

Economic Growth and Cultural Heritage: A Study of the Igbo Apprenticeship System as a tool for Youth Empowerment and Poverty Alleviation in the film, *Afamefuna*

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Abstract

This study examines the connection between economic growth and cultural heritage of the Igbo people through a detailed analysis of the Igbo apprenticeship system as seen in the film, *Afamefuna*. The Igbo apprenticeship system, known as "Igba-boi," is a traditional mechanism for youth empowerment and poverty alleviation among the Igbo people of Nigeria. This study examines how the system fosters entrepreneurial skills, financial independence, and social mobility, contributing to broader economic growth and development. By providing a structured path from apprenticeship to business ownership, Igba-boi not only promotes the cultural heritage of the Igbo people but also addresses modern economic challenges. The film *Afamefuna* serves as a case study to illustrate these dynamics, showcasing real-life examples of young individuals who have successfully transitioned from apprentices to business leaders. Through qualitative analysis of the film and characters, this study highlights the effectiveness of cultural practices in promoting sustainable economic growth and reducing poverty. The findings of this study underscore the importance of integrating traditional systems with contemporary economic strategies to enhance youth empowerment and foster development. This study recommends the need for a concerted effort to extend the benefits of the IAS beyond the region by nationalizing its practices. Such a move could potentially enhance economic growth and development across the entire country.

Keywords: Igbo Apprenticeship System, Indigenous Entrepreneurship, Sustainability, Igba Boi/Bonyi

Introduction

The Igbo traditional business landscape thrives on a deep-rooted system of vocational and craft-based knowledge acquisition called the Igbo Apprenticeship System (IAS), facilitated through the practice known as *Igba boi/Bonyi*. Catherine Kanu says that:

The Igbo apprenticeship Model (IAS) is a platform for informal practical business education and wealth creation. It is a model in which an established businessman takes up an apprentice and nurtures him to contribute to the growth of the business while developing capacity to manage his/her own business and, in the end, gives him start-up capital to start his/her own business. The IAS played a major role in pulling majority of Igbo families out of poverty within 30 months of the Biafra Civil War, in spite of the harsh 20 Pounds policy which said that only £20 be given to every Igbo person to survive on regardless of what they had in the bank before the war. Considering the general economic status of the Igbo after the Nigeria/Biafra war, the economic achievement of the Igbo is significant (Kanu 11-12)

This system, steeped in history, involves a process where a successful businessperson, driven either by the desire to expand their enterprise or to contribute to their family or community,

takes on apprentices in an informal arrangement. These apprentices live with their "Oga" or Master, who owns the business and serves as their mentor, learning the trade or craft while also assisting with household chores and running errands for the 'Oga' and his family. Upon the successful completion of the apprenticeship, the apprentice receives rewards such as goods, cash, or a combination thereof. Equipped with invaluable knowledge, practical experience, insights into market trends, a network of suppliers and clients, connections with fellow apprentices (Umu Bonyi), and the support of their mentor, the former apprentice embarks on their own business venture. This new endeavor is strengthened by the resources and assistance acquired during the apprenticeship phase.

The remarkable characteristics, potential, and future prospects of the Igbo Apprenticeship System (IAS), which have fostered enduring and sustainable achievements in Nigeria's South East region, have captured the attention of academics, business leaders, and policymakers alike. Indeed, the IAS has gained recognition as the world's largest and greatest incubation hub and a model for stakeholder capitalism.

Looking back to the colonial era, the Igbo people were celebrated for their success in trading agricultural commodities, particularly palm produce, which served as essential raw materials for numerous European Multinational Corporations (MNCs) like Lever Brothers and UAC, among others. However, a series of unforeseen events occurred, disrupting this vital source of livelihood and success. Nigeria's independence in 1960 reduced the influence of MNCs in the hinterlands, while the hostility during the civil war resulted in the destruction of mature palm trees, increased soil acidity, and claimed nearly 2 million lives, primarily consisting of youths, women, and children. Additionally, the Federal Government's rigorous financial policies, such as the replacement of Biafra's currency and the uniform distribution of Twenty Pounds to all Igbo individuals regardless of their bank deposits after the civil war, further worsened the situation. These circumstances likely contributed to the migration of Southeast Nigerians to various parts of the country and beyond, notwithstanding the unique challenges faced by the region.

In its essence, sustainability involves prioritizing present consumption while also considering the needs of future generations, thus ensuring inter-generational equity and continuity. The longevity of the IAS model can be attributed to the foundational cultural principles and values that form the basis of Igbo business practices. According to Livinus Okpara Onu, Paul Uzond, Anoruo, Chosen Chinwe Ukonu, and Agu Paul Chinedu:

Such entrepreneurial metaphors that spurred Ndi Igbo after the civil war included: Onye ajuru, anaghi aju onwe ya (he who is despised by others does not despise self- a veiled reference to Nigerian Government's attitude towards Ndi Igbo); onye aghana nwanneya insurance, they form Town Unions in every city they do business (Onu, Uzond, Ukonu and Agu 196)

The Igbo Apprenticeship System (IAS) is a business framework that has led to the emergence of globally recognized entrepreneurs including notable figures such as Innocent Chukwuma of Innoson Group, Cosmas Maduka of Coscharis Group, Dr. Samuel Maduka Okoli, Onyishi of Peace Mass Transit group, and the late Ejikeme Augustine Ilodibe of Ekenedilichukwu Transport Limited.

Deeply rooted in Igbo culture, the Igbo Apprenticeship System entails a mutual agreement between the Igbo community and the apprentice, tailored to the specific trade or business type.

Furthermore, it aligns with several of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by fostering collaboration among mentors, apprentices, and the community, thereby enhancing the local economy and promoting sustainable community development.

Therefore, the primary aim of this study is to analyze how the Nollywood film, *Afamefuna*, depicts the Igbo Apprenticeship System (IAS) as a means of empowering youth in the South Eastern region of Nigeria.

Origin and nature of the Igbo Indigenous Apprentice System

The Igbo Indigenous Apprentice System, a commercial framework deeply embedded in Igbo tradition, predates the Nigerian Civil War and played a significant role in the accumulation of wealth by the Igbo community throughout Nigeria. According to Ismael Iwara, Kingsley Amaechi, & Vhonani Netshandama:

Interestingly, this Igbo culture of entrepreneurship can be traced back to the advent of slave export from the Bights of Biafra and Benin in the fifteen century. By 1800s about 320, 000 Igbos have been sold at Bonny, as well as 50,000 at Calabar and Elem Kalabari. This process continues until the abolition of slave trade in the 1900s. Unlike most African communities, slaves from the Igbo ethnic group were channeled into entrepreneurship. There were integrated into a “worldwide economic system linked to spices, sugar, tobacco, cotton and industrial goods in the Americas, Europe and Asia”. This act ignites the spirit of entrepreneurship amongst the Igbo people and spurs the motive to quickly venture into various forms of entrepreneurship during the precolonial (Iwara, Amaechi & Netshandama 229-230)

This culture of entrepreneurship has been sustained till our modern age through apprenticeship framework. Iwara et al. say that “A substantial proportion of the Igbos in the pre-colonial era were craftsmen and women, sole owners of cottage industries traders, merchants, farmers, heads of religious establishments, craftsmen and women. This culture entrepreneurship has been sustained till our modern age through apprenticeship framework” (Iwara et al. 230).

In a similar vein, Kenneth Nduka Omoede and Ngboawaji Daniel Nte say that “There was the widespread entrepreneurial spirit of the people of the Eastern region before the Nigerian Biafran Civil conflict, and then there was the devastating poverty and malnutrition that followed the conflict. But after the Civil War, the apprenticeship system became one of the most reliable ways to help most families get started financially” (Omoede and Nte 98). Through the Igbo Apprenticeship System (IAS), their challenges were transformed into a notable model of economic prosperity, warranting examination and replication. The Igbo apprentice system, commonly referred to as *Igba boi* (which translates to serving), *Imu-Olu* (meaning learning work), and *Imu-ahia* (meaning learning trade), are pivotal components in discussions regarding Igbo wealth creation and commerce. It is crucial to distinguish the *Igba boi* framework from other Igbo practices such as *Imu ahia* (learning a trade) and *Imu oru* (learning a craft), which are also prevalent within Igbo communities. According to Iwara et al...

However, unlike ‘Igba-boi where mentees arrange a contract to have a complete training circle for free, imu-oru or imu-ahia is not done for free. In this, apprentice is expected to pay a ransom to their master to acquire skills. The contract is for a short period, often two years or less unlike the former which takes more years. This is significantly different from Igba-boi, which often lasts for many years. The term ‘Igba-boi’ in this context does not literally mean “to serve another” in the literal sense of the word, whereby the only purpose is total servitude to the master. The Igbo Igba-boi model is a process whereby someone is being trained in the act of

entrepreneurship (Agozino & Anyanike, 2007). Here, the family gives out their children to learn skills and startup their enterprises, having identified their talents. The terms and conditions of this process is often technical, yet embedded in the Igbo traditional worldviews, customs and norms (Iwara et al. 229).

Igbo Apprenticeship System is people-centred. Kalu says that “the Igbo apprenticeship system (IAS) is anchored on the people’s recognition of the need for one another; their spirit of resilience as well as their business people within the system are some of the reasons the system thrives” (Kanu 17). The Igbo apprenticeship system (IAS) consists of individuals who exhibit high levels of dynamism, industriousness, tolerance, and adaptability, aiming for tangible outcomes from their efforts. Upon an apprentice's arrival, their eagerness to learn, resilience, and dependability are assessed to determine their continued participation or dismissal within the initial months. Apprentices who lack these essential qualities are usually sent home within the first three months. Laziness, arrogance, and unreliability are not tolerated within the system. The success of the Master/Apprentice relationship within this system can be credited to its communal nature, which extends beyond the master and apprentice alone. Typically, community members are aware of this relationship. According to Kanu:

Community members usually know about the relationship apprentice, for instance, a master that dismisses an apprentice after some years of service on grounds that are not substantiated or fails to keep to the terms of community back at home. Family and community members are usually carried along till the end of the relationship, thus, at the end of the apprenticeship, the master brings the apprentice home and gives him a take-off fund in the presence of family members (Kanu 17).

There is always a robust connection between the master and apprentice. According to Omoede and Nte:

The apprentice in an Igbo apprenticeship typically moves away from his family to be trained by the master of his chosen profession. Five to seven years is a common estimate. This trainee and their mentor may be romantically involved. He could be his brother, cousin, or even a more remote relative. The apprentice could be a friend’s child or the kid of a mutual acquaintance. It is common practice for the apprentice to hail from the same metropolitan area as the master (Omoede and Nte 103).

In a similar vein, Maleke says “The idea centres around taking them off the streets and the perilous tendencies of an idle mind to give them a purpose, worthy of emulation, so they can also continue the trend when they are established” (Maleke 5). According to Crescent :

The Igbo Apprenticeship System is an unpaid business apprenticeship/incubator model that lets people learn business from a master for a certain number of year (5-8) depending and at the end of their apprenticeship tenure, gets cash infusion and support to start their own business. There is no salary paid during the time of the apprenticeship tenure but meals, clothing and t-fare are provided for by the master. When the years of learning are over, the boy is as good as his master (Crescent 29)

The master has absolute control over the apprentice. Kanu says that “The apprentice does not travel home without the consent of the master and he works hard to win the trust and favour of his master” (Kanu 17). In the Igbo Apprenticeship System (IAS), trustworthiness is a crucial

quality for entrepreneurs. Therefore, any instances of theft, misappropriation of funds, extravagant spending, or wastage of business finances during the apprenticeship years lead to the termination of the arrangement. Comparing the IAS with modern business incubation platforms, Alake observes that unlike contemporary business incubation programs, the IAS provides entrepreneurial development opportunities within a real environment characterized by high-stakes business, where profits and losses are paramount. According to Iwara et al. (2019), if an apprentice successfully passes the initial evaluation and is retained, they enter the nurturing stage, during which the master imparts knowledge about the competitive market system, market language, bargaining strategies, maximizing entrepreneurial opportunities, customer relationships, and handling innovation. As stated by Iwara et al.

The process of the approach involves three main stages: the talent identification stage, the learning period, and the settlement state. From the learning period, the apprentice is expected to live with the master, and occasionally help out with some domestic chores. The mentee sojourn and learn innovative skills from a mentor and in the end have reward with which to start an independent innovation. The main unique feature of this model stands out as important for the development of entrepreneurial adventures: the Igbo unique competitive cultural worldview, unique business network involving the apprentice and the other apprentices, availability of start-off capital for entrepreneurial activity. These features are the simple secrets of Igbo commercialism. As part of this model, they have ensured that new generations of Igbo traders are successful in entrepreneurial adventures (Iwara et al. 243).

The various phases of the apprenticeship program and its methodologies aid the apprentice in their personal and professional development. As the apprentice gains proficiency and expertise, their mentor gradually assigns them managerial and leadership responsibilities. This may include overseeing new branches on behalf of their mentor, engaging in negotiations, and representing their mentor in meetings with international counterparts. These opportunities foster trust, provide exposure, and contribute to the apprentice's confidence-building process. In the framework of the IAS system, the relationship between master and apprentice transcends mere instruction; it embodies a symbiotic dynamic where the apprentice assumes a pivotal role in the master's business expansion. The apprentice is tasked with actively contributing to the master's enterprise, thereby gaining trust and favor in return. This reciprocal investment yields progress for both parties, extending beyond the initial training phase of the apprentice. Even after the apprentice establishes their own venture, the master continues to extend support in various forms such as accommodation, meals, financial aid, and assistance with procurement. This ongoing support serves to ensure the apprentice's sustained success. Once stability is achieved, the apprentice is encouraged to pay forward the guidance received by mentoring others, thereby perpetuating a cycle of enrichment.

The Igbo apprenticeship system has faced criticism for its perceived lack of a stringent selection process for apprentices. Alake (2018) suggests that unlike contemporary incubation platforms, the Igbo apprenticeship system admits individuals without rigorous evaluation, thus occasionally accepting unconventional candidates with hopes of shaping their future. However, despite the absence of a formal selection process, the system swiftly identifies and dismisses apprentices who do not possess the requisite qualities to thrive in entrepreneurship shortly after their induction. Moreover, addressing the criticism regarding the absence of a rigorous selection process, Kanu (2019) contends that the system thrives due to the vigilance of apprentices, who understand that failure or detrimental actions impacting the master's business

would imperil their own future prospects, as the master may refrain from providing startup funds for their independent ventures.

In addition, Iwara et al. aver that there are usually no written laws and agreements that may be relied upon for legal action. This is especially true in situations when a master refuses to give the apprentice a take-off fund or when an apprentice defrauds his master. Kanu further elaborates that masters who unjustly withhold startup funds risk facing repercussions from the apprentice's spiritual guardian, the Chi, potentially leading to the downfall of their business. Additionally, such masters often fail to attract new apprentices, as their treatment of old apprentices has been widely known within their community for generations. Consequently, every master strives to provide startup capital to their apprentice upon completion of their service.

Chinweuba and Ezeugwu (2017) notes that the Igbo Apprenticeship System (IAS) tends to enlist apprentices at a tender age, potentially hindering the chances to formal education. However, their perspective on IAS's impact on apprentice's educational opportunities contrasts with the viewpoints expressed by Chrisent and Kanu (2019). According to Chrisent and Kanu (2019) "Igbos have a culture that frowns at the young roaming the streets in idleness, hence, the apprenticeship system helps to ensure that if a child is unable to go to school for any reason, instead of staying back at home and roaming about, he learns a trade" (Chrisent and Kanu 19). Majority of the adolescents who enter into the Igbo Apprenticeship System (IAS) do so on their own volition. Thus, socio-economic factors such as high unemployment rates, poverty, and academic struggles are prompting more young individuals to venture into entrepreneurship at an early age. Young individuals become discouraged after witnessing university graduates grappling with unemployment, poverty, and reliance on others for financial assistance. Furthermore, disillusionment sets in when observing degree holders facing both joblessness and financial insecurity, coupled with perceived limitations in their intellectual capacity to contribute meaningfully to familial or societal issues. These observations drive disenchanted youths to opt for entrepreneurship as an early career path. Prominent Igbo entrepreneurs such as Innoson, Coscharis, Ibeto, and Chikason, many of whom did not pursue higher education, serve as examples

Through the Imu-Ahia system, numerous Igbo families have taken charge of their financial destinies. Despite the Nigerian government's policy, led by Obafemi Awolowo, which limited Igbo individuals to a mere £20 for survival post-war, regardless of their pre-war bank savings, the Igbo community persisted. Despite these adversities, the Igbo continued to amass wealth through their apprenticeship network, a phenomenon that has intrigued and impressed many observers.

The apprenticeship system of commerce is uniquely Igbo, deeply ingrained in their societal structure and resilient ethos. While acknowledging that other cultural groups in Nigeria may have their own apprenticeship systems, it is evident that the *Imu-Olu* apprenticeship system possesses distinct characteristics that set it apart. Ikechukwu Kanu says that:

among the Yoruba of Western Nigeria, at the end of the apprenticeship of a candidate, which usually lasts between two to three years, he or she pays the master a 'freedom fee', and purchases drinks and throws a party according to celebrate the end of his or her apprenticeship. This is an important part of the apprenticeship which has to be done before the candidate can begin to trade officially. After this party, the candidate is presented

with a certificate to show that he or she has graduated. During these two or three years, the apprentice does not necessarily live with the master, and so the master does not necessarily have responsibility for the feeding, clothing and housing of the apprentice (Kanu 63).

The Igbo apprenticeship system differs significantly from other apprenticeship models. In the Igbo Apprenticeship System, the apprentice is typically taken as the biological offspring of the master. As a result, the apprentice leaves his parents' home to live under the tutelage and supervision of an established Igbo entrepreneur who assumes the role of the master, while the apprentice takes on the duties of the servant. Throughout the entire apprenticeship period as agreed by both parties, the apprentice performs all tasks delegated by the master, not only within the business premises but also in domestic settings, such as car washing, household cleaning, and laundry services for the master. The apprentice's freedom to visit his own family is contingent upon the master's consent, even if the apprentice's parents are nearby. Earning the trust and favor of the master is very important for the apprentice, as the master assesses his performance in both business expansion and non-business-related responsibilities. Upon a successful completion of the apprenticeship, the master provides the apprentice with startup capital to acquire or lease a shop, necessary equipment, and, in certain cases, accommodation for a specified period. Nonetheless, this financial assistance does not denote the cessation of collaboration between the master and the apprentice; rather, the master continues to aid the apprentice by facilitating procurement of goods at discounted rates, acknowledging the apprentice's constrained purchasing power.

By delegating diverse tasks to the apprentice, the master gets them ready for the forthcoming challenges. Despite the apparent rigor, this period exposes the apprentice to the realities they will confront, emphasizing the value of diligence. It is customary for the master to eventually establish a distinct business, possibly in another location, leaving the apprentice in charge of a branch. This arrangement not only fosters business expansion and enhanced profits for the master but also instills a sense of ownership, trust, and confidence in the apprentice, crucial for their future success.

Upon graduation and establishment, the apprentice assumes the responsibility of mentoring others, adhering to the pattern of selecting a new apprentice from their hometown. This cyclical model ensures sustained engagement of the younger generation and discourages idleness, reflecting the Igbo culture's aversion to idle youth. The apprentice system upholds two fundamental principles: keeping every Igbo child occupied to deter idleness and fostering mentorship by aiding business owners and transmitting knowledge to subsequent generations.

Despite the absence of formal regulations governing the master-apprentice relationship, this system has thrived over time due to several factors. Firstly, the apprentice proceeds cautiously, recognizing that their own future hinges on the prosperity of their master's business. Consequently, they diligently manage the business affairs to ensure mutual success. Secondly, the master is mindful of upholding a positive reputation within their community, as unjust treatment of an apprentice can result in backlash from relatives and neighbors. Thus, both parties fulfill their obligations to avoid adverse consequences.

Hence, the Igbo apprenticeship system surpasses a mere contractual agreement between master and apprentice; it is deeply embedded in community and familial bonds. Masters who mistreat their apprentices quickly gain notoriety, affecting their ability to attract new apprentices. These

reputations, whether positive or negative, endure for generations within the community or family, leading some masters to receive more applications for apprenticeship than others. The entire process, from initiation to settlement, operates on trust rather than written agreements or legal documents. Neuwirth (2018) underscores this, highlighting that the apprentice's family meets with the master at the beginning and end of the apprenticeship, emphasizing the importance of trust in the arrangement. Neuwirth argues that government intervention would only complicate this traditional system.

Therefore, this study investigates how Nollywood films contribute to sustainable development, with a specific focus on the movie *Afamefuna* and its depiction of the Igbo Apprenticeship System (IAS). The film highlights the need of recognizing the Igbo Apprenticeship System as a means of empowering youth and alleviating poverty in Nigeria.

Igbo Apprenticeship system as a tool for Youth Empowerment in *Afamefuna*

Afaemefuna, the movie earmarked for analysis was released in 2024 and its rendition is in indigenous Igbo language. The movie is starring Nollywood actors like Kanayo O. Kanayo, Alex Ekubo, Segun Arinze Alex Anyalo, Ebuka Udeh, Kamson Duru and Paul Nnadiokwe. Directed by Kayode Kasum. and produced by Olawunmi Fajemirokun and Kenechukwu Egbue the movie portrays the Igbo apprenticeship system. The movie opens with a festive celebration at Afamefuna's residence, amidst heavy drumming, singing and dancing. This ceremony was abruptly interrupted with the arrival of police officers, who got him arrested on the charges of murder. Afamefuna was taken to the police station where he is being interrogated for allegedly murdering Paul, who is a friend of his.

Through a flashback, the movie narrates the journey of young Igbo boys as they embark on the path to economic freedom through apprenticeship. Afamefuna's mother takes him to Odogwu, a successful businessman in the city, who deals on building materials to learn a trade. It is as a result of this journey for survival that Afamefuna comes to live under the care and supervision of Odogwu who becomes his master and he the servant. As it is expected in the cultural context of the movie, Odogwu educates Afam on the need for him to behave well in the city. Most of all, he strongly admonishes the new apprentice to ensure he doesn't steal his money. According to Odogwu, Afam would be handed over to the police if he ever steals from him. Naturally, one of the apprentices in Odogwu's shop, known as Paul Obiajulu takes it upon himself to give Afam orientations on how to go about the daily running of the business. Initially, Afam finds it difficult to cope with the excruciating tasks involved in the daily operations of the business, but as time goes on, he starts picking up and continues performing even better than some of the older apprentices in Odogwu's shop. True to his name, which literally means that a good name is better than money, Afam remains diligent and honest in all of his business dealings in Odogwu's shop. Afam attends to his master's needs and completes every task assigned to him. He serves his master not only in the shop or in business-related matters but also at home, performing duties such as washing cars, cleaning the house, and washing and ironing his master's clothes. This attitude of his endears him so much to his master, who speaks well about him on daily basis.

The movie vividly portrays the ambitions and sacrifices required by the eponymous hero to succeed and the inevitable betrayals that accompany the success. At a point in time, Odogwu's goods were confiscated by the port authority, and Odogwu has been told to pay the sum of ten million naira, before his goods could be released. Unfortunately, he doesn't have that huge of money. Afam summons the courage to go and see the head of clearing Department whose

intervention really helped in facilitating the release of Odogwu's goods. As a result of this development, Odogwu throws a party in the presence of family and friends so as to honour Afam for the worthwhile services he rendered to him. In the middle of this occasion, Odogwu beckons on Afam to kneel down, so that he can pray for him. Using kolanut and holt drink for pouring of libations, Odogwu blesses Afam for his commitment, loyalty and honesty throughout the years of his apprenticeship. This marks the end of Afam's apprenticeship. It is a significant part of the apprenticeship which has to be done before the candidate can begin to trade officially. Then, Afam is given a take-off fund for starting off his own shop.

Afam's ability to win the trust and favour of his master sparks off jealousy in Paul as he warns him to stay away from him. Afam was shocked at Paul's behavior and probes to find out what he must have done wrong. Paul feels betrayed and complains that Afam has taken a place in Odogwu's heart. Paul bitterly laments that he is the first to start running Odogwu's business before the arrival of Afam in the company. There is nothing Afam would tell him to make this hatred go away. The storyline of the movie somehow makes it clear that Odogwu's attitude towards Paul is his own way of punishing him for misleading his daughter. Paul had encouraged the young lady to steal the sum of one million naira and give him as a loan. She stole the money from his father, Odogwu eventually gets to know about this, because Paul absconded with the money and couldn't repay it.

Paul's hatred for Afam gets worse with each day that passes by when Afam marries Odogwu's daughter, who has been befriending Paul over the years. Afam is now successful in his own business. He owns a big company and boys work for him as apprentices. No wonder Maleke says "The idea centres around taking them off the streets and the perilous tendencies of an idle mind to give them a purpose, worthy of emulation, so they can also continue the trend when they are established" (Maleke 11) In the movie, Afam is able to create jobs in his company as a result of the fact that he has been well mobilized and trained in Odogwu's shop. Shamsu Abubakar says that "There is no doubt that an enlightened and effectively mobilized youth is a critical factor for good governance, economic stability, as well as growth and development (Abubakar 26).

In the middle of the flashback, the movie takes us back to the scene where he is being interrogated by a police officer, who probes to find out details about the Danladi group. At this point, Afam throws more light on the circumstances that led Paul into having business partnership with Danladi brothers. He recalls how Odogwu, their master has consistently turned down business offer with a notorious group popularly known as Danladi brothers.

Having felt cheated and betrayed, Paul angrily leaves Odogwu's company and goes ahead to join alliances in doing business with Danladi Brothers. He was then given the huge sum of three hundred million naira, which he fails to account for. The Danladi brothers threaten to eliminate Paul as a result of his financial irresponsibility and he approaches Afamefuna to assist him in settling the outstanding. Afamefuna, in his humble nature, promises to be paying five million naira to the Danladi brothers on monthly basis until, the bills are settled. Despite this, Paul remains an ingrate and even threatens to blackmail him each time Afam fails to give him money. For instance, in the movie, he threatens to expose the fact that the Afam is impotent and unable to sire children. This pushes Afam to consult a medical doctor, and after the DNA test has been conducted on his son, the result reveals that truly the child is not his biological son. Afam, eventually becomes fed up with Paul's constant threat and blackmail and contacts the Danladi brothers. Upon informing Danladi group that he will no longer pay the five million

naira on behalf of Paul for the month, this cartel of criminals ambushed Paul on his way back to his house and shot him dead.

The movie gives a hint on the patriarchal nature of the Igbo society also. At a point in the movie, his daughter questions Odogwu on the reason why the Igbo apprenticeship system fails to take women into consideration. The discriminatory nature of this society is quite oppressive in nature and does not support gender equality. Nkiruka Akaenyi says that:

The subjugation of women is pervasive across various communities and ethnic groups in Nigeria, where women are perceived as mere extensions of men, occupying a subservient status. Traditional institutions strongly reinforce gender differences, seeing women as inconsequential, the "insignificant other." This stereotypical view of women, to a large extent, influences the mindset of women, who often internalize and accept this position. Any effort to challenge this norm is met with resistance, with such women being seen as competing with men or trying to disrupt the natural order of things. Consequently, they are frequently labeled as stubborn, out of control, or ill-mannered (Akaenyi 86)

The film, *Afamefuna* showcases the Igbo apprenticeship system and at the same time it lays emphasis on the importance of mentorship, skill-acquisition, and community effort in empowering young individuals to overcome poverty and make significant contributions to society. Moreover, by portraying the perseverance and resolve of characters like Afamefuna, this movie instills a sense of optimism and potential in the youth, motivating them to chase their aspirations despite obstacles.

Conclusion

This study explores how Nollywood movies play a vital role in fostering economic growth by showcasing the Igbo apprenticeship system as a tool for youth empowerment and poverty alleviation. As seen in the movie, *Afamefuna*, the Igbo apprenticeship system highlights the need for skill acquisition, mentorship and community support in enabling young people to break the cycle of poverty and make a meaningful contribution to society.

Therefore, Nollywood movies serve as more than just a tool for entertainment; it becomes a powerful tool for social change and national development. Through the promotion of indigenous cultural practices and values in Nollywood films, it is made obvious that a sense of identity and belonging among Nigerian youth is important for creating a cohesive and secure nation. By celebrating the richness of Nigeria's cultural heritage, Nollywood contributes to the preservation of national unity and social harmony, thus strengthening the fabric of society and fostering economic growth.

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