginalized voices seized the video medium to bypass institutional gatekeepers. Ogunleye (2004, p. 27) notes that “the affordability of VHS and later VCD technologies gave filmmakers a direct link to audiences, dismantling the elitist exclusivity of cinema halls.”

The key features of Old Nollywood includes:

Low budgets and rapid production    films shot in a week or two, Informal distribution hubs    such as Idumota (Lagos) and Upper Iweka (Onitsha); there are dominant genres like melodrama, ritual/occult thrillers, and epic tales, and mass audience appeal across linguistic, religious, and class divides. As Ekwuazi (2007, p. 31) argues, Old Nollywood films became “a people’s theatre on cassette,” serving as both entertainment and moral education.

By the mid-2000s, Nollywood faced criticisms of poor quality, piracy, and lack of

international recognition. This led to the emergence of New Nollywood, characterized by professionalism, globalization, and digitalization. Haynes (2016, p. 75) observes that the new wave was marked by “a conscious pursuit of cinematic polish, international visibility, and middle-class urban audiences.” Okome (2010, p. 11) contrasts the two phases, noting that “where Old Nollywood thrived on speed and quantity, New Nollywood insists on spectacle, technical refinement, and festival circulation.” Adesokan (2011, p. 109) adds that New Nollywood “pursues cosmopolitan legitimacy, but risks alienating the mass audiences that sustained its predecessor.”

The key features of New Nollywood includes Cinema resurgence with films like *The Figurine* (Kunle Afolayan, 2009) and *October 1* (2014); Digital distribution through platforms such as Netflix, IrokoTV, and Amazon Prime; Higher budgets and professional crews.

Global festival circuits and international co-productions. Genre diversification beyond occult thrillers, including action, historical dramas, romance, and comedies. As Okome (2010, p. 13) concludes, New Nollywood demonstrates “a cinema in transition, caught between grassroots authenticity and global aspiration.”

The Nigerian film industry, has become one of the most prolific cultural producers in the world since its emergence in the early 1990s, it has consistently foregrounded themes drawn from Nigeria’s socio-cultural and spiritual realities. Among these themes, ritual has emerged as one of the most persistent, controversial, and

commercially successful motifs. The portrayal of ritual in Nollywood is not an isolated phenomenon but an extension of Nigeria's cultural imagination, historical experiences, and socio-political anxieties.

## **2.2. Ritual as a Tool of Power and Revenge in Nollywood**

The centrality of ritual in Nollywood can be traced back to the formative film 'Living in Bondage' (1992), directed by Chris Obi Rapu. Widely regarded as the first major Nollywood video film 'Living in Bondage' popularized the occult economy motif, portraying a protagonist who sacrifices his wife in a ritual for wealth, only to be haunted by her ghost. As Haynes and Okome (1998) observe, this film established the template for the "ritual film" genre that dominated Nollywood in the 1990s and early 2000s.

Following this prototype, a wave of films such as *Blood Money* (1997), *Karishika* (1996), *Occultic Kingdom* (1999), and Yoruba-language films like *Koto Orun* and *Saworoide* expanded ritual representations into diverse narratives. Ogunleye (2004) notes that the prevalence of ritual themes during this period reflected the socio-economic crisis of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), rising unemployment, and public anxiety about wealth acquisition through illegitimate means. Ritual films thus dramatized the moral ambivalence of sudden wealth, portraying the occult as a dangerous but tempting path. By the mid-2000s, ritual motifs had become almost formulaic in Nollywood. Adesokan (2011) argues that this was both a creative limitation and a commercial strategy, as audiences

eagerly consumed films where ritual served as the nexus of suspense, fear, and moral lessons. In Yoruba cinema, directors like Tunde Kelani, and later Odunlade Adekola with *Lakatabu*, incorporated ritual motifs into larger narratives about justice, authority, and revenge, blending entertainment with socio-cultural commentary.

Scholars have identified ritual as a distinct Nollywood genre, often referred to as the “ritual/occult film” (Ekwuazi, 2007). This genre is characterized by recurring elements:

- a. A protagonist seeking wealth, power, or revenge.
- b. Engagement with ritual specialists or secret societies.
- c. The use of dramatic spectacles—blood sacrifices, chants, shrines, nocturnal gatherings.
- d. Initial success of the ritual pact followed by catastrophic consequences.
- e. A concluding moral lesson that reaffirms social values.

Okome (2010) notes that this narrative structure mirrors traditional folktales where hubris and greed invite cosmic punishment. In Nollywood, however, these tales are amplified by cinematic spectacle, using sound effects, costumes, and editing to dramatize the supernatural.

One reason for the persistence of ritual in Nollywood is its commercial appeal. As Larkin (2008) observes, Nollywood films thrive on melodrama and spectacle, and ritual provides both. The dramatic imagery of blood, shrines, incantations, and transformations creates visual excitement that captivates audiences across classes.

Ogunleye (2004) points out that ritual also functions as a “special effect” in low-budget Nollywood productions, compensating for the lack of expensive technology. By deploying rituals, filmmakers could generate suspense and horror without Hollywood-style graphics. Commercially, ritual films cater to popular anxieties about sudden wealth, political corruption, and spiritual warfare. Audiences see these films not merely as fiction but as allegories of real societal struggles. Uwah (2008) observes that many Nigerian viewers interpret ritual films as “cautionary tales,” warning against the dangers of greed and illegitimate power.

While often dismissed as sensationalist, ritual films serve important didactic functions. Haynes (2016) argues that Nollywood is a form of “popular pedagogy,” transmitting moral lessons in accessible forms. In ritual films, the lesson is almost always the same: wealth or power obtained through ritual ends in destruction. Nigerian scholars like Ekwuazi (2007) and Okoye (2015) argue that these narratives reinforce communal morality by dramatizing the dangers of breaking cosmic laws. In Yoruba ritual films, the didactic element is even more pronounced. Thus, ritual films function as cultural texts that negotiate between entertainment and ethics, spectacle and pedagogy.

Despite their popularity, Nollywood ritual films have faced sustained criticism. First, scholars such as Ogunleye (2004) and Okome (2010) argue that Nollywood distorts African ritual practices, reducing them to diabolic spectacles devoid of their positive cultural functions. Rituals for healing, fertility, or communal renewal are rarely depicted; instead, films focus on sacrifices for wealth and revenge. Second, Pentecostal critics accuse Nollywood of promoting superstition and normalizing

occult practices (Ukah, 2003). They argue that ritual films legitimize fear of witchcraft and reinforce the “fetishization” of African spirituality. Third, there is concern about the global image of Africa. Adesokan (2011) notes that Nollywood’s fixation on ritual has reinforced stereotypes of Africa as a continent obsessed with witchcraft and magic. This concern is particularly relevant in international distribution, where ritual films often become the face of Nollywood abroad.

However, Nigerian scholars like Olayiwola (2013) counter that these critiques overlook the cultural realities that Nollywood dramatizes. Ritual is not a mere invention but a lived belief system that continues to shape Nigerian society. As such, its cinematic representation cannot be dismissed as distortion but must be seen as cultural expression.

In Yoruba-language cinema for instance, from its roots in traveling theatre to contemporary Nollywood, has had a distinctive relationship with ritual. Scholars such as Barber (1997) and Adeeko (2002) highlight that Yoruba theatre historically integrated ritual performance into drama, a tradition inherited by Yoruba filmmakers. In Yoruba cosmology, ritual is embedded in everyday life—chieftaincy rites, divination, sacrifices, and festivals—and this cultural milieu informs Yoruba ritual films.

Unlike English-language Nollywood films that often universalize ritual as occult greed, Yoruba films root it in specific cultural practices, thereby offering more nuanced representations.

Audience studies reveal that Nigerian viewers interpret ritual films in complex ways. Larkin (2008) found that audiences in Kano interpreted occult films as evidence of real spiritual dangers. Similarly, Uwah (2008) observes that viewers treat ritual films as warnings, often debating the authenticity of depicted practices. Interestingly, while audiences criticize the exaggeration of rituals, they nonetheless consume these films avidly. This contradiction reflects what Barber (1997) terms the “dialectics of cultural consumption”—viewers oscillate between skepticism and belief, fascination and fear. For Yoruba audiences, films like *Lakatabu* resonate because they dramatize familiar cultural repertoires while also providing thrilling entertainment.

### **2.3.1 Ritual and Power in Nollywood**

This section which is ritual as a tool of power and to return back to the focus of revenge in Nollywood, suffice to state that the nexus between ritual and power is a recurring concern in Nollywood scholarship. Foucault's (1980) theory of power/knowledge has been applied to African contexts by scholars such as Barber (1997) and Adeeko (2002), who argue that ritual knowledge constitutes an alternative form of power in societies where state authority is weak or distrusted.

Nigerian film scholars provide empirical support for this claim. Ekwuazi (2007) observes that characters in ritual films often acquire social dominance not through political office but through mystical contracts. Okoye (2015) links this to Nigeria's culture of political corruption, where citizens perceive the occult as a more effective route to power than democratic institutions.

In Yoruba cinema, Olayiwola (2013) highlights how ritual specialists are depicted as "shadow authorities" who can empower or destroy kings, businessmen, or criminals. This aligns with Adeduntan's (2010) finding that Nollywood films often portray ritual priests as custodians of secret knowledge that surpasses modern institutions.

While the link between ritual and power has been widely studied, the use of ritual for revenge has received comparatively less attention. Revenge as a narrative motif is common in Nollywood, where aggrieved characters resort to supernatural channels when denied justice through formal systems. Okome (2010) argues that revenge

through ritual dramatizes the “failure of state institutions” in Nigeria, where corruption and inefficiency render formal justice inaccessible. Ogunleye (2004) notes that revenge-driven rituals are often gendered, with women turning to witchcraft or fetish practices to retaliate against unfaithful partners or oppressive in-laws.

Nigerian authors such as Uwah (2008) and Alamu (2010) point out that Nollywood tends to moralize revenge by showing its destructive consequences. Characters who seek vengeance through ritual means may achieve temporary satisfaction but ultimately face retribution, reinforcing communal codes of forgiveness and restraint.

Power, in African and Nigerian contexts, is not only political or economic but also profoundly spiritual. As Foucault (1980) theorized, power is relational, diffuse, and embodied in discourses, practices, and knowledge systems. Within African cosmologies, ritual constitutes one of the primary channels through which power is accessed, legitimized, and exercised. Nollywood, reflecting this worldview, persistently depicts ritual as a potent tool for acquiring, consolidating, and displaying power. From political authority to economic wealth and social dominance, ritual is represented as a pathway to power—albeit one fraught with moral and spiritual consequences.

One of the most persistent tropes in Nollywood is the use of ritual for wealth acquisition. Beginning with *Living in Bondage* (1992), Nollywood established the motif of characters sacrificing loved ones in exchange for sudden riches. Haynes (2016) notes that such films emerged at a time when Nigeria faced economic decline,

structural adjustment, and rising inequality. Ritual for wealth thus mirrored public anxieties about the moral legitimacy of unexplained affluence. In these narratives, power is equated with wealth, and ritual becomes the hidden mechanism of social mobility. Characters who were once poor suddenly acquire cars, mansions, and political connections after engaging in ritual practices. As Ogunleye (2004) observes, these depictions reflect societal suspicions that Nigeria's elites politicians, businessmen, and celebrities—owe their success to occult bargains rather than hard work.

Beyond wealth, Nollywood also portrays ritual as a pathway to political office and influence. Films such as *Igodo* (1999), *Blood Billionaires* (2002), and Yoruba-language titles like *Saworoide* (1999) dramatize politicians who undergo rituals to secure victory or immunity. Ekwuazi (2007) categorizes such films as “ritual-political dramas,” noting that they expose the perceived corruption of Nigerian politics, where spiritual power is seen as indispensable for survival. Adeduntan (2010) adds that these films reflect public beliefs that political authority in Nigeria is rarely acquired legitimately but through ritual pacts and occult societies.

In Yoruba cinema, the nexus of ritual and political power is deeply rooted in cultural realities. Barber (1997) documents how Yoruba kingship rituals historically legitimize rulers, and Kelani's *Saworoide* adapts this tradition into film by portraying a drum ritual that regulates political authority.

Another recurring element in Nollywood is the figure of the ritual specialist—*dibia*,

babalawo, or occult grandmaster—who serves as the broker of power. These specialists mediate between ordinary individuals and spiritual forces, prescribing sacrifices, concoctions, or oaths to access power. Okome (2010) notes that such characters embody both fascination and fear, representing the allure of supernatural power while also embodying its dangers. In Yoruba films, the babalawo is often portrayed with ambivalence: respected for his knowledge but feared for his destructive potential.

A key feature of Nollywood's representation of ritual power is its moral framing. While characters may initially succeed, their downfall is inevitable. Ogunleye (2004) argues that this narrative arc reflects the cultural insistence that power must be morally regulated. Ritual power used for selfish ends—greed, domination, revenge—leads to destruction. Adesokan (2011) describes this as Nollywood's "moral economy," where ritual power is simultaneously alluring and condemned. Audiences are thus entertained by the spectacle of power but reminded of its dangers.

Critics have raised concerns about Nollywood's portrayal of ritual power. First, scholars like Okome (2010) and Uwah (2008) argue that the films sensationalize rituals, portraying them as shortcuts to power while ignoring their communal and positive functions. Rituals for healing, fertility, and communal welfare are rarely shown.

Second, Pentecostal Christianity has challenged Nollywood's representations, accusing them of glamorizing occultism. Ukah (2003) notes that Pentecostal pastors

frequently reference Nollywood ritual films in sermons, warning congregations against the dangers of spiritual shortcuts. Yet Nigerian scholars such as Olayiwola (2013) counter that Nollywood's representation of ritual power is not invention but cultural realism. It reflects lived beliefs and societal suspicions about how wealth and political power are acquired in Nigeria.

Revenge is one of the oldest narrative structures in world storytelling, from Greek tragedies to Shakespearean drama and African oral traditions. In Nigerian cinema, particularly Nollywood, revenge narratives are deeply entangled with ritual practices. When formal channels of justice—courts, police, community arbitration—fail or are inaccessible, characters often turn to supernatural forces to redress wrongs. Ritual thus emerges as a culturally resonant instrument for revenge, dramatizing the social desire for justice while simultaneously exposing the dangers of seeking power outside moral and institutional boundaries.

Revenge has always been part of African storytelling. Among the Yoruba, tales of *àjàkù* (retributive spirits) dramatize how those who wrong others are punished through spiritual means (Barber, 1991). The Igbo cosmology recognizes *ogwu agha* (ritual war-medicine) as a legitimate way of protecting oneself and retaliating against aggressors (Nwachukwu, 2002). Mbiti (1990) underscores that African societies often view justice in terms of cosmic balance: when injustice occurs, rituals may be performed to restore equilibrium, either through appeasement or punishment.

Nigerian scholars reinforce this point. Okoye (2015) notes that in many indigenous

systems, revenge is not personal but communal—rituals of vengeance are framed as restoring social harmony. Ekwuazi (2007) adds that oral epics such as those of the hunters' guilds dramatize heroes who seek supernatural assistance to avenge betrayals, thereby encoding moral lessons about loyalty, betrayal, and justice. This cultural heritage directly informs Nollywood's obsession with revenge-through-ritual narratives.

From the early 1990s, Nollywood established ritual revenge as a popular genre motif. Films such as *Blood Money* (1997), *Living in Bondage II*, and Yoruba films like *Koto Aiye* (1995) depict betrayed characters seeking ritual means to retaliate. Haynes (2016) observes that Nollywood's revenge plots follow a predictable trajectory:

- a. A wrong (betrayal, murder, cheating, injustice) occurs.
- b. The victim, powerless within legal systems, consults a ritual specialist.
- c. Through rituals, the victim gains supernatural means to punish the oppressor.
- d. The revenge is initially successful but ultimately spirals into moral or spiritual chaos.

This formula reflects both entertainment imperatives and cultural pedagogy. As Ogunleye (2004) argues, Nollywood exploits the spectacle of ritualized revenge to captivate audiences, while simultaneously warning viewers about the destructive consequences of vengeance.

Yoruba films, in particular, foreground revenge as a ritualized process. Adeduntan

(2010) notes that Yoruba oral narratives valorize cunning and retributive justice, and Yoruba Nollywood cinema translates this ethos into film. Ritual is dramatized as a legitimate, though dangerous, instrument of vengeance.

An important dimension of ritual revenge in Nollywood is gender. Many narratives depict women as central actors in revenge plots. For instance, in *Karishika* (1996), women who have been wronged employ ritual seduction and supernatural retaliation. Okome (2010) argues that this reflects anxieties about female agency: Nollywood dramatizes women's access to ritual as both empowering and threatening.

In Yoruba cinema, betrayed wives or mothers often turn to ritual to avenge infidelity, abuse, or the killing of children. Ogunleye (2004) notes that such plots echo cultural concerns about the destructive potential of women's wrath when wronged.

### **2.3 The Moral Order and Societal Impact of Ritual Themed Nigerian Films**

While Nollywood sensationalizes ritual revenge, it also uses it to critique Nigerian society. Adesokan (2011) argues that ritual revenge narratives dramatize frustrations with the failures of formal justice. When courts are corrupt and police are ineffective, characters resort to spiritual justice. Thus, ritual revenge films become allegories of Nigeria's weak institutions. At the same time, Nollywood moralizes revenge. Although characters may succeed temporarily, their ultimate downfall reinforces cultural warnings against excessive vengeance. Uwah (2008) explains that these films operate within a "moral economy of justice"—audiences are entertained by the spectacle of revenge but reassured that divine or cosmic law will eventually punish

excesses.

Studies of audience responses reveal the popularity of revenge plots. Larkin (2008) notes that viewers are simultaneously horrified and fascinated by ritual revenge narratives. Nigerian audiences interpret them as both reflections of real societal practices and warnings about spiritual dangers. Ukah (2003) documents how Pentecostal churches frequently critique Nollywood revenge films, arguing that they glamorize occultism. Yet these same churches borrow cinematic language in their sermons, demonstrating the films' cultural reach. For many Nigerians, ritual revenge in film mirrors suspicions about real-life events—politicians, business tycoons, or neighbors allegedly using rituals to punish rivals.

The concept of a moral economy, as adapted from E.P. Thompson (1971) and James Scott (1976), refers to the implicit social codes that regulate behavior, reciprocity, and justice. In the Nigerian cinematic context, ritual operates within such a moral economy. Okome (2010) argues that the persistent representation of ritual in Yoruba films reflects anxieties about wealth accumulation, social mobility, and the erosion of communal ethics. Characters who seek ritual power outside accepted moral boundaries whether for revenge, greed, or domination—are invariably punished, thus reaffirming communal codes of justice. Similarly, Ogunleye (2004) notes that Nollywood films often present ritual wealth as illegitimate and unsustainable, reinforcing the idea that true prosperity must align with moral norms.

### **Nollywood, Morality, and Audience Perception**

Several studies examine how audiences interpret Nollywood's ritual themes. Larkin (2008) notes that viewers approach ritual films with a blend of fascination and fear, often debating their authenticity. Okome (2010) suggests that Yoruba audiences read ritual films both as entertainment and as moral instruction, interpreting onscreen punishments as warnings. Nigerian researchers provide further insights. Olayiwola (2013) found that university students perceive ritual films as cautionary tales against greed and corruption. Alamu (2010) reports that rural audiences sometimes view these films as exaggerated but still morally instructive. Uwah (2008) argues that Nollywood shapes public discourse about wealth acquisition, teaching that illegitimate power particularly through ritual inevitably collapses. These findings highlight Nollywood's dual role as cultural pedagogy and commercial entertainment.

The representation of ritual in Nigerian films, particularly when linked to power and revenge, is not merely a matter of aesthetics or entertainment. Rather, it constitutes a moral economy, where cultural values, social anxieties, and ethical discourses are negotiated through cinematic spectacle. The term "moral economy," popularized by Thompson (1971) and adapted in African film scholarship by Okome (2010), refers to the implicit codes of morality embedded in cultural productions that govern how actions, rewards, and punishments are represented. In Nollywood, ritual films are constructed within a framework where the pursuit of power or revenge through occult means may initially succeed but must ultimately collapse under the weight of spiritual or moral retribution.

One of Nollywood's defining features is its overt moralism. As Haynes (2016)

observes, the industry thrives on narratives that teach lessons about life, family, and society. Ritual films, in particular, dramatize the dangers of greed, vengeance, and occult power. Ogunleye (2004) explains that ritual films operate on a didactic logic: characters who gain power through rituals may prosper temporarily but are eventually destroyed. This narrative closure reinforces the idea that cosmic justice exists and that deviation from moral codes leads to catastrophe.

Audience reception is crucial to understanding the social implications of ritual films. Viewers are captivated by the spectacle of shrines, incantations, and supernatural battles but interpret these images within a moral framework. As Uwah (2008, p. 45) argues, “the ultimate destruction of the ritualist is the moral lesson that resonates most deeply with audiences.” Churches often frame these films as evidence of real demonic practices, using them to validate their spiritual warfare narratives.

Conversely, Islamic scholars in Northern Nigeria critique ritual films for promoting shirk (associating partners with God), which contradicts Islamic monotheism (Danmole, 2015). Yet despite these condemnations, ritual films remain widely consumed, reflecting their embeddedness in Nigerian cultural consciousness.

Beyond religion, ritual films also comment on Nigeria’s socio-political realities. Adesokan (2011) argues that Nollywood’s fixation with ritual reflects anxieties about corruption, inequality, and political instability. Ritual becomes a metaphor for illicit power—whether in politics, business, or personal relationships. Thus, Nollywood embeds ritual films within a political critique: they expose corruption and injustice

while reaffirming cultural values that condemn illegitimate power.

Ritual films also play a role in shaping Nigerian cultural identity. By dramatizing traditional practices, they preserve and reinterpret indigenous cosmologies for modern audiences. Ekwuazi (2007) emphasizes that Nollywood serves as a cultural archive, albeit one that sometimes distorts traditions for commercial purposes. The cultural implication is double-edged: on the one hand, Nollywood preserves ritual knowledge; on the other, it risks perpetuating stereotypes that reduce African spirituality to greed, violence, and vengeance.

Critics argue that Nollywood ritual films can have negative implications. Okome (2010) contends that their emphasis on wealth and revenge fuels superstition, fear, and mistrust. Ogunleye (2004) warns that constant depictions of ritual killings and sacrifices risk desensitizing audiences to violence. Others, however, see ethical value in these films. Uwah (2008) argues that by consistently punishing ritualists, Nollywood reinforces communal ethics and deters audiences from engaging in such practices. Adesokan (2011) supports this view, suggesting that ritual films operate as moral theatre, where the dangers of immorality are spectacularly displayed. Thus, the ethical implications of ritual films are contested: they may both reinforce and undermine moral values, depending on context and reception.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study adopts a qualitative case study design because it prioritizes meaning-making over numerical measurement. Since the goal is to understand how ritual is portrayed as a mechanism for power and revenge in Nigerian films, an interpretive and descriptive approach is most suitable.

The case study method is applied with *Lakatabu* as the primary focus. For example, in one pivotal scene, the central character consults a ritualist to perform sacrifices aimed at destroying his enemies. Such moments are not quantifiable but can be analyzed for their symbolic weight, cultural resonance, and dramatic function.

#### **3.2 Sample and Sampling Techniques**

The study uses purposive sampling, deliberately selecting films that emphasize ritual as a key narrative device.

Main Case: *Lakatabu*

In one scene, the protagonist uses a ritual charm to paralyze his betrayer before carrying out vengeance. Such instances make *Lakatabu* a rich text for examining the ritual-revenge nexus.

### **3.3 Research Instruments**

The following instruments are applied:

a. Film Analysis Guide

Type of ritual (sacrifices, blood oaths, incantations).

Characters involved.

Purpose (revenge, power, wealth).

Outcome (death, downfall, supernatural retaliation).

In Lakatabu, a sequence where the central figure buries ritual objects at an enemy's doorstep is recorded under "revenge-driven ritual act."

b. Literature Review— organizing secondary works that analyze Nollywood ritual films.

### **3.4 Method of Data Collection**

Data will be gathered using three strategies:

a. Primary Film Analysis

Lakatabu will be watched repeatedly. For instance, the shrine scenes where the protagonist sacrifices animals and later humans will be documented in terms of sound design (drums, chants), mise-en-scène (candles, effigies), and symbolism (blood as both power and revenge).

b. Comparative Viewing

Other films (Living in Bondage, Blood Money) will be cross-analyzed with Lakatabu. For example, "Blood Money's protagonist engages in ritual killings similar

to those in Lakatabu but with different consequences—enriching comparative insights.

c. Secondary Data

Literature on Nollywood ritual cinema will be examined, highlighting how scholars connect ritual narratives to Nigeria’s socio-cultural anxieties about wealth, betrayal, and supernatural justice.

### **3.5 Method of Data Analysis**

The study applies thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Immersion the researcher will repeatedly watch Lakatabu, paying close attention to revenge-driven ritual scenes, such as when the protagonist invokes curses that result in an opponent’s mysterious death.

Coding - Ritual revenge acts (like oath-taking before committing violence, human sacrifice to eliminate rivals) will be coded under themes such as “ritual as empowerment” and “ritual as retribution.”

Theme Development – Broader categories such as:

Ritual as an instrument of Revenge in Nollywood

Ritual as an instrument of Power in Nollywood

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION OF DATA, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Presentation of Lakatabu

The film *Lakatabu* belongs to Nollywood's ritual and occult genre, one of the most popular narrative traditions in Nigerian cinema. It dramatizes the journey of a man betrayed by close allies who, in his quest for revenge, turns to occult powers for strength and retribution. The storyline situates ritual not only as an element of spectacle but also as a metaphor for Nigeria's social, political, and spiritual crises (Onokome, 1999; Haynes, 2016).

By combining the familiar motifs of shrines, blood sacrifices, incantations, and supernatural retaliation, *Lakatabu* echoes cultural anxieties about betrayal, greed, power, and cosmic justice. The film's moral trajectory, consistent with Nollywood traditions, ultimately warns against the destructive path of revenge and ritualism (Ekwuazi, 2001), Genre: Action / Drama / Thriller, with supernatural/mystical elements. Language: Primarily Yoruba, with some use of English. Writer & Director: Odunlade Adekola Producer: Odunlade Adekola is also credited as producer. Release Date / Premiere Date: June 21, 2024

#### 4.2 Analysis of Lakatabu

This section is broken down into subsections like plot, which summarizes events in the film, ritual, power and revenge analysis to enable us situate the discussion properly to enhance better understanding.

#### 4.2.1 Plot Analysis

The plot of *Lakatabu* unfolds in below phases:

##### a. The Betrayal and Humiliation

In the opening sequences, the protagonist is betrayed by trusted associates who strip him of wealth and dignity. This humiliation creates the psychological trigger for his descent into occult practices. The betrayal is shown not as random, but as a deliberate act of greed, reflecting Nigeria's socio-political climate where trusted leaders often betray the public trust (Okome, 2007). In *Lakatabu*, the protagonist's vengeance is masculine, but the narrative acknowledges that betrayal and humiliation, regardless of gender, can drive characters into ritual practices.

##### b. The Resort to Ritual

A pivotal scene shows the protagonist being led by a ritual priest into a dark shrine, illuminated by red candles and marked with chalk symbols. The ritual priest chants incantations in Yoruba (subtitled in English), and the protagonist offers animal blood as a sacrifice. This scene highlights the film's reliance on ritual spectacle, echoing traditional depictions of African shrines while also evoking modern anxieties about occultism in Nigerian society (Oha, 2014).

##### c. The Rise and Fall

After acquiring occult power, the protagonist grows arrogant and destructive, using his powers to eliminate enemies. For instance, in one revenge scene, he mysteriously causes a rival's sudden convulsion and death in public, reinforcing his

dominance. However, his victories are short-lived as the very spirits that granted him power demand greater sacrifices—including the lives of his loved ones. In the climax, the protagonist is consumed by spiritual forces, dramatizing Nollywood’s moral philosophy that “evil destroys its own” (Adesanya, 2000).

#### **4.2.2 Ritual Analysis**

Ritual is not just a narrative element but the backbone of *Lakatabu*.

**Sacrifices:** In a key scene, the protagonist is ordered to provide human blood. The camera lingers on his hesitation before he ultimately kidnaps a victim. This act represents both a loss of humanity and a symbolic “point of no return.” In Nigerian society, such ritual killings have often been linked with money-making myths and political ambitions, and Nollywood dramatizes these fears (Afolabi, 2014).

**Incantations and Oral Power:** Several sequences emphasize the spoken word as a medium of spiritual control. For example, during one nocturnal ritual, the priest repeatedly chants, and the protagonist echoes the words, symbolizing submission to spiritual authority. This reflects African oral traditions where words carry mystical energy (Eke, 2017).

**Sacred Spaces:** Shrines in *Lakatabu* are visually constructed with skulls, candles, and blood-stained altars. These images, though dramatized, resonate with familiar depictions of occult practices in Nigeria. They serve as visual shorthand for evil pacts, creating suspense while grounding the story in cultural realities (Uwah, 2011).

#### **4.2.3 Power Analysis**

Power is the central promise of ritual in *Lakatabu*. The protagonist's power is

inseparable from his ritual protections, making the film a pertinent case for analyzing the relationship between ritual and power in Nigerian popular culture. Ritual is not simply a tool of greed but a vehicle of vengeance and power negotiation. Odunlade Adekola situates the narrative in a moral landscape where ritual emerges as both a cultural resource and a dangerous temptation.

In Yoruba films such as *Lakatabu*, however, ritual power extends beyond wealth to encompass influence, revenge, and authority. Odunlade Adekola dramatizes characters who use ritual not just to become rich but to exert dominance over rivals, silence enemies, and command fear.

Ritual power is thus represented as multidimensional: economic, social, political, and psychological. *Lakatabu* dramatizes ritual power as an alternative to failed political and judicial institutions, where characters resort to spiritual means to assert dominance and enforce justice. In one striking scene, after performing rituals, the protagonist walks confidently into a meeting of his former associates. As they confront him, he raises his hand, and one of them collapses instantly, clutching his chest. This dramatization of occult power shows how ritual in Nollywood often replaces political and legal structures with spiritual dominance (Adejunmobi, 2015).

However, the film carefully underscores that this power is illusory. Later, the spirits demand further sacrifices, proving that power gained through illegitimate means cannot be sustained without destruction. The protagonist becomes a slave to the very forces he sought to control. Thus, power in *Lakatabu* mirrors Nigeria's real-life struggles with corruption and illegitimate authority, where leaders who manipulate

resources for selfish gain ultimately destabilize society (Okome, 2007). The protagonist's use of ritual power to pursue revenge places him outside the bounds of this moral economy. His eventual downfall functions as a narrative resolution that restores communal order. This framework is crucial for analyzing how Nollywood constructs ritual not as neutral but as morally coded, with clear consequences for transgression.

#### **4.2.4 Revenge Analysis**

Revenge drives the protagonist's actions, but the film portrays it as a destructive cycle. In *Lakatabu*, Odunlade Adekola dramatizes a protagonist who turns to ritual not only to gain power but to exact vengeance against perceived wrongdoers. The film situates revenge as both personal and cosmic: the protagonist feels betrayed and humiliated, and ritual becomes the only viable recourse. As Olayiwola (2013) argues, Yoruba cinema often presents ritual revenge as a response to systemic failures—where modern law is ineffective, traditional, spiritual avenues are pursued.

In a key revenge scene, the protagonist hunts down a rival in a secluded village. Instead of confronting him openly, he uses ritual charms to strike him down mysteriously. This act not only terrifies the community but also reinforces the atmosphere of fear surrounding occult vengeance in Nigeria. However, the more he eliminates his enemies, the deeper he sinks into bondage. His initial joy at avenging betrayal turns into paranoia, as he begins to suspect everyone—including his own family—of betrayal. Eventually, the cycle of revenge consumes him, reinforcing the African moral philosophy that vengeance destabilizes both the individual and the

community (Nwachukwu, 2013).

### **4.3 Findings and Discussion**

From the different analysis, several insights emerge such as ritual as spectacle and social allegory. Here, Lakatabu uses ritual scenes to captivate audiences while also reflecting Nigerian anxieties about occult practices, wealth acquisition, and spiritual manipulation. The illusion of power is another finding where the protagonist's spiritual victories are temporary and destructive, echoing the Nigerian experience where illegitimate power structures eventually collapse. Also, the film portray revenge as a path to self-destruction underscoring the futility of revenge and showing how it perpetuates cycles of violence and ultimately consumes the avenger.

The film further treat issues of moral didacticism. This is consistent with Nollywood tradition, the film reinforces moral lessons: shortcuts to power lead to destruction, and revenge destabilizes community harmony. In Lakatabu, the protagonist's use of ritual power to pursue revenge places him outside the bounds of this moral economy. His eventual downfall functions as a narrative resolution that restores communal order. This framework is crucial for analyzing how Nollywood constructs ritual not as neutral but as morally coded, with clear consequences for transgression. All of the above issues points to cultural relevance. By dramatizing shrines, sacrifices, and spiritual consultations, Lakatabu reflects indigenous traditions while simultaneously warning against their misuse of power in modern society.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Summary

This study investigated the use of ritual as a tool for power and revenge in Nigerian films, with *Lakatabu* as the case study. Nollywood, as Nigeria's most influential cultural industry, has consistently engaged with themes of ritual, mysticism, and supernatural powers, reflecting the realities of a society where belief in traditional spirituality coexists with modernity (Adesanya, 2000; Onokome, 1999).

The analysis revealed that in *Lakatabu*, ritual is portrayed both as an avenue of empowerment and as an instrument of destruction. Characters employ rituals to seek dominance, avenge betrayal, and reinforce their social influence. However, such powers are shown to be temporary, often ending in downfall and tragedy. This affirms the Nollywood tradition of dramatizing the moral consequences of greed and vengeance (Adejunmobi, 2015; Okome, 2007).

Beyond its literal representation, ritual in the film functions symbolically as a commentary on Nigeria's socio-political climate. The struggle for power, betrayal among allies, and the desire for revenge mirror issues of corruption, abuse of authority, and the dangers of unchecked ambition in Nigerian society (Alawode, 2013; Uwah, 2011).

#### 5.2 Conclusion

The study concludes that ritual remains a central narrative strategy in Nollywood, serving multiple roles. First, it acts as a dramatic spectacle —heightening suspense

and creating strong visual and auditory impact (Ekwuazi, 2001). Second, it functions as a moral lesson emphasizing the inevitability of justice and the futility of evil (Okome, 2007). Third, it operates as a socio-cultural mirror —reflecting Nigerian anxieties about corruption, betrayal, inequality, and the abuse of power (Adesanya, 2000; Alawode, 2013), the use of ritual in the film, underscores the destructive cycle of revenge and ambition. While ritual grants temporary power, it ultimately leads to collapse, thereby re-establishing moral order. This confirms Nollywood’s role as both a cultural archive and a moral guide (Afolabi, 2014; Oha, 2014).

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the findings a careful and detailed study of the use of power and revenge in Nigerian films – *Lakatabu*, the following recommendations are made:

- a. Nigerian filmmakers should continue to explore ritual as a cultural theme but avoid excessive glorification of occultism. Ritual scenes should be employed to highlight moral consequences, ensuring films educate as much as they entertain.
- b. Nigerian universities should support research into the intersection of film, ritual, and culture, as Nollywood remains a vital medium of cultural negotiation. More indigenous scholarship should document how rituals in films reflect African cosmology, spirituality, and ethics.
- c. Nigerian audiences must approach ritual-themed films with critical awareness, recognizing them as cultural representations rather than endorsements of occult practices. Public sensitization should stress that Nollywood often uses ritual metaphorically to critique corruption, greed, and injustice.

d. The National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) should ensure balanced representation of ritual—preserving cultural authenticity while discouraging negative excesses. Film funding agencies and cultural organizations in Nigeria should encourage productions that responsibly explore African spirituality while promoting national values.

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