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**Cross-cultural Perceptions of Paranormal Themes in
Nollywood: A Study of Thunderbolt among Nigerian
Viewers in Canada and Nigeria**

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Abstract

Film, a pop culture among Nigerians, plays a crucial role in socialisation and adaptation. The current recentering of indigenous cultural films in Nigeria necessitated this study, which investigated Nigerian viewers' perceptions of paranormal themes in Nollywood films while examining the impact of cross-country residency and the dynamics of cultural adaptation. This research explored the nuanced interplay between cultural backgrounds, acculturation experiences, and the interpretation of paranormal portrayals in the Nollywood film "Thunderbolt". The research, based on reception theory, involved four focus group discussions with Nigerian emigrants in Canada and residents of Nigeria. This study is qualitative, and participants were selected through a purposive sampling technique. The findings revealed that Nigerian viewers' enculturation and acculturation competencies influence the reception and production of meaning from paranormal depictions in Nollywood films. Most Canadian and Nigerian-based viewers believe in the paranormal depiction due to their bicultural competencies, personal experiences, belief systems, convictions, environmental influence, parental influence, and observations. The study significantly found that living abroad did not impact paranormal beliefs. Still, a few Nigerian Canadians believed the paranormal activities in "Thunderbolt" were superstitions, and remote acculturation could impact globalisation-based beliefs. The study emphasised the importance of media literacy, cultural sensitivity training, and cross-cultural dialogue platforms to promote understanding and respect for diverse media interpretations.

Keywords: *Acculturation, Cross-cultural perceptions, Enculturation, Nollywood, Paranormal themes, Thunderbolt.*

Introduction

Migration is a complex process that involves individuals adapting to new environments and reshaping their affective, cognitive, and behavioural dimensions. Film plays a crucial role in this process, reflecting societal norms and allowing individuals to perceive and understand their surroundings (Haynes, 2016). The film catalyses discussions around traditional beliefs and practices, prompting viewers to critically assess their cultural identity and values (Carr, 2022). Nigeria, a country with a rich cultural heritage, uses popular arts like Nollywood films to transmit indigenous themes, enculturating audiences and preserving the nation's unique cultural tapestry (Bryce, 2013). This indigenous cultural infusion in Nollywood films protects against foreign values and cultural invasion,

preserving the nation's unique identity (Adebajo, 2023). Nigerians often experience the "Japa" syndrome, a term referring to their final escape to developed economies, which involves cross-cultural adaptation to new environments, often leading to the loss of their native cultural identities, including beliefs, languages, values, traditions, and names (John-Igbiele, Fowosere, & Iyobhebe, 2022).

Meanwhile, Nigerian film industry, Nollywood, is the third most prolific after Hollywood and Bollywood. Its success is attributed to its high production volume, primarily through television, where drama is a significant programming element (Olanrewaju et al., 2021). Nollywood has become a significant entertainment source for Nigerians due to the declining popularity of cinemas, its affordability, and the availability of home videos and online streaming platforms (Alawode & Uduakobong, 2013).

Esan (2016) posits that identity is not about one's nameplate but about who they are becoming. As a connection point, media influences people's understanding of identity boundaries, recognising that identities are socially formed and evolve. From a formative age, interactions and socialisation compel human beings to cultivate the cultural values of their immediate birth environments (Simon, 2022). As the native culture of the environment evolves, individuals develop with emerging cultural trends. These two cultural adaptation and assimilation processes are called acculturation — the process through which emigrants partly adopt the features of the host culture. Enculturation is the process of socialisation people go through within the perimeter of their original cultures (Kim, 2001).

The cultural environment and process within which human beings exist and grow are called enculturation by anthropologists and socialisation by sociologists. Both as a kid and an adult, man develops competency in his culture, internalises it and becomes fully enculturated through conscious and unconscious conditioning. Enculturation takes place before conception and up until death. The enculturating process produces the cultural identity of individuals within society (Grunland & Mayers, 2010).

Acculturation is primarily driven by direct contact with dominant social structures, but popular arts like film and television drive social learning and consumer acculturation (O'Guinn, Faber, & Rice, 1985). Nollywood success is projected to have captured the attention of Africans living abroad. Its themes are in tandem with the languages, cultures, traditions, and religions that travelled with Nigerian immigrants to foreign lands (Akpan & Ikuelogbon, 2023). Nollywood films have brought Nigerian

heritages to foreign host communities, preserving and updating their languages and cultures. However, host communities have acquired new cultures, as Nigerians who emigrated brought regional entertainment preferences and helped disseminate information. This has led to the preservation of cultural artefacts and the spread of information among different cultures (Abodunrin & Akinola, 2019).

Due to the tension between technology and traditional worldviews, technocracy does not significantly impact Africans in the diaspora. Nollywood reflects this by highlighting the influence of localism and globalisation on culture. Nigerian immigrants exhibit bicultural identities, with the support of Nollywood's unique contribution to edutainment, addressing socio-cultural themes in its native languages (Musa, 2019). The proliferation of Nollywood films across borders, driven by modern technologies and streaming platforms, has impacted Nigerians' enculturation and acculturation in the diaspora and at home (Alozie, 2022). This research examines the impact of Nollywood films, specifically *Thunderbolt*, on the belief in paranormal phenomena among Nigerian viewers in Nigeria and Canada. The Nigerian film industry, known for supernatural themes and African spiritual beliefs, has gained global popularity, influencing individuals' adaptability to new cultural contexts and altering their affective, cognitive, and behavioural dimensions (Amonyeye & Agbo, 2022). Nigeria's film industry has equally faced criticism for portraying paranormal phenomena in films like *Thunderbolt*. Hence, a comprehensive study is needed to understand the relationship between migration and cultural adaptation.

This study examines how enculturation and acculturation influence the reception and belief in paranormal-induced Nollywood film (*Thunderbolt*) among Nigerians in Canada and Nigeria. This qualitative research employed focus group discussion (FGD) to collect data. The participants were asked how their residencies influence their beliefs in paranormal activities as espoused in *Thunderbolt* and their perceptions of such portrayals. The findings of this study shed light on the relationship between media exposure and cultural adaptation. Furthermore, the study contributes to the broader discussion of how entertainment media can shape cultural beliefs and practices. Understanding the impact of *Thunderbolt* and similar films can provide valuable insights for filmmakers, policymakers, and researchers interested in the cultural implications of media content. This study analyses *Thunderbolt*, a Nollywood film with paranormal themes, recognising potential biases. The findings may not

apply universally to other films, as the narrative may introduce unique and peculiar cultural elements. Contextual awareness is prioritised to address this, emphasising the film's unique attributes. The study also emphasises participant diversity, capturing diverse perspectives from diverse cultural backgrounds to mitigate biases and ensure a comprehensive representation of viewpoints.

Background of Thunderbolt

Thunderbolt, produced in 2000 by one of Africa's foremost auteurs and cinematographers, is the story of a young couple from different Nigerian tribes. The husband, who suspects his wife (Ngozi) of promiscuity, acts on the advice of his friends to secretly inflict her with a diabolic charm known as magun (Thunderbolt). Magun, if placed on a woman and she makes love with another man, the man dies instantly. If she is innocent and unable to sleep with any man, the woman dies after nine days. The apparition of Ngozi's grandmother appears and informs her of imminent death. Ngozi must consult a babalawo (a traditional native doctor) for cleansing, after which a man must make love to her for final purification. A medical doctor friend who does not believe in magun volunteers to help prove that paranormal belief does not exist. For the interventions of the babalawos, he is resurrected. The film – Thunderbolt – is also a test between orthodox and alternative medicine.

Literature Review

The literature review offers an overview of the study area, Nigerian audience, reception of Nollywood, reception and paranormal depiction in films, paranormal portrayals, and viewer acculturation. Several studies exist on paranormal dimensions and depictions in Nollywood films by Nigerians and foreign scholars. Some studies suggest that Nollywood's portrayal of paranormal activities influences Nigerians' global worldview, with Western-educated Nigerians reacting differently to these depictions. Another school of thought believes Nollywood's paranormal themes are accepted without prejudice or borders.

Nigerian Audience and Reception of Nollywood Films

Emasealu (2008) explains that the audience, the final consumer of a work of art, remains important from prehistoric to contemporary times. In his

prefatory remarks, Hyginus Ekwuazi (2011) narrates that audiences are usually considered before filmmakers decide on what gratification to infuse into a film and the nature of the film. As audience reception of film text is essential, so is the influence of the place of residency and the film's central dramatic problem (CDP). Endong (2022) confirms that the Nollywood film culture has grown significantly and is now globally popular, serving as a valuable source of information about Nigeria for foreign audiences as it has experienced significant transnationalisation.

Abodunrin and Akinola (2019) outline that Nigerian audiences accept Nollywood's cultural identity due to language, history, and technology. English subtitles and mixed titles make it popular on African and Western screens, attracting diverse audiences worldwide with real-life stories. Musa (2019) argues that "glocalisation" in film distribution challenges the homogeneous identification of cultural elements and adapts to global contexts while being sensitive to local requirements. He highlights Nollywood films' contribution to global pop culture and Nigeria's socio-cultural story in ways that natives, diaspora, and non-Africans can understand (Musa, 2019). Kankaria and Banerjee (2020) study how polyphonic and multivocal transnationalism embraces global popular culture, integrating it with local concerns and goals. They suggest that there may not be a significant difference in the acceptance and consumption of paranormal depictions in Nollywood films between Nigerian emigrants and locals. Abodunrin and Akinola (2019) argue that an individual's identity is shaped by their cultural and environmental conditioning and their understanding of the world, influenced by various historical, genetic, biological, social, and economic factors. Radway (1984) further submits that several factors, including religious beliefs, social trends, media promotion, emotional needs, environmental influence, and cognitive sophistication, influence the reception and meaning production of paranormal claims.

Reception and Paranormal Depiction in Films

Xie et al. (2022) explain that Stuart Hall's "Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse" laid the groundwork for film reception studies, emphasising viewers' response and acceptance of paranormal film content production, circulation, usage, and reproduction. Esan (2016) contends that watching films is not a mindless activity. Audiences actively analyse mediated experiences, visualising themselves and their world, in contrast to the beliefs

that viewers are uncritical in the early media effects model or impervious pleasure seekers in the uses and gratifications models.

Taiwo (2022) examines the culture of translation services in Yoruba-inspired films, revealing that incorrect words, particularly subtitling and simultaneous translations, significantly impact filmic interactions. Martin's 2019 study reveals that people from different cultural backgrounds have varying psychological reactions to paranormal films. It suggests that those from collectivistic cultures may express greater fear regarding how paranormal films are received, perceived, experienced, and enjoyed. Hahner, Varda and Wilson (2013) argue that paranormal films can challenge conventional norms and address cultural tensions related to consumption. They challenge the domestic compulsion to consume and represent the relentless repetition of capitalism. The study also challenges stereotypes about the Nigerian film industry as "pagan or voodoo" due to its unique themes. Nollywood films have become a cultural force, supporting diaspora Nigerians and promoting glocalisation. This has made Nigeria's films the most significant global cultural export, attracting lovers of original creative expression.

Reception theory highlights the role of cultural context in media consumption and how viewers from diverse backgrounds interact with paranormal elements, which is relevant to research (Schmälzle & Huskey, 2023). This theory is applied to research, the paranormal elements in the Nollywood film "Thunderbolt" and how viewers' interpretations are linked to their negotiation of cultural identity during acculturation. Reception theory identifies three central reading positions: dominant or preferred, negotiated, and oppositional readings (G'aniyevna, 2023). Using Stuart Hall's encoding and decoding model, researchers can analyse viewers' acceptance, reinterpretation, or rejection of paranormal elements in films. Reception theory emphasises the importance of considering cultural context and how viewers from diverse backgrounds engage with these elements, influencing their acculturation journey. This framework helps in understanding the cultural context of media consumption. The reception theory was used as a theoretical framework to interpret the findings and investigate the participants' responses.

Method

Participant Selection

Purposive sampling was used for participant selection to ensure diverse views on the paranormal elements in Thunderbolt and their impact on acculturation. Participants were chosen based on familiarity with Nollywood films and in-depth criteria like age, gender, residence in Canada, and region of origin within Nigeria to account for potential variations in acculturation experiences and cultural backgrounds.

Data Collection

The study utilised focus group discussions (FGDs) to collect data from four focus groups, each comprising eight participants from Nigeria and Canada. The study utilised focus group discussions (FGDs) as the primary method for data collection due to their effectiveness in examining intricate perceptions and cultural dynamics.

Focus group discussions (FGDs) were used for data collection, conducted via Zoom's video conferencing system, with participants' consent obtained. Ethical considerations were prioritised, and participants were informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks. Data anonymity was maintained to ensure privacy and voluntary participation. The study used videotaped and transcribed FGDs to analyse participants' perceptions of Thunderbolt, their acculturation experiences, and the influence of Nollywood films on their cultural adaptation. Zoom enabled the inclusion of participants from diverse geographical locations, thereby enhancing the diversity of perspectives.

The selection of Canada is based on the nation's multiculturalism (Koopmans, 2013; Berry, 2013), the exhibition of Nollywood films on Canadian cinema screens, collaboration with Nollywood stakeholders, and the celebration of Nollywood achievements (Abu, 2022; Bloor, 2022). Canada's multiculturalism and diverse society make it an ideal study location for exploring how viewers from diverse cultural backgrounds engage with Nollywood films, especially those with paranormal elements, through its presence in cinemas and festivals. Statistically, the African Polling Institute (2020) lists Canada (97%) ahead of the United States (55%) and the United Kingdom (43%), Australia (42%), Germany (23%), Spain (6%), Italy (3%), and South Africa (1%) as the destination countries for Nigerian immigrants.

Data Analysis

The study used NVivo 12 for data organisation and coding transcripts using a homogeneous technique to identify recurring themes. A member check and inter-rater evaluations were done to ensure accuracy, and triangulation of data sources was used to enhance the study's validity, trustworthiness, and reliability.

Analysis and Findings

Audience's Country of Residency as the Determinant of Belief in the Paranormal Depictions in Thunderbolt (Canada)

The acculturation level of Nigerian participants in Canada who might have migrated or were born in Canada and are currently residing in Toronto was investigated by examining their beliefs in paranormal dimensions as depicted in the Nollywood film Thunderbolt. The presumption of change in cultural taste and preference is tied to direct or indirect exposure to culturally different environments. The Canadian participants' exposure to Thunderbolt generated themes categorised into two responses: (i) "NO" with four themes: association, belief system, personal experience, and observation, and two sub-themes – culture and religiosity. (ii) "YES" with three themes: personal conviction, belief system, and superstition, and one sub-theme – culture – as shown in Table 1:

The audience's country of residency determines the belief in paranormal depiction in <i>Thunderbolt</i> (Canada)	Main Themes	Sub-themes	Sources
	NO		
	Association with social groups		*FGD
	Belief system	* Culture *Religiosity	*FGD
	Personal experience/ Observations		*FGD
	YES		

	Personal conviction		*FGD
	Belief system	*Culture	*FGD
	Superstition		*FGD

Table 1: The audience's country of residency determines the belief in paranormal depictions in *Thunderbolt* (Canada)

The question directed the participants to answer "Yes" or "No" and explain their options. Significantly, more than 80% of the participants in this category ticked "No"; living abroad has not changed anything about their beliefs in paranormal phenomena, as depicted in *Thunderbolt*.

Continuous social interaction and association with Nigerians in Canada strengthen the enculturated worldviews of the participants about paranormal depictions in *Thunderbolt*. Worshipping at Nigerian-owned or dominated religious centres, attending Nigeria's social functions, and mingling with Nigerians at different fora continue to nurture the cultural affinity that stems from the participants' native identity. Participant 1 in Group 2 explained:

... where I am living right now has not affected my belief. Why? Because I see myself living among my fellow Nigerians. I still go to Nigerian churches. I still go to Nigerian parties. When somebody travels to Nigeria to show his wealth, they can return to Canada and lose their job if they are not careful. So, I still believe in many things, as depicted in the film, because I refuse to detach myself from tradition. (P1: GP2)

Participant 3 in the same group shares similar sentiments. Despite being open to different worldviews, the interactivity with the Nigerian expat has tremendously influenced the need to relate to and appreciate *Thunderbolt*'s paranormalities.

Similarly, the belief systems of individuals influence their interactions with film texts, which could be a repository of cultural or religious influences. Indigenous cultural influence is enculturated from birth and grows with individuals, making it a personal and biological value. Cultural relativism frames practices and beliefs for everything that is considered culture. What is culturally obtainable in Nigeria is equally evident in Canada, as put forward by a participant. For instance, he believes there are witches and wizards in Canada, despite some Nigerian domesticated beliefs about paranormal activities. However, referencing

one of the participants who detested the portrayals in Thunderbolt, Participant One claimed that Canadian species of witches and wizards are more compassionate compared to their Nigerian counterparts:

Here in Canada, a particular set of people call themselves witches and wizards, and they do exist. This guy says he has not seen any. I wish I could meet him, and I will take him somewhere downtown where they have their meetings. However, the difference between our version of witches and wizards and the white folks is that they are not as wicked as we black back home. (P1. GP1).

Living in Canada, Nigerian immigrants have developed a cultural bulwark against cultural erosion due to their rich native cultural values. This defence mechanism allows them to negotiate foreign cultural imperatives, select beneficial ones, and potentially influence their environment. Participant 6 in Group 2, a cultural ambassador and teacher in Canada, believes she has been culturally inoculated enough to defend her culture despite the expected acculturation tendencies of Canadians.

I seek knowledge and am inquisitive; you can no longer sell lies to me. If it does not make sense, I am dropping it. Moreover, I am dropping it respectfully. So, my living abroad has not changed anything about my belief in what I have seen in Thunderbolt, but my horizon is vast now. (P6: GP2).

Religious affiliation significantly influences Nigerian emigrants' reception, interpretation, acceptance, and application of cultural products. While spiritual involvement may vary, most Nigerians engage in religious dualism. Participants 2 and 4 in Group 2 attributed Canada's inability to change paranormal beliefs to being a Christian. Participants 2 and 4 stated:

I have seen and heard about juju, voodoo, and all this stuff and have not attended school here. I know and exercise critical thought as a Christian. However, I fear knowing too much. (P2:GP2)

...even being a Christian is paranormal, which is supernatural. So generally, no, it has not changed. (P4: GP2).

Moreover, personal experience and observation significantly shape an individual's belief in paranormal phenomena, as reflected in Thunderbolt.

This belief is influenced by direct involvement in or eyewitness accounts of paranormal activities. The findings of this study in Toronto, Canada, suggest that traditional science cannot prove or develop empirical evidence to support supernatural activities, making them paranormal and real. The question remains whether the paranormal activities are too high for science to decipher or if scientists have not developed devices capable of measuring the efficacy of paranormal claims. The lack of scientific evidence to prove the veracity of paranormal claims renders them null and void. The recaps of participants P5, GP2, P6, GP2, and P5, GP2 are graphically represented in the experience of Participant 4:

I have seen someone with a charmed ring that commanded a person to eat grass, and the person started eating grass; I have witnessed that with my two eyes open. I have seen them apply a solution, and the person stopped eating the grass. Although there has not been any scientific evidence for that, and it has not been documented, it still does not preclude that paranormal activities exist; that is why it is paranormal because it is not explainable. Has living abroad altered the fact that there is a money ritual, and people are still doing it to date? Has my living abroad changed the existence of Magun as depicted in *Thunderbolt*? Even here abroad, scientists have no explanations for haunted houses. Does that make the claims valid? (P4: GP1).

Participants in this study subscribed to the fact that their belief system, particularly in Nigeria, influenced their beliefs in paranormal phenomena, as depicted in *Thunderbolt*, despite living in Canada. However, they also noted that cultural adaptation should align with locations and peculiarities. Participant 6 in Group 1 believed paranormal phenomena are prevalent in Nigeria due to faith, culture, belief system, and understanding. However, she canvassed for regional and peculiar cultural understanding. The belief system in Canada should determine paranormalities in Canada, which is valid for Nigeria. As a Nigerian in Nigeria, she believes in the paranormal existence depicted in the film “*Thunderbolt*”. However, as a Nigerian in Canada, she explained:

I think it is about the belief system of Nigeria and where you are at a given time. Like if you are told not to do something, either in Nigeria or here in Canada, if you do it, there is a countermeasure for it. So, I think, yeah, if I were in Nigeria, I would hold on to our beliefs because of our culture, faith, and religion. However, here abroad, we believe everything in the Western world happens differently. Here in Canada, I also believe

it does not exist. So, I would say, if I were in Nigeria, yes, I believe, but outside Nigeria, I do not believe. (P6: GP1)

In contradiction to the participants earlier discussed, who firmly believed that living abroad has not changed their beliefs in paranormal activities as depicted in *Thunderbolt*, the second set of participants, though in the minority, agreed that residing in Canada has changed their worldviews about paranormal depictions. These individuals hold a sacrosanct stance until superior arguments or convictions are presented, possibly due to external factors like interaction with foreign individuals or groups. Participants 3 in Group 1 and 8 in Group 2 are subliminally acculturated or culturally integrated, believing living in Canada has altered their cultural subscription; otherwise, they do not believe in paranormal activities. Participant 3 believes living abroad has exposed him to situations that have made him doubt paranormal experiences. Participant 8 claimed that:

No average man would inflict his wife with deadly charms to deter promiscuity, as “*Thunderbolt*” wants us to believe. Nobody would run to gods for help when everything was provided. (P8: GP2)

In furtherance of their arguments, the participants claimed that some myths that cannot be attributed to logical understanding have become part of indigenous culture and norms in Nigerian society. Some are figments of the promoter's imagination, while others are religiously positioned to instil fear and whip their believers into cultural conformity. Having experienced such “revered” situations that were tagged abominations back home in Canada without any repercussions, the participants concluded that there is nothing like *thunderbolt*; those situations and enactments in the film are mere superstitions. Participant 2 in Group 1 cited a personal example:

In Nigeria, once a woman gives birth, she is not supposed to go out until after 40 days. When making babies in Canada, you must do some groceries, return to the hospital for immunisation, and do everything else. I gave birth today; I was already out, like the fourth or fifth day. Now that I have done the unimaginable in Nigeria's context, what has happened to me? Same for the depictions in “*Thunderbolt*”; they are mere superstitions (P2: GP1)

Still, on childbirth, Participant 3 in Group 1 and Participant 7 in Group 2 in this study compared Nigeria and Canada, respectively, emphasising the superstition associated with the process. They argued that hospitals in

Canada handle the placenta, unlike in Nigeria, where the father is responsible for disposing of it as a "spiritual" rite. This contrasts with the Canadian approach, where nothing untoward happens to the children.

In Nigeria, they say something terrible will happen to a child if you do not bury the placenta; there is nothing like that here in Canada. They will not even give you the placenta from the hospital; they will flush it themselves or put in chemicals. Living abroad has changed my perception of the paranormal entirely. (P3: GP1)

I went around with my husband, carrying a seven-month pregnancy, and a white woman touched my baby bump; I screamed. My husband gave me that cut eye. So, we talked about it in the car later; why would she touch my baby? Nobody would have done that to me back in Nigeria because there would be a spiritual interpretation. (P7: GP2)

Significantly, the Canada-based Nigerians sampled disagreed that their new environment influenced their reception of paranormal dimensions in Thunderbolt.

Audience's Country of Residency as the Determinant of Belief in the Paranormal Depictions in Thunderbolt (Nigeria)

Cultural globalisation, technocracy, and emerging technologies are imminent threats to indigenous societal enculturation and socialisation, especially in Africa. The assumption that people's cultural identities are conspicuously discernible and influenced by their cultural environment of birth, language, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity/race, mental/physical abilities, age, social status, etc., and mediated by popular arts such as film is analysed, using Nigerians residing in Nigeria. Table 2 represents the main and sub-themes generated from the participants' data on how the audience's country of abode determines the belief in paranormalised "Thunderbolt" among Nigerians in Nigeria.

Table 2: Audience's country of residency as the determinant of belief in the paranormal depictions in Thunderbolt (Nigeria)

Audience's Country of Residency as the Determinant of Belief in the Paranormal Depictions in Thunderbolt (Nigeria)	Main Themes	Sub-themes	Sources
	YES		
	Belief system	*Culture *Parental Influence *Religiosity *Spirituality	*FGD
	Environmental influence		*FGD
	Personal experience/ Observations		*FGD
	Personal conviction		*FGD

Any given society's belief structure is directly interconnected to the cosmology rooted in the peculiarity and understanding of its immediate cultural environment. Subsequently, the environment nurtures the "communality" of the people believed to be influenced by what they see, hear, and observe others do. The socio-cultural belief is one of the main themes generated for the believability of paranormal activities in Thunderbolt among the participants residing in Nigeria. The belief system is connected to the cultural geography and idioculture of the individuals in their natural habitation.

Experiential learning through cultural transmission influences immersive experiences and cultural exposure. One such endogenous

culture in Southwest Nigeria positions mothers as goddesses that must be revered. The mother goddesses have protective, preventive, and destructive powers, depending on their vicissitudes. The mother goddess theory is attributed to the apparition of Ngozi's grandmother, warning her of the imminent calamity in *Thunderbolt*. The mothers are culturally believed to be the next to their children after Almighty God, and whatever they proclaim about a child comes into existence immediately. Therefore, the mothers, being the carriers of pregnancy and bearers of the pains of the child's labour, are considered orisas, deities, or goddesses who must not be allowed to curse or have cause to be upset. Participant 1, Group 3, firmly believed that culture significantly influenced his belief in paranormal existence and the role of mothers in real life.

In Yoruba culture, so shall it be if a mother strips herself naked and rains curse on any child. We cannot connect this link scientifically (As in *ki lo kan ka bora si ihoho, ati epe*), but whatever the woman says, it will happen. Many experiences are bound to strengthen our belief in paranormal phenomena. (P1:GP3)

Parents and media, including film, play a major role in socialisation, as children often imitate their parents' values and beliefs — this influence, whether spiritual, religious, or virtuous, significantly shapes a child's formation. Participant 7 in Group 3 is strengthened by what she learnt directly from her parents:

When we watched a movie with my mum, she was always quick to relate to similar occurrences because my father was diabolic. She teaches us paranormal instances. My mum always has a story or a history to tell. Hearing and experiencing all those things, I believe so much in paranormal phenomena, which are real, as shown in *Thunderbolt*. (P7: GP3)

Also, religiosity in Nigeria is considered an extension of social life. The degree of involvement and devotion may differ; Nigerians are not exempted from religious affinity, sects, doctrines, and other related groupings. Subscriptions to different faiths, such as Christianity, Islam, traditional worship, and others, determine individuals' worldviews and relationships. In some homes, as Participant 1 put it, parents emphasise learning religious tenets and practices rather than formal education.

There is a thin line between religiosity and spirituality. While spirituality

could be more intense in paranormal phenomena, religiosity mostly leads to spirituality. A few Nigerians may not subscribe to any religious affiliation, but they always believe there is one supreme power that requires constant reverence and appeasement. Participants 1, 2, and 3 in Group 3 agreed that their place of abode, Nigeria, was responsible for their beliefs in the paranormal. They also pointed to spirituality as a factor responsible for their beliefs.

Participant 4's experience of religiosity and spirituality encapsulates others' spiritual influences from the traditional religion. She attributed her belief in paranormal phenomena in 'Thunderbolt' to living in Nigeria and witnessing events that made her undoubtedly a believer in some seemingly magical moments:

While growing up in the village, there was this Agemo festival. When the Agemo is dancing, we would first be amazed at how a mere mat can dance without support. You would see it floating in the air, coming up and down, and then wonder if somebody was in this thing. Scientifically, it cannot be proven, but supernatural powers control it in the real sense. (P4: GP3)

Environmental influence is pivotal to individuals' belief in paranormal existence. Though contestable, cultural determinism opines that we are culturally shaped and groomed by the influence of our immediate environment and not genetics. In Group 4, two participants gave two instances of events that recently happened within their environments that could not be tagged as ordinary. Participant 5 shared a tale of a youth who resolved to use diabolical means (Yahoo +) to obtain money from vulnerable online targets but went berserk because the charm backfired. Participant 7 narrated the story of a drowned young boy who was said to have been pulled by the river goddess because he was spiritually connected to the waters. The happenings around the two participants' immediate environments in Nigeria assisted them in decoding the paranormal belief portrayals in 'Thunderbolt'.

A lengthy but recent story shared by Participant 4 in Group 4 considered what she saw and heard vital to her easy comprehension of paranormal activities in 'Thunderbolt'. She also clarified that these bizarre stories had become regular happenings within Nigerian society and did not need extra effort to convince people that the paranormal was real. Without any rationale, Participant 6 in Group 3 aptly agreed that the country of abode influences paranormal beliefs. Her situation may not be

disconnected from subliminal and accumulated paranormal influences. She posited that all the depictions in *Thunderbolt* are real and practicable, although she cannot substantiate her fact or attribute reasons to her stance.

The study reveals that enculturation, environmental factors, and personal convictions influence Nigerians' beliefs in paranormal phenomena. It explores how migration, through reception theory, facilitates cross-cultural adaptation, and influences cultural beliefs.

Discussion and Interpretation

Acculturation of Nigerian Emigrants and Belief in the Paranormal Depictions in Thunderbolt

Cultural influence undoubtedly affects individuals' decoding of film texts and the production of meaning, regardless of the place of residency (Hall, 2006; Hall et al., 2003; Elliott; Xie et al., 2022). In this study, most of the participants from Canada believe that their current country of residency does not change their beliefs in the paranormal activities depicted in *Thunderbolt* because of their native cultural knowledge and cognitive sophistication, which inoculated them against acculturation (Musa, 2019; Abodunrin & Akinola, 2019). It is rare for Nigerians not to subscribe to a religious and spiritual belief system that is culturally engraved on their identities. Paranormal is spiritual, religious, and vice versa (Schofield et al., 2016). Regarding religiosity, spirituality, and paranormality, Nigerians are naturally "culturally prejudiced" (Kyriakakis, 2012, p.133). Nigeria's "spiritual elites" live by cultural understanding regardless of their affiliations with the perceived "imported religions".

Meanwhile, the category of Nigerian Canadian audience (paranormal active, Nistor, 2020) that attributed continuous engagements with Nigerian expats, personal experience, and belief systems as reasons adduced to their beliefs in paranormal depiction as portrayed in *Thunderbolt* is not immune to acculturation. Such a category could be reinterpreting the dominant culture to the codes of its native culture (Santos-Phillips, 2010) or experiencing "selective acculturation" from the affective, behavioural, or cognitive acculturation's areas of individual change (Sial & Iqbal, 2022). This category could be entrapped in the same development between globalisation-based and immigration-based acculturation (Hall, 2006; Hall et al., 2003). The globalisation of film penetrations promotes cultural reinforcement and fortification of native culture. On the other side,

globalisation encourages "remote acculturation". At the same time, immigration-based acculturation allows the audience to negotiate mediated or direct dominant cultures to retain behavioural changes in the acculturation framework, such as linguistics, religion, food, clothing, and cultural identity (Musa, 2019; Kankaria & Banerjee, 2020; Sial & Iqbal, 2022).

Ultimately, the participants' stance that residing in Canada has not changed their beliefs in the paranormal, as depicted in *Thunderbolt*, spoke to the fact that Africans who have emigrated to other countries have brought their preferences for regional entertainment with them (Musa, 2019; Abodunrin & Akinola, 2019). Nigerian immigrants successfully sieved and adapted foreign cultural items according to their needs even when exposed to them, frustrating the invasion of Western values and cultural imperialism (Hall, 2003; Musa, 2019). However, the quality of combining acculturation and enculturation is considered bicultural expertise in a majority and a minority culture or multicultural in a majority and multiple minority cultures (Blume, 2013).

The Canadian participants also align with the findings of Onuzulike (2016), Ugochukwu (2009, 2011, 2017), and Onyenakeya et al. (2017), whose studies centred on the audience reception of Nollywood among Nigerians in the Diaspora. Despite migration, participants' beliefs in paranormal depictions in Nollywood films are influenced by their cultural adaptation, indicating that their strong connection to their Nigerian roots remains. In contrast, three out of the 16 participants argued that they had been acculturated to Canadian orientations and found most paranormal depictions in *Thunderbolt* to be superstitious. These participants' "culture shift" does not mean they are deculturised or paranormal inactive (Nistor, 2020), as acculturation does not erase the original native culture but adds to it from the "Other" culture (Santos-Phillips, 2010, p. 216). The category of these Nigerian viewers and emigrants only experience integrated cross-cultural adaptation. Specifically, the Nigerians could be "experiencing a degree of existential alertness" (Kim, 2001, p. 5). However, the insignificant difference between the participants affected by acculturation is in line with Hall's negotiated readings in reception theory (Hall et al., 1980).

Enculturation of Nigerians and Belief in the Paranormal Depictions in Thunderbolt

As reflected in *Thunderbolt*, participants in Nigeria across the FGD groups unanimously agreed that the country of residence is responsible for

their beliefs in paranormal phenomena. They attributed their reasons to belief systems that cut across cultures (Abodunrin & Akinola, 2019; Etta et al., 2016; Ezenagu, 2020), parental influence (Watt, Watson, & Wilson, 2007), and religiosity and spirituality (Schofield et al., 2016). According to African scholars, the Nigerian participants' belief in paranormal phenomena is influenced by their environment. Their identity is shaped by historical, cultural, genetic, biological, social, and economic frameworks, which form a network of connections and functional linkages (Watt et al., 2006).

Aside from observational or social learning enculturation that could be responsible for the audiences' belief in paranormal activities, Nollywood film exposure enculturates and protects Nigerian audiences with constant paranormal narratives and tropes. Notably, the paranormal portrayal in *Thunderbolt* is representative, making it easier to achieve a high degree of dominant reception (Hall, 1980 & 1997). Enculturative mental frameworks, such as languages, concepts, categories, thought imagery, and representation, are used by various classes and social groupings to define and render comprehension of how society functions (Decherney & Sender, 2018).

The findings of this study show that participants from Canada and Nigeria demonstrated diverse interpretations of the paranormal elements in *Thunderbolt*, highlighting audiences' active role in decoding media messages based on their cultural frameworks. The study also highlights the role of mediation in shaping participants' beliefs about paranormal phenomena, as they are mediated through their own cultural experiences, social networks, and personal observations. The study highlights the influence of media, particularly Nollywood films, on reinforcing and shaping cultural identity. Nigerian emigrants use Nollywood films to reinforce their cultural beliefs and preferences in their new contexts. The complex interplay between globalisation, acculturation, and audience responses corresponds to reception theory's recognition of the global spread of media content and its impact on local cultures. The varied responses among participants to the paranormal elements in the case film (*Thunderbolt*) underscore the central tenet of reception theory: that media content is open to multiple interpretations.

Broader Implication and Generality

The study examines cultural and acculturation dynamics in Nigerian

audiences in Canada and Nigeria, with implications for the Nigerian diaspora and film industries. It highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity in media content, including paranormal depictions, and the need for filmmakers to understand their target audience and create content that respects diverse cultural beliefs. The study also highlights the role of personal experiences, belief systems, environmental influences, and observations in shaping participants' beliefs. Media literacy programmes and cultural sensitivity training are recommended to foster cross-cultural understanding. The findings have significant implications for filmmakers, policymakers, and researchers interested in the cultural dimensions of media content.

Conclusion

The study established that the reception and "meaning production" of paranormal depictions in Nollywood films are functions of the enculturation and acculturation of Nigerian viewers. Undoubtedly, Nigerians are culturally prejudiced as they migrate to every part of the world with their native cultural values and popular entertainment arts to sustain their identity. Contrary to the notion that globalisation and technocracy are inimical to preserving Nigerian culture, the concept of glocalisation has helped selective acculturation change. Regardless of the place of residency during film-text interactions, Nigerians are encultured to negotiate dominant cross-cultural invasions through cultural knowledge, self-concept, and cognitive sophistication. Consequently, paranomalised activities are enculturated with ideals and engrained in the social learning structure. Acculturation and enculturation are common for all individuals, regardless of background or location. The interface between immigration and globalisation can be a double-edged sword, with "remote acculturation" potentially impacting enculturated individuals in their native homes. A new scale should be developed to analyse acculturation levels of Nigerians abroad and remotely, and filmmakers should receive cultural sensitivity training to understand audience reception. Implementing contextual content warnings for supernatural elements can enhance cross-cultural understanding. Media literacy programmes should focus on cultural influences and acculturation, and collaboration with cultural experts can lead to accurate and dignifying supernatural portrayals.

Potential Biases and Limitations of the Study

The study focuses on the in-depth analysis of the film "Thunderbolt" (2000) but acknowledges potential biases due to its singular focus. The findings may not be generalisable to a broader range of Nollywood films with paranormal themes. The research aims for a detailed exploration rather than a comprehensive survey of all relevant films.

The findings of the study may be influenced by online focus group discussions and the choice of Thunderbolt as the primary film, potentially leading to participant bias. Although it offers insights into paranormal elements and acculturation, its scope is limited to this film. Future research should expand the selection of Nollywood films to better understand the cultural impact of diverse films within the genre, thereby enhancing the overall understanding of the subject matter.

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