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FILM AS A MEDUIM FOR SOCIO-CULTURAL CHANGE: *THE REMNANT* AND *ESEMSEM* IN REVIEW

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Abstract

This study investigates 'Film as a Medium for Socio-cultural Change: The Remnant and Esemsem in Review'. The effectiveness of film as an agent of socio-cultural change via influencing public attitudes and fostering social transformation amidst challenges like accessibility, interpretation, and commercial viability. Rooted in Post-Colonial Theory and Cultural Studies Theory, the research examines how these films address critical issues such as poverty, gender roles, cultural identity, and religious hypocrisy, reflecting and challenging societal norms in contemporary Nigerian society. Employing a qualitative methodology, including content analysis and interviews with directors, the study explores narrative and characterisation as tools for shaping viewers perception. Findings reveal that, Aniebiet Mbede's The Remnant highlights gender resilience and critiques religious hypocrisy through Iberedem's journey, while Bassey Ubong's Esemsem underscores the socio-economic struggles of men and celebrates the richness of Ibibio culture. Both films inspire critical reflection and empathy, fostering dialogue about systemic inequalities and cultural pride. However, challenges such as limited accessibility and varied audience interpretations hinder their broader impact. The study concludes that, films like The Remnant and Esemsem are potent vehicles for socio-cultural change, provided their messages reach diverse audiences. Recommendations include enhancing accessibility through community screenings and digital platforms and supporting filmmakers with funding and mentorship programs to create more impactful narratives. This research contributes to the discourse on the transformative power of film, offering insights into leveraging cinema to address societal challenges and promote cultural understanding.

Keywords: Film, Cultural Understanding, Social Transformation, Socio-cultural Change.

Introduction

Film has long served as a potent medium for socio-cultural change, acting as both a reflection of society and a tool to influence and shape cultural norms and values. Throughout history, filmmakers have utilised the medium to challenge prevailing ideologies, bring marginalised voices to the forefront, and catalyse social movements. This research examines film as a medium for socio-cultural change, with a specific focus on two Nigerian films *The Remnant* written and directed by Aniebiet Mbede and *Esemsem* written by Bassey Ubong and directed by Ndifreke Williams. These films are reviewed for their contributions to the discourse on cultural identity, social justice, and gender equality within the Nigerian society.

The significance of film in effecting socio-cultural change is widely acknowledged in academic literature. "Films serve as more than mere entertainment; they are cultural artifacts that reflect

and shape the social and political landscapes in which they are produced. Meanings are produced and shaped by historical, political and economic conditions" (Stuart Hall, 1997). This perspective underscores the potential of film to influence public opinion and foster dialogue on critical social issues. Films have the capacity to evoke empathy, challenge stereotypes, and inspire collective action, making them a vital tool for social change.

Nigerian cinema (Nollywood) has emerged as a powerful force in the global film industry, known for its prolific output and its ability to engage with pressing social issues. Nollywood films often address themes such as corruption, gender inequality, religious conflict, and cultural identity, resonating with audiences both within and beyond Africa. As Haynes (2006) observes, "Nollywood has become a significant cultural force, using film as a platform to address the complexities of Nigerian society and to promote social change". According to Aniebiet Mbede (2024), Having discovered that creative industries need not depend on analog and traditional tools of play production, there should be suitable infrastructural and structural transition in the infusion of digital art to ensure compatibility to international levels in terms of technical training and provision of equipment in the theatre". The film template provides the required fluidity for this kind of artistic expression.

Theoretical Framework: Postcolonial Theory and Cultural Studies Theory

This study is grounded in two major theoretical frameworks: Postcolonial Theory and Cultural Studies Theory. These theories provide the lens through which the films *The Remnant* and *Esemsem* are reviewed, offering insight into how film functions as a medium for socio-cultural change in the society.

Postcolonial Film Theory

Postcolonial Film Theory, which emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century, precisely the 1950s and early 1960s, seeks to critique the lasting impacts of colonialism on formerly colonised societies. This theoretical framework is particularly relevant for analysing African cinema, as it provides a way to understand how films from postcolonial contexts engage with issues of identity, culture, and power. According to Edward Said, in his seminal work *Orientalism* argues that, "colonialism was not only a political and economic endeavor but also a cultural one, where Western societies constructed and perpetuated stereotypes about the "Orient" to justify their dominance (3)". Said's work laid the foundation for Postcolonial Theory by highlighting the importance of cultural representation in maintaining colonial power structures. This theory investigates how film challenges or reinforces colonial narratives and cultural stereotypes, circulates meaning and makes for topical discourses that is capable of shaping public perception. This work will examine the immediate and long-term socio-cultural influence of films and how films like *The Remnant* and *Esemsem* contributes to the cultural consciousness and serves as a driver for socio-cultural change.

Cultural Studies Theory

Cultural Studies Theory, which emerged from the work of scholars at the Birmingham School in the 1960s, focuses on the ways in which culture is produced, consumed, and interpreted by society. One of the key contributors to this theory is Stuart Hall, who postulates that, "culture is not a fixed set of practices but a dynamic process that is constantly being shaped by social, political, and economic forces. Hall stated that "cultural identity is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being' reflecting the constant evolution of cultural meanings in response to historical

events" (213). Hall's submission presents culture as a framework for producing meaning and not just reflecting reality. This representation is captured by the film culture. According to Aniebiet Mbede,"the practices of this imbibes the use of ideologies and technologies to keep the theatre practice artistically and aesthetically relevant as a slice of life and the mirror of the society" (Mbede et al., 2004). This is the social mirror that the works, *The Remnant* and *Esemsem* in driving socio-cultural change.

Synopsis of *The Remnant*

The Remnant tells the touching story of Iberedem, a young African girl who grapples with the burden of taking care of a sick father. Through the trauma of dysfunctional parenting (abandoned by her mother), she rises as a beacon of hope for her community. *The Remnant* is the story of resilience in the face of grim adversity and the heroine exudes the conquering spirit of womanhood as the birthers and nurturers of life, who sometimes bear the burden of becoming the tortured and sufferers; at the base of family caregiving with little or no social, emotional, financial or moral support. This is a story of resilience, faith and the hope that tomorrow holds better promise, as it did for Iberedem, in her grass to grace experience.

Background of the Director: *The Remnant*

Aniebiet Unwana Mbede is a Lecturer in the Department of Performing Arts, Akwa Ibom State University with PhD in Media Arts and special interest in Multimedia, Directing and Film Aesthetics. She has written and directed productions for the stage, radio, screen and multimedia which include: *Arise* (2016), *My Portion* (2017), *Osusu Owo* (2018), *Once upon a Parade* (2019), *Our Cartel* (2020), *Echoes of Life* (2022), *Uyio Obio* (2023), *Happily Never After* (2023), *The Rising Sun* (2024), *The Remnant* (2024) *The Remnant* and *The Untold Story* (2026). She has also directed works from other scholars: Bassey Ubong's *Entangled Lives* (2008) and *My Brother's Keeper* (2021) *and Vicky Bon Uzuazor's Diary of a Pastor's Wife* (2023).

Synopsis of *Esemsem*

Esemsem tells the compelling story of a young Nigerian man burdened by societal expectations to provide for his family as the breadwinner. Despite his impressive qualifications, *Esemsem* struggles to secure a decent job in an unequal system that stifles opportunities for social mobility. Driven by desperation and the unrelenting pressures to succeed, he takes dangerous risks in pursuit of wealth. Tragically, his choices lead to a downward spiral, leaving his dreams shattered and his life in turmoil. Set against the backdrop of Ibibio culture, *Esemsem* weaves a rich narrative that explores family dynamics, cultural rituals, and societal norms. The film critiques structural inequality and poverty while celebrating the resilience, creativity, and diversity of Nigerian heritage. Through Esemsem's journey, audiences are invited to reflect on the struggles of countless individuals facing similar circumstances, sparking empathy and critical thinking about the socio-economic challenges that define our world, reminding us of the resilience of the human spirit amidst adversity.

Background of the Writer: *Esemsem*

Bassey Ubong, Ph.D hails from Oboyo Ikot Ita, Nsit Ibom County, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. He holds a Bachelor of Science B.Sc. in Agricultural Economics MBA (Marketing) both of the University of Nigeria; Technical Teachers Certificate (TTCert.) of the Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku; Med. He holds a Doctorate Degree in Philosophy of Education, Ph.D (Philosophy of Education) from the University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Has been

teaching Entrepreneurship Development and Education at Omoku since 2001. Dr. Ubong served as Deputy Provost, Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku, Rivers State, Nigeria. Bassey Ubong has over twenty-one published literary works in all the major genres of literature, the books used in Nigerian schools from nursery to university; three of the books were published in the USA by Author Solutions Inc. They include, *Zero Sum Game, Entangled Lives, You Can't See my Break Lights, Manchild Blues, Queen Asari, Esemsem* among others. He is a board member, Association for Cultural Studies worldwide; member, International Network of Philosophers of Education, and member, Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain. He is a Knight of St. Stephen of the First African Church Mission and is married with children. Website: www.basseyubong.com

Background of the Director: *Esemsem*

Ndifreke William (Bryan) is a creative professional with a Bachelor of Arts in Performing Arts. William is a pursuing his Master's degree in Performing Arts, in Akwa Ibom state university and deploys his talent as a professional movie director, that has featured on various film projects, bringing stories to life on the big screen. Additionally, he is a member of the Actors Guild of Nigeria (AGN), which has provided him with opportunities for growth, networking, and collaboration within the Nigerian film industry.

Film as a Catalyst for Social Transformation: **Exploring Themes in *The Remnant***

Films have always been used as tools for reflecting societal values, questioning norms, and fostering cultural and social change. *The Remnant* exemplifies this role by exploring key issues such as gender, religion, and cultural identity within an African context. The narrative, shaped by its characters and their experiences, offers a powerful commentary on these social issues, challenging audiences to reconsider entrenched societal behaviors and attitudes. Through this analysis, we evaluate how *The Remnant* influences public attitudes, emphasizing its impact on gender roles, religious hypocrisy, and the resilience of cultural identity, while also examining the role of narrative and characterisation in driving socio-cultural transformation.

Iberedem's journey symbolises the resilience and strength of African womanhood, which is often expected to thrive under harsh circumstances. This representation challenges the audience to reflect on the socio-economic and emotional inequities faced by women in caregiving roles. While society idealizes such sacrifices, it rarely offers adequate support or recognition for these contributions. As Mbede notes, "Iberedem exudes the conquering spirit of womanhood…bearing the burden of becoming the tortured and sufferers." This duality of celebrating resilience while exposing systemic neglect provokes viewers to reconsider the unequal expectations placed on women. Furthermore, the film subtly critiques the absence of male figures in caregiving roles. While traditional roles are upheld, the narrative raises the question of whether such rigid assignments are sustainable or fair in a modern context. By highlighting the consequences of these traditional roles, In the words of Iberedem's father, it is not the gender that matters, but the agenda. *The Remnant* challenges audiences to advocate for more balanced gender responsibilities within families and communities.

- Religious Hypocrisy

Religion plays a pivotal role in *The Remnant*, particularly in exposing the moral failings of individuals who exploit their positions of power. Director Mbede, describes the pastor character as 'a hypocrite who uses long hours to pray but whose life does not align with the tenets of

Christianity'. His attempt to abuse a child entrusted to his care underscores the disconnect between religious rhetoric and personal morality, a critique that resonates in many African societies where religious institutions wield significant influence.

The pastor's actions highlight the issue of hypocrisy within religious settings. While he outwardly portrays piety, his behavior reveals the darker undercurrents of exploitation and falsehood. This character serves as a vehicle for addressing the societal tendency to place blind trust in religious leaders, often to the detriment of vulnerable individuals. As Mbede aptly states, "the character is used to speak against the falsehood that is commonly expressed in our society." Through this narrative, the film challenges audiences to critically evaluate the actions of religious leaders and the institutions they represent. It also calls for greater accountability and integrity within religious circles. By juxtaposing the pastor's hypocrisy with Iberedem's genuine acts of love and sacrifice, *The Remnant* redefines true spirituality as being rooted in selflessness and care for others, rather than outward displays of religiosity.

At its core, *The Remnant* is a celebration of African cultural identity and the resilience of its people. The film portrays Iberedem as a symbol of hope and perseverance, qualities deeply embedded in African cultural values. Despite facing immense personal hardship, she remains committed to her family and community, embodying the ethos of communal care and solidarity that defines African societies. The narrative also highlights the intergenerational transmission of values, as Iberedem's actions reflect the cultural emphasis on familial responsibility and forgiveness. Her ability to "conquer the evil of betrayal through forgiveness" underscores the importance of reconciliation and healing in maintaining social cohesion. These themes resonate with audiences, encouraging them to embrace these values in their own lives. At the same time, the film critiques aspects of cultural identity that perpetuate suffering, such as the expectation for women to endure hardship without complaint. By presenting Iberedem's struggles in a sympathetic light, the narrative challenges viewers to question the fairness of these cultural norms and advocate for more equitable social structures.

- Promoting Socio-Cultural Change

Through its portrayal of gender roles, religious hypocrisy, and cultural identity, *The Remnant* serves as a catalyst for socio-cultural change. The film challenges audiences to question entrenched norms and behaviors, while also offering a vision of a more equitable and compassionate society. By addressing these issues in an accessible and emotionally engaging format, the film has the potential to influence public attitudes and foster a greater commitment to social justice. As Mbede observes, "*The Remnant* is a call to light our corners with grace and truth, so we can make the world a better place." This call to action resonates with audiences, encouraging them to embrace the values of love, hope, and resilience that define the film's narrative. In doing so, *The Remnant* not only reflects societal issues but also inspires viewers to become agents of change in their own lives and communities. *The Remnant* is a poignant exploration of social issues within an African context, offering a powerful critique of gender inequalities, religious hypocrisy, and cultural identity. Through its compelling narrative and richly drawn characters, the film challenges audiences to confront these issues and envision a more just and compassionate society. By highlighting the resilience and strength of its protagonist, *The Remnant* celebrates the enduring spirit of African womanhood while also calling for greater equity and accountability. In doing so, it exemplifies the transformative power of film as a medium for social commentary and change.

Film as a Catalyst for Social Transformation in ***Esemsem***

Films have the power to challenge societal norms, provoke critical thinking, and inspire change. *Esemsem*, written by Bassey Ubong, PhD and directed by Ndifreke William, is a poignant story that delves into themes of gender roles, religion, and cultural identity, presenting a vivid portrayal of the struggles and expectations placed upon individuals in Nigerian society. This analysis evaluates how *Esemsem* influences public attitudes towards social issues and examines how its narrative and characterisation contribute to shaping viewers' perceptions and promoting socio-cultural transformation. One of the central themes in *Esemsem* is the societal expectation that men should be the primary providers for their families. As William explains, "The phrase 'man is the breadwinner of the family' underscores the weight of societal expectations on men to provide." This cultural norm creates immense pressure on men to succeed economically, often at the expense of their mental and physical well-being. *Esemsem*, the protagonist, embodies this struggle. Despite being well-qualified, he faces systemic barriers to securing a stable job, which leads to frustration and desperation. His eventual decision to pursue a morally questionable path to wealth highlights the destructive impact of societal pressure on individuals who are unable to meet these expectations. The film critiques the rigid gender roles that define masculinity in Nigerian culture, particularly within the Ibibio community.

- Religion and Faith in a Materialistic World

Religion is another critical theme explored in *Esemsem*. The protagonist begins his journey as a devout believer, trusting in God. However, as his faith is tested by prolonged hardship, he succumbs to the lure of quick wealth. This shift in his values ultimately leads to his downfall, serving as a cautionary tale about the dangers of prioritising material success over spiritual integrity. William highlights this tension, noting that "to stay ahead and overcome life's struggles, (some individuals) may feel driven to pursue paths that ultimately compromise their well-being." The film critiques not only the individual but also the broader societal values that glorify wealth and success, often at the expense of moral and ethical principles. The depiction of *Esemsem's* moral decline invites viewers to reflect on their own priorities and the role of religion in navigating life's challenges. By exposing the pitfalls of compromising one's values for material gain, the film fosters a deeper understanding of the importance of maintaining faith and integrity in a materialistic world.

The power of *Esemsem* lies in its compelling narrative and well-rounded characters, which bring its themes to life in a relatable and impactful way. *Esemsem*, as the protagonist, is a complex and multi-dimensional character whose journey mirrors the experiences of many Nigerians. His initial faith, eventual desperation, and ultimate downfall are portrayed with authenticity, allowing viewers to connect with his story on an emotional level. *Esemsem* is a powerful exploration of gender roles, religion, and cultural identity in Nigerian society. Through its compelling narrative and authentic portrayal of Ibibio culture, the film sheds light on critical social issues while inspiring viewers to reflect on their own values and priorities.

Thematic and Social Issues in *The Remnant* and *Esemsem*

Film as a medium has long been recognized for its ability to shape public perceptions, provoke discussions, and inspire socio-cultural change. In *The Remnant* and *Esemsem*, director Aniebiet Mbede and Ndifreke William tackles critical social issues the lens of the protagonists Iberedem and Esemsem respectively. This analysis examines pressing social issues.

Thematic and Social Issues in *The Remnant*

- Poverty

Poverty is central to the narrative of *The Remnant*. Iberedem's struggle to care for her sick father while grappling with limited resources mirrors the realities faced by countless individuals in African societies. Multimedia Director, Aniebiet Mbede emphasises that "social issues of poverty are being addressed" in the film, showcasing the emotional and physical toll of living in deprivation. The depiction of poverty in *The Remnant* does more than elicit sympathy; it highlights the systemic neglect that perpetuates such conditions. For instance, the lack of social safety nets forces Iberedem into a caregiver role that stifles her personal aspirations. This portrayal calls attention to the need for structural reforms in healthcare, education, and social welfare systems to alleviate the burden on individuals like Iberedem.

- Sexual Abuse

Another critical issue addressed in *The Remnant* is the exploitation of vulnerable individuals. People taking advantage of the weak instead of ' helping them' is a recurring theme in the film, exemplified by characters who betray trust or fail to provide support. This issue is particularly significant in African societies, where hierarchical relationships often create power imbalances that foster abuse. Through its narrative, the film critiques societal attitudes that enable such exploitation, urging viewers to adopt more compassionate and equitable behaviors. However, as noted earlier, audiences may interpret these messages differently based on their socio-cultural contexts, underscoring the importance of framing and supplementary discussions to reinforce the film's critique. The film raises the issue of sexual perversion and speaks to the bane of such.

- Resilience and Hope

Despite its exploration of grim realities, *The Remnant* is ultimately a story of hope and resilience. Iberedem's determination to overcome adversity and her commitment to family and community serve as a testament to the human spirit's strength, reflecting a core message of the film. This theme resonates universally, inspiring viewers to believe in the possibility of positive change. However, it also raises questions about the extent to which individual determination alone can address systemic issues like poverty and exploitation. By combining personal narratives with broader societal critiques, the film encourages a holistic approach to socio-cultural transformation.





Plate 3: The lead Character Iberedem taking her sick father to the hospital in *The Remnant*
Plate 4: Filming, Iberedem selling puff puff in *The Remnant*
Source: Pinnacle Theatre Media

Thematic and Social Issues in *Esemsem*

Films are a powerful medium for addressing societal challenges and fostering socio-cultural change. Bryan William's *Esemsem* serves as a remarkable example of how storytelling can illuminate pressing issues such as poverty, inequality, and social mobility.

- Poverty and Inequality

At its core, *Esemsem* is a critique of the systemic barriers that perpetuate economic inequality in Nigerian society. The protagonist's inability to secure a stable job despite his qualifications highlights the flaws in the nation's socio-economic system, which often prioritizes connections and wealth over merit. By addressing these issues, the film sparks conversations about the need for systemic reforms to create equal opportunities for all, regardless of their background. Resilience and Cultural Identity

Esemsem showcases the resilience and creativity of the Nigerian (Ibibio) people, presenting a nuanced and authentic portrayal of their cultural heritage. As Ndifreke William notes, "the film promotes cross-cultural understanding, fosters empathy, and celebrates the richness of Nigerian (Ibibio) heritage." By sharing these stories with a global audience, the film challenges stereotypes about Nigeria and Africa, presenting a more diverse and authentic perspective. *Esemsem* is a powerful testament to the potential of film as a tool for socio-cultural change. By addressing pressing issues like poverty, inequality, and cultural identity, the film sparks empathy and critical thinking, encouraging audiences to reflect on the structures that shape their lives. However, to fully realize the transformative power of films like *Esemsem*, it is essential to address the challenges of accessibility, interpretation, and commercial viability.

Challenges of Using Film as a Tool for Socio-Cultural Change

Accessibility remains one of the most significant barriers to using film as a widespread agent of change. While *The Remnant* highlights crucial social issues like poverty and exploitation, its reach is limited if certain segments of the population, particularly those in rural or economically disadvantaged areas: lack access to cinemas, streaming platforms, or digital devices. Films like *The Remnant* that address socio-cultural issues often cater to urban audiences with access to modern technology, leaving behind a substantial portion of the population who might benefit most from the message. In many African contexts, infrastructural challenges such as unreliable electricity, limited internet penetration, and high costs of digital media further exacerbate this issue. Policymakers and cultural institutions can collaborate with filmmakers to establish community cinema initiatives, mobile film screenings, and partnerships with local television stations to reach underprivileged communities. Subsidizing the production and distribution of socially conscious films for rural and low-income areas can also help bridge this accessibility gap.

- Interpretation and Cultural Context

Films often rely on visual storytelling and symbolic representations to convey complex ideas. While this approach is effective for engaging audiences, it also leaves room for diverse interpretations. In the case of *The Remnant*, Iberedem's story of resilience can be interpreted in various ways depending on the viewer's socio-cultural background, personal experiences, and worldview. For instance, audiences may focus on her determination as an individual triumph, overshadowing the systemic issues of poverty and exploitation that the film seeks to critique. Additionally, some viewers may misinterpret Iberedem's endurance as a justification for accepting societal inequities rather than challenging them. To mitigate misinterpretations, filmmakers can include supplementary materials such as director's commentaries, behind-the-scenes discussions, or community dialogues to clarify the intended message. These messages

can be verbal or non-verbal (signs and symbolic representations). In this vein, Aniebiet Mbede submits that, "the use of symbols to represent ideas in non-verbal communication helps to clarify and contextualise messages exchanged between individuals (Mbede and Jackson, 2026)". This is the thrust of *The Remnant* as a tool for cultural communication

- Commercial Viability

The balance between creating a commercially successful film and addressing critical social issues is a challenge. Films that delve into social themes such as poverty, exploitation, and systemic inequalities, often struggle to compete with entertainment-focused productions. For example, while *The Remnant* tackles deeply rooted social issues, its market appeal may be limited compared to blockbuster films with high-budget action sequences or romantic escapism. Filmmakers often face pressure to prioritize profitability over messaging, leading to compromises in storytelling or marketing strategies. Moreover, limited funding for socially conscious films restricts their production quality, distribution reach, and promotional campaigns, which are crucial for attracting larger audiences. Governments and cultural institutions should establish grants or tax incentives for filmmakers producing socially conscious content. Collaborations with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), advocacy groups, and international bodies can also provide alternative funding sources and platforms for films like *The Remnant*. Additionally, creating hybrid content that balances compelling narratives with social messaging can broaden commercial appeal while retaining the film's core message.



Plate 6: Technical Crew and Cast of *Esemsem* on set
Source: Pinnacle Theatre Media Team, 2022.



Plate 7: Uyai and Esemsem acting in the film, *Esemsem*
Source: Pinnacle Theatre Media Team, 2022.

The exploration of *The Remnant* and *Esemsem* as films underscores the power of cinematic storytelling in fostering socio-cultural change. These films highlight pressing social issues, including poverty, inequality, gender roles, and cultural identity, reflecting their deep-rooted influence on public attitudes and perceptions. In *The Remnant,* the portrayal of Iberedem, a determined young woman tasked with caring for her sick father, brings to light the societal expectation placed on women as primary caregivers. Her resilience and forgiveness emerge as central themes, challenging gender stereotypes and celebrating the strength of womanhood. The film critiques the hypocrisy of religious leaders, as seen through the character of the pastor, who misuses his authority. This duality serves as a commentary on the disconnect between religious ideals and societal behaviors, sparking critical reflection on the role of religion in addressing societal ills. Similarly, *Esemsem* explores the struggles of a man navigating systemic barriers to achieve financial stability. The character *Esemsem's* downward spiral after taking risks to secure wealth serves as a critique of the societal pressures placed on men as breadwinners. It also highlights the broader socio-economic challenges in Nigeria, including unemployment and inequality. Through its rich depiction of Ibibio culture, the film challenges stereotypes, offering a nuanced portrayal of Nigerian traditions and social dynamics. Both films emphasize the importance of resilience, empathy, and cultural pride while critiquing societal structures that perpetuate inequality and hypocrisy. They resonate deeply with audiences, fostering critical thinking and empathy, and serve as catalysts for conversations about change. However, despite their potential, the films also reveal limitations in using film as a tool for socio-cultural change. Accessibility remains a major issue, as economic and infrastructural challenges restrict viewership. Additionally, audience interpretations of the films' messages may vary, affecting their impact. Commercial viability is another significant concern, as socially conscious films often struggle to attract funding and distribution.

Conclusion

Film has proven to be a potent medium for socio-cultural change, as evidenced by the analysis of *The Remnant* and *Esemsem*. Both films tackle critical social issues, addressing the complexities of poverty, inequality, gender roles, and cultural identity within the Nigerian context. Through compelling narratives and authentic characterizations, these films challenge societal norms, spark critical reflection, and promote empathy among audiences. According to Mbede et al. (2024), the world has evolved in the use of technology and is in the digital era. There should be a policy for theatre practitioners (Scriptwriters, Actors, Artistic Directors and Technical directors) to learn and be acquainted with new media technologies to intentionally create and disseminate artistic messages in the production of stage plays". Adopting the same strategy to *The Remnant* exemplifies the strength and resilience of women in the face of societal expectations, using Iberedem's story to highlight the burdens of caregiving, dysfunctional parenting, and the enduring spirit of hope. The critique of religious hypocrisy underscores the need for integrity in leadership and the alignment of moral teachings with practice. On the other hand, *Esemsem* sheds light on the pressures faced by men as breadwinners, exploring the consequences of systemic inequality and unemployment. By incorporating elements of Ibibio culture, the film challenges stereotypes and promotes cross-cultural understanding. *Esemsem's* story serves as a cautionary tale, emphasizing the need for systemic reforms to alleviate societal pressures and create opportunities for all. *The Remnant and Esemsem* demonstrate the potential of film to inspire dialogue, foster empathy, and challenge societal norms. However, to fully

harness this potential, strategic actions must be taken to address the challenges associated with accessibility, interpretation, and commercial viability.

Recommendations

To make best use of the potential of films like *The Remnant and Esemsem* in driving socio-cultural change, the following recommendations are submitted. Low-cost film screenings should be organized in schools, community centers, and rural areas to reach underserved audiences. The producers should collaborate with affordable streaming services and telecom providers to ensure widespread access to films. To organise film festivals and awards to celebrate and promote socially conscious and culturally themed films, encouraging more filmmakers to pursue such projects.

There is also need to utilise social media platforms to promote culture-themed films and engage audiences. Also, the development of digital contents, such as behind-the-scenes videos, question and answer sessions with directors and audience testimonials, to deepen audience engagement with the films. By implementing these recommendations, films like *The Remnant and Esemsem* can reach broader audiences and foster a deeper connection among the people and drive meaningful socio-cultural change in the society.

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