



Leadership Representation and Managerial Practices in Nollywood Films: Insights for Organizational Behaviour

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Abstract. This study examines how leadership is represented in contemporary Nollywood films and explores its implications for organizational behaviour and managerial practice. While leadership has been extensively investigated in organizational and corporate settings, limited attention has been paid to cinematic narratives as culturally embedded sources of managerial knowledge, particularly within the African context. Using a qualitative comparative content analysis, the study analyzes four influential Nollywood films *The CEO* (2016), *Lionheart* (2018), *The Last Flight to Abuja* (2012), and *30 Days in Atlanta* (2014). These films were purposively selected because they portray diverse organizational environments, leadership challenges, and decision-making processes. The findings reveal four dominant leadership representations namely transformational leadership that promotes innovation and employee empowerment, authoritarian leadership characterized by centralized crisis decision-making, participative leadership emphasizing collaboration and stakeholder engagement, and relational leadership that strengthens trust and interpersonal influence. The study further demonstrates that managerial effectiveness in the films is shaped by cultural values, organizational context, and leaders' ability to balance authority with participation. These cinematic narratives extend beyond entertainment by providing practical illustrations of leadership behaviour, conflict management, strategic decision-making, and organizational resilience. The study contributes to the business and management literature by positioning Nollywood films as valuable qualitative resources for understanding culturally grounded leadership practices in emerging economies.

Keywords: Nollywood Films; Leadership Representation; Organizational Behaviour; Managerial Practices; Transformational Leadership; Strategic Management

1. Introduction

Leadership is widely recognized as one of the most influential determinants of organizational effectiveness, shaping strategic decision-making, employee motivation, organizational culture, and long-term business performance (Blom, 2024; Liden et al., 2025; Riggio & Newstead, 2023). Effective leadership enables organizations to navigate

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environmental uncertainty, stimulate innovation, and maintain competitive advantage in increasingly dynamic markets (Fernando et al., 2023; Sarwar, 2013; Xiang & Wang, 2025). Contemporary leadership research has shifted from viewing leadership solely as an individual trait toward understanding it as a socially constructed and context-dependent process that emerges through interactions between leaders, followers, and organizational environments (Jian & Fairhurst, 2017; R. L. Miller, 2012). Within the field of organizational behaviour, leadership is therefore regarded not only as a managerial function but also as a mechanism that influences organizational learning, collaboration, resilience, and sustainable performance (Kwia, 2023; Luthans & Youssef, 2007). As organizations become increasingly interconnected with media and digital culture, understanding how leadership is represented in public discourse has become equally important for explaining how managerial ideals are formed and interpreted across societies.

Beyond organizational settings, leadership is continuously constructed through cultural products, including films, television, and digital media, which serve as important channels for communicating managerial values and behavioural expectations. According to Bandura (2020), individuals acquire behavioural models not only through direct experience but also through observational learning from symbolic environments such as mass media. Likewise, French (2016) argues that popular culture increasingly shapes public understanding of leadership by presenting narratives that influence perceptions of authority, ethics, power, and organizational responsibility. Rather than functioning merely as entertainment, films provide audiences with symbolic representations of leadership challenges, conflict resolution, strategic decision-making, and organizational change. Consequently, cinematic narratives have attracted growing scholarly attention as alternative sources for examining leadership behaviour and organizational practices from contextual and cultural perspectives.

Recent literature demonstrates increasing academic interest in leadership representation across media and creative industries. Studies have examined leadership narratives in Hollywood films, television series, and digital storytelling to explain how media construct perceptions of transformational, servant, ethical, and authentic leadership (Johnson, C.E, Hackman, 2018; Ladkin, 2020). Within management education, films have also been adopted as experiential learning resources because they present realistic organizational dilemmas that encourage critical reflection on leadership behaviour and managerial decision-making (Hao et al., 2024; Peña Zerpa & Peña Zerpa, 2024; Wood, 2023). These studies suggest that cinematic narratives possess substantial pedagogical value by enabling learners to observe leadership practices within complex social and organizational contexts. Nevertheless, the majority of this literature remains concentrated on Western productions, leaving leadership representations in African cinema comparatively underexplored.

The emergence of Nollywood as one of the world's largest film industries presents a distinctive opportunity to extend leadership scholarship beyond Western cultural settings. Nollywood has become an influential cultural institution whose films portray contemporary Nigerian society through narratives of entrepreneurship, family businesses, public administration, corporate governance, and social transformation (Ezepue, 2020; Oguamanam, 2020; Umukoro et al., 2020). Several productions, including *Lionheart*, *The CEO*, *The Last Flight to Abuja*, and *30 Days in Atlanta*, depict leaders confronting strategic crises, organizational conflicts, stakeholder negotiations, and business succession challenges. Such portrayals reflect not only dramatic storytelling but



also broader socio-cultural understandings of leadership within African organizations. Moreover, these films frequently illustrate how managerial decisions are influenced by communal values, institutional constraints, and indigenous leadership traditions, thereby providing valuable empirical contexts for organizational behaviour research.

Despite the growing recognition of Nollywood within global media scholarship, existing studies primarily investigate issues related to cultural identity, national representation, political communication, gender, audience reception, and cinematic aesthetics (Afolabi, 2024; Hua & He, 2025; Mohammed & Fawe, 2025). Comparatively little attention has been devoted to examining how leadership representations in Nollywood contribute to management knowledge or organizational behaviour theory. Existing leadership studies generally discuss political or cultural leadership without systematically linking cinematic representations to managerial practices such as strategic decision-making, employee engagement, crisis management, organizational communication, and leadership effectiveness. Consequently, the literature provides limited understanding of how African cinematic narratives can enrich mainstream leadership theories and expand organizational behaviour research beyond conventional organizational settings.

This study addresses that research gap by repositioning Nollywood films as qualitative sources of managerial knowledge rather than merely cultural artefacts. Instead of analysing films exclusively from cinematic or communication perspectives, this research adopts an organizational behaviour lens to examine how leadership representations correspond with established leadership theories and contemporary management practices. Specifically, the study integrates Transformational Leadership Theory (J. P. Miller, 1996), Authoritarian-Participative Leadership Theory (Lewin et al., 1939), and organizational behaviour perspectives to identify recurring leadership patterns embedded within selected Nollywood films. By connecting cinematic narratives with organizational leadership concepts, the study extends previous research that has largely treated film analysis and management studies as separate scholarly domains.

The novelty of this research lies in its interdisciplinary framework that bridges film studies and business management by conceptualizing cinematic narratives as repositories of culturally embedded managerial practices. Unlike previous studies that primarily evaluate leadership from political or cultural perspectives, this study develops a comparative organizational framework that explains how different leadership styles influence decision-making processes, stakeholder relationships, organizational resilience, and managerial effectiveness within diverse institutional contexts. Furthermore, the research introduces the concept of leadership representation as an analytical construct linking symbolic media narratives with practical organizational behaviour, thereby contributing a culturally grounded perspective to leadership scholarship in emerging economies.

The significance of this study extends to both theoretical and practical domains. Theoretically, it enriches organizational behaviour literature by demonstrating that leadership knowledge can be generated from cinematic representations that reflect culturally specific managerial experiences. Practically, the findings provide valuable insights for leadership development programmes, executive education, business schools, organizational training, and management practitioners seeking contextual examples of leadership behaviour beyond conventional business case studies. Accordingly, this study aims to analyse leadership representations in selected contemporary Nollywood films, compare their managerial practices with established leadership theories, identify



culturally embedded leadership patterns, and explain their implications for organizational behaviour and contemporary management practice.

2. Methods

This study employed a qualitative research design using a comparative content analysis approach to examine leadership representations and managerial practices in contemporary Nollywood films. Qualitative content analysis is appropriate for investigating symbolic meanings, leadership behaviours, organizational interactions, and decision-making processes embedded in cinematic narratives (Schreier, 2012). Rather than measuring leadership quantitatively, this approach enables an in-depth interpretation of how leadership styles are constructed, communicated, and contextualized within organizational and social environments. The study adopted an interpretivist perspective, recognizing films as cultural texts that both reflect and shape managerial values, organizational behaviour, and leadership practices in contemporary African society.

The research analyzed four purposively selected Nollywood films: *The CEO* (Agina, 2020), *Lionheart* (Doghudge, 2020), *The Last Flight to Abuja* (Arthur, 2014), and *30 Days in Atlanta* (Ojieson, 2016). These films were selected based on four criteria: (1) they explicitly portray leaders operating within organizational, corporate, or institutional settings; (2) they present diverse leadership challenges involving strategic decision-making, crisis management, organizational communication, or stakeholder relationships; (3) they represent different organizational contexts, including multinational corporations, family businesses, public institutions, and cross-cultural environments; and (4) they have received significant recognition for their contribution to contemporary Nollywood cinema. The diversity of these films allowed meaningful comparisons across leadership contexts while ensuring analytical richness regarding managerial behaviour and organizational dynamics.

Data collection involved repeated viewing of each film to ensure comprehensive understanding of leadership interactions, managerial decisions, communication patterns, and organizational conflicts. Important scenes containing leadership behaviours were identified, transcribed, and documented as analytical units. Additional supporting materials, including film synopses, production notes, director interviews, and relevant scholarly literature on leadership and organizational behaviour, were also consulted to strengthen contextual interpretation and improve analytical credibility. The unit of analysis consisted of leadership-related scenes, character interactions, dialogue, organizational events, and strategic decisions that reflected leadership practices within each film.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the six-stage procedure proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006). The analysis began with familiarization through repeated observation of the films, followed by initial coding of leadership-related behaviours and managerial actions. Similar codes were subsequently grouped into broader themes representing recurring leadership patterns across the selected films. These themes were then interpreted using Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass & Avolio B. J., 1994), Authoritarian-Participative Leadership Theory (Lewin et al., 1939), and organizational behaviour perspectives concerning decision-making, communication, employee engagement, and managerial effectiveness. Cross-case comparison was employed to identify similarities, differences, and contextual variations in leadership representation among the four films.



To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, the study applied the qualitative quality criteria proposed by (Lincoln et al., 1985), including credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility was strengthened through repeated observations, systematic coding, and theoretical triangulation using multiple leadership perspectives. Dependability was ensured by maintaining a transparent analytical procedure and consistent coding framework throughout the research process. Confirmability was achieved by grounding interpretations in observable cinematic evidence rather than researcher assumptions, while transferability was supported through detailed descriptions of organizational contexts and leadership situations presented in the films. These procedures ensured that the findings provide a rigorous and theoretically grounded understanding of leadership representation and managerial practices in contemporary Nollywood cinema.

3. Results and Discussion

The findings of this study are organized into four major themes that emerged from the comparative analysis of leadership representations across the selected Nollywood films: *The CEO*, *Lionheart*, *The Last Flight to Abuja*, and *30 Days in Atlanta*. Rather than describing each film individually, the analysis focuses on recurring managerial patterns that illustrate how leadership is conceptualized, enacted, and adapted within different organizational contexts. Through a thematic comparison, the study identifies common leadership behaviours, decision-making processes, communication strategies, and organizational responses that transcend individual narratives and collectively contribute to a broader understanding of leadership practices in African business environments.

The analysis reveals that leadership representation in the selected films extends beyond cinematic storytelling and reflects practical managerial realities relevant to organizational behaviour. Four dominant themes consistently emerged across the films: (1) transformational leadership as a driver of organizational adaptability and employee empowerment, (2) authoritarian leadership as an effective yet constrained approach to crisis management, (3) participative leadership as a mechanism for strengthening collaboration and stakeholder engagement, and (4) context-dependent leadership effectiveness shaped by organizational and cultural environments. These findings demonstrate that Nollywood films function not only as cultural narratives but also as valuable qualitative resources for understanding leadership dynamics, managerial decision-making, and organizational effectiveness within emerging economies.

3.1. Transformational Leadership Promotes Organizational Adaptability and Employee Empowerment

The comparative analysis indicates that transformational leadership constitutes the most dominant leadership representation across the selected Nollywood films, particularly in organizational situations characterized by strategic uncertainty, financial instability, and institutional change. Among the films analyzed, *Lionheart* offers the most comprehensive illustration of transformational leadership through the character of Adaeze Obiagu, who assumes responsibility for managing her father's transportation company during a period of severe financial and operational crisis. Unlike traditional hierarchical leaders who rely primarily on positional authority, Adaeze adopts a participatory and vision-oriented leadership approach that emphasizes organizational collaboration, trust-building, and continuous innovation. Rather than imposing decisions unilaterally, she actively consults employees, seeks diverse perspectives, and encourages



collective responsibility in developing strategic solutions. This leadership behaviour reflects the fundamental premise of transformational leadership that organizational transformation is achieved not through authority alone but by inspiring followers to commit voluntarily to a shared organizational vision.

Further analysis demonstrates that transformational leadership in the selected films is manifested through the four classical dimensions proposed by Bass and Avolio (1994): idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Idealized influence is evident when leaders become role models who demonstrate integrity, accountability, and commitment during organizational adversity, thereby strengthening employees' confidence in organizational leadership. Inspirational motivation appears through the articulation of clear strategic visions capable of maintaining employee optimism despite uncertain business conditions. Intellectual stimulation is reflected in leaders' willingness to challenge conventional organizational practices, encourage creativity, and invite employees to generate innovative solutions to complex managerial problems. Meanwhile, individualized consideration is demonstrated through leaders' attention to employee welfare, personal development, and psychological support, fostering stronger interpersonal relationships between management and organizational members. Collectively, these dimensions transform leadership from a mechanism of supervision into a process of organizational empowerment that mobilizes human capital toward sustainable organizational objectives.

The findings further reveal that transformational leadership significantly enhances organizational adaptability by promoting learning-oriented managerial practices. Across several leadership situations portrayed in *Lionheart* and partially in *The CEO*, organizational leaders continuously respond to changing business environments through strategic flexibility rather than rigid administrative control. Leaders encourage employees to participate in organizational learning, evaluate operational weaknesses, and identify new market opportunities capable of improving organizational competitiveness. Rather than perceiving environmental uncertainty as a threat, transformational leaders frame organizational challenges as opportunities for innovation and continuous improvement. Such adaptive behaviour enables organizations to respond more effectively to external pressures while simultaneously strengthening employees' commitment to organizational change. Consequently, organizational resilience emerges not merely from structural resources but from leadership practices that cultivate shared learning, innovation, and collective problem-solving capabilities.

Another important finding concerns the relationship between transformational leadership and employee empowerment. The analysis suggests that effective leaders deliberately redistribute responsibility by involving employees in organizational decision-making processes and recognizing their contributions to organizational success. Employees are portrayed not as passive recipients of managerial instructions but as strategic partners whose knowledge, experience, and creativity contribute directly to organizational performance. This participatory climate increases employees' psychological ownership, intrinsic motivation, and organizational commitment because they perceive themselves as valuable stakeholders rather than subordinate workers. Furthermore, transparent communication, mutual trust, and collaborative leadership reduce hierarchical barriers that frequently constrain organizational innovation. As a result, employee empowerment becomes an organizational resource that strengthens cooperation, improves problem-solving capacity, and enhances long-term organizational effectiveness.



The findings demonstrate that transformational leadership represents the most effective managerial approach among the leadership styles identified in the selected Nollywood films. Its effectiveness lies not only in achieving organizational objectives but also in developing adaptive organizational cultures capable of responding to environmental turbulence through innovation, collaboration, and employee engagement. The analysis confirms that organizational adaptability and sustainable performance are strongly influenced by leaders' ability to integrate strategic vision, participatory communication, employee empowerment, and continuous organizational learning. Therefore, transformational leadership within the selected films extends beyond cinematic representation and offers valuable managerial insights for contemporary organizations seeking to improve leadership effectiveness, organizational resilience, and sustainable competitive advantage.

Table 1 Characteristics of Transformational Leadership Representation in Selected Nollywood Films

Transformational Leadership Dimension	Leadership Representation	Organizational Behaviour	Managerial Implication
Idealized Influence	Leaders demonstrate integrity, accountability, and ethical decision-making during organizational crises.	Employees develop trust and confidence in organizational leadership.	Strengthens organizational credibility and employee commitment.
Inspirational Motivation	Leaders communicate a clear organizational vision and encourage collective commitment toward long-term goals.	Employees become motivated to pursue organizational objectives despite uncertainty.	Enhances organizational cohesion and strategic alignment.
Intellectual Stimulation	Leaders encourage innovation, creative thinking, and collaborative problem-solving.	Employees actively contribute ideas and participate in organizational learning.	Improves innovation capability and organizational adaptability.
Individualized Consideration	Leaders provide mentoring, support, and personal attention to employees' needs and development.	Employees experience higher engagement, psychological safety, and job satisfaction.	Promotes talent development and sustainable organizational performance.
Employee Empowerment	Decision-making responsibilities are shared through participatory leadership practices.	Employees demonstrate stronger ownership, accountability, and collaboration.	Increases organizational resilience and long-term effectiveness.

Table 1 summarizes the principal characteristics of transformational leadership identified throughout the comparative analysis. The findings indicate that



transformational leadership extends beyond inspirational behaviour by integrating ethical leadership, employee empowerment, strategic communication, organizational learning, and innovation into a coherent managerial practice. These dimensions collectively strengthen organizational adaptability by encouraging employees to become active contributors to strategic decision-making rather than passive implementers of managerial directives. Consequently, transformational leadership functions as a comprehensive organizational capability that enhances employee commitment, supports continuous organizational improvement, and enables organizations to maintain sustainable performance under conditions of environmental uncertainty.

3.2. Authoritarian Leadership Facilitates Crisis Decision-Making but Restricts Organizational Learning

Authoritarian leadership is consistently represented in organizational situations characterized by extreme uncertainty, operational emergencies, and high-risk decision-making. Among the selected films, *The Last Flight to Abuja* provides the most explicit illustration of this leadership style through the interactions between pilots, aviation authorities, operational managers, and emergency personnel during an in-flight crisis. Faced with limited time, incomplete information, and life-threatening circumstances, organizational leaders adopt a highly centralized decision-making structure in which authority is concentrated at the highest level. Strategic decisions are made rapidly without extensive consultation because organizational survival becomes the overriding priority. Communication follows a formal hierarchical chain in which instructions are transmitted from leaders to subordinates with minimal opportunity for discussion or feedback. The findings suggest that under conditions of extreme urgency, authoritarian leadership functions as a practical managerial mechanism for maintaining organizational coordination and minimizing operational delays.

The analysis further demonstrates that centralized leadership contributes significantly to operational efficiency during crisis situations. Leaders are portrayed as assuming complete responsibility for evaluating risks, allocating organizational resources, and directing coordinated responses under severe time constraints. Employees and operational personnel comply immediately with managerial directives because procedural consistency and rapid execution are essential for minimizing organizational losses. This pattern is particularly evident in scenes involving emergency communication between pilots and air traffic control, where hesitation or prolonged deliberation could substantially increase organizational and human risks. Consequently, hierarchical authority becomes an organizational asset that enables swift coordination, clear accountability, and disciplined execution of crisis management strategies. These findings indicate that authoritarian leadership can be highly effective when organizational environments demand immediate action and when strategic decisions cannot be postponed for collaborative deliberation.

Despite these operational advantages, the findings also reveal substantial managerial limitations associated with authoritarian leadership when applied beyond emergency contexts. The dominance of centralized authority significantly restricts employee participation, collaborative problem-solving, and organizational communication. Employees are portrayed primarily as executors of managerial instructions rather than contributors to strategic thinking or organizational improvement. As decision-making authority remains concentrated among senior leaders, opportunities for employees to share operational knowledge, propose alternative solutions, or participate in



organizational learning become increasingly limited. This hierarchical structure may improve short-term operational efficiency; however, it simultaneously reduces organizational flexibility because valuable knowledge possessed by lower-level organizational members is rarely incorporated into managerial decision-making processes. Consequently, organizations become increasingly dependent on individual leaders rather than developing collective organizational capabilities.

Another important finding concerns the negative implications of authoritarian leadership for organizational learning and innovation. The comparative analysis indicates that excessive managerial control often suppresses open communication and discourages constructive feedback following crisis events. After emergency situations have subsided, organizations portrayed in the selected films demonstrate limited evidence of systematic reflection, knowledge sharing, or continuous organizational improvement. Employees rarely engage in post-crisis evaluation because organizational culture prioritizes compliance over dialogue. As a result, organizational learning remains reactive rather than proactive, reducing opportunities to improve future crisis preparedness and managerial effectiveness. Furthermore, the absence of psychological safety prevents employees from expressing concerns, reporting operational weaknesses, or challenging managerial assumptions, thereby increasing the risk of repeated organizational failures. These findings suggest that while authoritarian leadership effectively manages immediate operational crises, it contributes relatively little to developing adaptive organizations capable of learning from experience.

Authoritarian leadership represents a contingency-based managerial approach whose effectiveness depends largely on organizational context. During crises requiring immediate coordination, centralized authority enables rapid decision-making, disciplined implementation, and efficient resource allocation. However, prolonged reliance on authoritarian leadership may weaken employee engagement, inhibit organizational learning, and reduce long-term adaptability. Sustainable organizational performance therefore requires leaders to gradually transition from directive crisis leadership toward participative management once operational stability has been restored. By combining decisive authority during emergencies with collaborative communication and knowledge-sharing afterward, organizations can simultaneously maintain operational effectiveness and strengthen organizational resilience. Accordingly, the selected Nollywood films illustrate that effective crisis leadership is not determined solely by decisiveness but also by leaders' capacity to transform emergency experiences into opportunities for organizational learning and continuous managerial improvement.

Table 2 Characteristics of Authoritarian Leadership Representation in Selected Nollywood Films

Leadership Dimension	Leadership Representation	Organizational Behaviour	Managerial Implication
Centralized Decision-Making	Leaders retain complete authority over strategic and operational decisions during crises.	Employees follow instructions with minimal consultation or participation.	Accelerates crisis response and clarifies managerial accountability.
Hierarchical Communication	Information flows vertically from leaders	Communication is efficient but limits upward feedback	Improves operational coordination but restricts



	subordinates through formal command structures.	and dialogue.	organizational communication.
Crisis Coordination	Leaders prioritize rapid execution, resource allocation, and emergency control.	Organizational members focus on procedural compliance and immediate task completion.	Enhances operational efficiency under high-risk conditions.
Limited Employee Participation	Employees have little involvement in planning or strategic problem-solving.	Staff become passive implementers rather than active contributors to organizational improvement.	Reduces innovation, empowerment, and collaborative decision-making.
Organizational Learning Constraints	Post-crisis reflection and knowledge sharing are limited because managerial authority remains centralized.	Organizations experience weaker continuous learning and reduced adaptive capacity.	Highlights the need to integrate participative learning after crises to improve long-term organizational resilience.

Table 2 summarizes the principal characteristics of authoritarian leadership identified throughout the comparative analysis. The findings demonstrate that authoritarian leadership serves as an effective managerial mechanism during organizational emergencies by facilitating centralized decision-making, rapid coordination, and disciplined execution of strategic actions. Nevertheless, its effectiveness is largely confined to crisis situations because prolonged dependence on hierarchical authority restricts employee participation, inhibits organizational learning, and weakens innovation capability. The comparison therefore suggests that organizations should adopt a contingency-oriented leadership strategy, utilizing authoritarian leadership during periods of acute crisis while progressively introducing participative communication, employee involvement, and knowledge-sharing practices during post-crisis recovery. Such an integrated approach enables organizations to preserve operational efficiency without sacrificing long-term adaptability, employee development, and sustainable organizational performance.

3.3. Participative Leadership Strengthens Collaboration and Stakeholder Relationships

Participative leadership as one of the most influential managerial approaches for fostering organizational collaboration, employee engagement, and stakeholder relationships across the selected Nollywood films. This leadership style is most prominently portrayed in *30 Days in Atlanta*, where leadership influence is exercised through interpersonal communication, teamwork, mutual trust, and collaborative interaction rather than through formal authority or hierarchical control. Unlike authoritarian leaders who rely on positional power, participative leaders gain legitimacy by encouraging dialogue, listening to multiple viewpoints, and involving others in solving organizational and interpersonal challenges. Throughout the film, leadership emerges as a



relational process in which influence is built through cooperation and shared experiences rather than command-and-control mechanisms. The analysis suggests that leadership effectiveness is determined not solely by decision-making authority but also by the leader's ability to cultivate positive social relationships that support organizational cohesion and collective action.

The findings further demonstrate that participative leadership significantly improves internal organizational collaboration by encouraging employees and organizational members to become active participants in managerial decision-making. Rather than centralizing authority within senior management, leaders distribute responsibilities according to members' competencies and encourage constructive discussions before strategic decisions are made. This collaborative process creates an organizational climate characterized by openness, mutual respect, and psychological safety, enabling employees to communicate ideas, express concerns, and contribute innovative solutions without fear of negative consequences. As employees become increasingly involved in organizational activities, they develop stronger feelings of ownership and accountability toward organizational outcomes. Consequently, participative leadership strengthens employee commitment because organizational success is perceived as a shared responsibility rather than an exclusive managerial obligation.

Another important finding concerns the role of participative leadership in strengthening organizational communication and stakeholder relationships. The comparative analysis reveals that leaders who consistently engage employees, partners, and external stakeholders in organizational dialogue are better able to build trust and maintain long-term collaborative relationships. Communication within participative organizations is characterized by reciprocal information exchange rather than one-way managerial instructions. Leaders actively seek feedback, clarify organizational expectations, and ensure that stakeholders understand the rationale underlying managerial decisions. This transparent communication process minimizes organizational misunderstanding, reduces interpersonal conflict, and strengthens cooperation among organizational members. Furthermore, stakeholder involvement enables leaders to make more balanced strategic decisions because multiple perspectives contribute to identifying organizational opportunities and potential risks. These findings indicate that stakeholder engagement functions not merely as a communication strategy but as a strategic organizational capability that improves managerial effectiveness.

The analysis also reveals that participative leadership enhances organizational adaptability by integrating diverse knowledge and experiences into strategic decision-making. Organizations operating in dynamic environments require continuous access to information from employees, customers, business partners, and other stakeholders to respond effectively to environmental change. Participative leaders facilitate this process by creating collaborative platforms where organizational members exchange knowledge, evaluate alternative strategies, and jointly develop solutions to emerging business challenges. Such collaborative learning improves organizational flexibility because decisions are informed by collective expertise rather than individual managerial judgment alone. Moreover, shared decision-making increases employees' psychological ownership of organizational change initiatives, thereby reducing resistance to change and improving implementation effectiveness. The findings therefore demonstrate that participative leadership contributes not only to stronger interpersonal relationships but also to greater organizational resilience through continuous learning and adaptive decision-making.



Participative leadership represents a sustainable managerial approach capable of simultaneously improving organizational effectiveness, employee engagement, and stakeholder collaboration. Unlike leadership models that emphasize centralized authority, participative leadership develops organizational capacity by strengthening communication networks, encouraging collective responsibility, and promoting inclusive governance practices. The selected Nollywood films illustrate that successful leaders recognize organizational members and stakeholders as strategic partners whose knowledge and perspectives contribute directly to organizational success. Consequently, participative leadership should be viewed as an organizational capability that supports innovation, strengthens stakeholder trust, enhances decision quality, and improves long-term organizational performance. These findings reinforce the importance of collaborative leadership practices for organizations operating within increasingly complex, knowledge-intensive, and stakeholder-oriented business environments.

Table 3 Characteristics of Participative Leadership Representation in Selected Nollywood Films

Participative Leadership Dimension	Leadership Representation	Organizational Behaviour	Managerial Implication
Collaborative Decision-Making	Leaders involve employees and stakeholders in identifying problems and determining strategic solutions.	Employees actively participate in organizational decisions and demonstrate stronger ownership.	Improves decision quality and organizational commitment.
Open Communication	Leaders encourage dialogue, active listening, and reciprocal information exchange across organizational levels.	Organizational communication becomes more transparent, inclusive, and responsive.	Strengthens trust and minimizes organizational conflict.
Employee Empowerment	Responsibilities are delegated according to competencies while encouraging initiative and accountability.	Employees develop confidence, motivation, and greater responsibility for organizational outcomes.	Enhances employee engagement and productivity.
Stakeholder Engagement	Leaders build collaborative relationships with internal and external stakeholders through consultation and cooperation.	Stronger partnerships and mutual trust support organizational sustainability.	Improves stakeholder satisfaction and long-term organizational relationships.
Organizational Adaptability	Diverse perspectives and collective knowledge are integrated into	Organizations become more flexible, innovative, and responsive to	Strengthens organizational resilience and sustainable



strategic making.	decision-	environmental changes.	competitive advantage.
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Table 3 summarizes the major characteristics of participative leadership identified across the selected Nollywood films. The comparative analysis demonstrates that participative leadership extends beyond employee involvement by establishing an organizational culture grounded in collaboration, transparency, mutual trust, and shared responsibility. These managerial practices strengthen organizational effectiveness because they encourage continuous communication, improve stakeholder engagement, and facilitate collective problem-solving in complex business environments. The findings further indicate that organizations adopting participative leadership are better positioned to adapt to changing market conditions, sustain productive stakeholder relationships, and enhance long-term organizational performance through inclusive governance and collaborative decision-making. Consequently, participative leadership emerges as a critical managerial capability for organizations seeking to balance operational efficiency with employee empowerment and stakeholder-oriented management.

3.4. Leadership Effectiveness Is Shaped by Cultural Context and Organizational Environment

Leadership effectiveness in the selected Nollywood films is not determined solely by individual managerial competencies but is fundamentally shaped by the interaction between cultural values, organizational structures, institutional expectations, and environmental conditions. Across *Lionheart*, *The CEO*, *The Last Flight to Abuja*, and *30 Days in Atlanta*, leaders operate within organizational settings that possess distinct cultural norms, governance systems, and stakeholder expectations, requiring them to continuously adapt their leadership behaviours. Rather than portraying leadership as a universally applicable managerial model, the films consistently depict leadership as a socially embedded process in which organizational success depends on leaders' ability to understand and respond to contextual realities. Indigenous cultural values such as respect for seniority, collectivism, family responsibility, interpersonal trust, and community orientation frequently influence managerial decisions alongside conventional business objectives. Consequently, leadership effectiveness emerges not from strict adherence to a single leadership style but from leaders' capacity to align managerial practices with the cultural and organizational environments in which they operate.

The findings further reveal that different organizational contexts require different combinations of leadership behaviours. In *Lionheart*, leadership effectiveness is closely associated with relational trust, family commitment, and long-term organizational sustainability because the business is deeply embedded within family ownership and communal values. The leader succeeds by maintaining organizational harmony while introducing strategic innovations that preserve the firm's competitive position. Conversely, *The CEO* portrays leadership within a multinational corporate environment where managerial effectiveness depends on professionalism, strategic competitiveness, performance evaluation, and executive accountability. Decision-making is more formalized, organizational authority is clearly structured, and leaders are expected to balance corporate governance with business performance. Meanwhile, *The Last Flight to Abuja* illustrates a crisis-driven organizational environment in which centralized authority, rapid coordination, and operational discipline become essential for organizational survival. These contrasting settings demonstrate that organizational



context substantially influences the leadership behaviours considered effective in achieving organizational objectives.

Another important finding concerns the influence of national and cultural values on managerial decision-making processes. The selected films consistently portray leaders who integrate formal organizational responsibilities with broader societal expectations regarding ethics, interpersonal relationships, and collective welfare. Leadership decisions frequently consider not only organizational efficiency but also family obligations, social reputation, communal harmony, and moral responsibility. Such representations differ from purely transactional management approaches by emphasizing that organizational leaders remain accountable to multiple stakeholders beyond shareholders or senior executives. This culturally embedded leadership perspective highlights the importance of relational legitimacy, where leaders earn influence through integrity, empathy, and social responsibility rather than through positional authority alone. Consequently, managerial effectiveness is portrayed as a multidimensional construct that integrates economic performance with cultural legitimacy and stakeholder acceptance.

The comparative analysis also demonstrates that highly effective leaders exhibit behavioural flexibility by combining multiple leadership approaches according to changing organizational circumstances. Rather than relying exclusively on transformational, participative, or authoritarian leadership, successful leaders selectively integrate these approaches as organizational conditions evolve. During periods of organizational stability, leaders emphasize participative communication, employee empowerment, and collaborative governance to strengthen organizational commitment and innovation. However, during financial crises or operational emergencies, the same leaders shift toward more directive leadership behaviours to ensure rapid coordination and effective resource allocation. Once organizational stability has been restored, participative and transformational practices re-emerge to facilitate organizational learning, employee development, and long-term strategic renewal. This adaptive leadership behaviour reflects the principles of contingency-based management, suggesting that managerial effectiveness depends less on the superiority of any single leadership style than on leaders' ability to diagnose organizational situations and adjust their behaviours accordingly.

Leadership representation in Nollywood films supports a contingency-oriented understanding of organizational behaviour in which leadership effectiveness emerges through the dynamic interaction of leadership style, organizational environment, and cultural context. The films demonstrate that successful managerial practice requires strategic competence, cultural intelligence, interpersonal sensitivity, and contextual adaptability rather than universal application of standardized leadership models. By portraying leaders operating within diverse organizational environments including family enterprises, multinational corporations, public institutions, and crisis organizations Nollywood provides valuable qualitative insights into culturally grounded leadership practices relevant to emerging economies. These findings contribute to business and management literature by illustrating that leadership development should incorporate contextual awareness alongside technical managerial competencies, enabling future leaders to navigate increasingly complex organizational environments characterized by cultural diversity, stakeholder expectations, and continuous environmental change.

Table 4 Contextual Factors Shaping Leadership Effectiveness in Selected Nollywood Films

Organizational	Dominant	Leadership	Contextual Influence	Organizational
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Context	Characteristics		Outcome
Family Business (Lionheart)	Transformational and relational leadership emphasizing trust, collaboration, and long-term sustainability.	Family values, collective responsibility, and interpersonal trust influence managerial decisions.	Strong employee commitment, organizational continuity, and strategic adaptability.
Multinational Corporation (The CEO)	Strategic and performance-oriented leadership with formal governance and executive accountability.	Corporate governance, competition, and organizational professionalism shape leadership practices.	Improved strategic competitiveness and managerial accountability.
Crisis Organization (The Last Flight to Abuja)	Directive and authoritarian leadership emphasizing rapid decision-making and centralized coordination.	High-risk environment and operational urgency require immediate executive action.	Efficient crisis response and operational control, but limited organizational learning.
Cross-Cultural Environment (30 Days in Atlanta)	Participative and collaborative leadership emphasizing communication, teamwork, and stakeholder engagement.	Cultural diversity and interpersonal relationships encourage inclusive decision-making.	Enhanced collaboration, stakeholder trust, and organizational flexibility.
Cross-Context Comparison	Adaptive leadership integrating transformational, participative, and directive behaviours.	Leadership behaviour changes according to organizational complexity and cultural expectations.	Greater organizational resilience, leadership effectiveness, and sustainable performance.

Table 4 summarizes how leadership effectiveness varies across organizational and cultural contexts represented in the selected Nollywood films. The comparison demonstrates that no single leadership style consistently produces superior organizational outcomes across all settings. Instead, leadership effectiveness is contingent upon leaders' ability to interpret contextual demands and align their managerial behaviours with organizational objectives, stakeholder expectations, and cultural values. Family-owned businesses prioritize relational trust and collective responsibility, multinational corporations emphasize strategic governance and performance, crisis organizations require centralized authority, while cross-cultural environments depend on participative communication and collaboration. These findings reinforce the contingency perspective of organizational behaviour by demonstrating that adaptive leadership,



rather than rigid adherence to a particular leadership model, constitutes the most effective managerial capability for sustaining organizational performance in increasingly dynamic and culturally diverse business environments.

3.5. Discussion: Leadership Representation as a Contextual Managerial Capability in Organizational Behaviour

The findings demonstrate that transformational leadership constitutes the most influential leadership representation in the selected Nollywood films, particularly in organizational settings characterized by strategic uncertainty and business transformation. Leaders who emphasized vision, innovation, employee empowerment, and collaborative decision-making consistently generated stronger organizational adaptability and employee commitment. This finding strongly supports Transformational Leadership Theory, which argues that leaders achieve superior organizational performance by inspiring followers to transcend individual interests and pursue collective organizational goals (Bass & Avolio B. J., 1994). The findings are likewise consistent with Tian et al. (2023), who emphasized that transformational leaders facilitate organizational change by motivating followers to embrace higher levels of commitment and responsibility. Within the context of organizational behaviour, employee empowerment portrayed in *Lionheart* illustrates that transformational leadership strengthens psychological ownership, organizational learning, and strategic resilience. These findings further corroborate Paesano (2023), who argue that organizations characterized by participative leadership and employee involvement generally exhibit higher organizational commitment, innovation capability, and long-term performance than organizations relying primarily on hierarchical control.

The second finding highlights the dual nature of authoritarian leadership within organizational crisis management. The analysis demonstrates that centralized authority enables rapid coordination, efficient decision-making, and disciplined execution during emergencies, particularly in *The Last Flight to Abuja*. These findings support the contingency perspective proposed by Campbell & Fiedler (1968), which argues that leadership effectiveness depends on the compatibility between leadership style and situational characteristics rather than the superiority of a single leadership approach. During highly uncertain and time-sensitive situations, directive leadership may become necessary because organizational survival requires immediate decisions and clear authority structures. However, the present findings also reveal that prolonged authoritarian leadership suppresses employee participation, organizational communication, and continuous learning. This observation aligns with Örténblad (2018), who argue that organizations achieve sustainable improvement through learning processes involving reflection, dialogue, and feedback rather than rigid compliance. Consequently, while authoritarian leadership may enhance operational efficiency during crises, organizations require more participative leadership practices during post-crisis recovery to transform operational experiences into organizational knowledge.

Another important contribution of this study concerns the role of participative leadership in strengthening organizational collaboration and stakeholder engagement. The findings indicate that leaders who encourage communication, shared decision-making, and mutual trust create stronger organizational commitment and more sustainable stakeholder relationships. These findings are highly consistent with Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory, which suggests that high-quality relationships between leaders and followers increase trust, cooperation, job satisfaction, and organizational



citizenship behaviour (Vermeulen et al., 2022). Likewise, Mahajan et al. (2023) argues that organizational success depends on leaders' ability to balance the interests of multiple stakeholders rather than focusing exclusively on internal managerial objectives. The selected Nollywood films demonstrate that collaborative leadership improves communication quality, strengthens employee ownership, and enhances organizational flexibility because strategic decisions benefit from diverse perspectives and collective expertise. These results reinforce previous organizational behaviour research suggesting that participative leadership contributes directly to innovation capability, organizational adaptability, and sustainable organizational performance (Allen, 1998).

Perhaps the most significant finding concerns the contextual nature of leadership effectiveness. Rather than identifying one universally superior leadership style, the study demonstrates that leadership effectiveness depends upon leaders' ability to adapt their managerial behaviours according to organizational conditions, institutional structures, and cultural environments. This finding provides strong empirical support for Contingency Theory, which emphasizes that effective leadership results from the alignment between leadership behaviour and situational demands (Yang & Jiang, 2023). Furthermore, the findings complement the GLOBE Project, which demonstrated that cultural values substantially influence leadership expectations, managerial legitimacy, and organizational effectiveness across societies (Shiferaw et al., 2023). In the selected Nollywood films, family businesses prioritize relational trust and collective responsibility, multinational corporations emphasize strategic competitiveness and governance, while crisis organizations require centralized coordination and operational discipline. Such diversity illustrates that leadership is fundamentally embedded within cultural and organizational contexts rather than existing as a universally standardized managerial practice.

The findings also contribute to the growing literature concerning organizational behaviour in emerging economies by demonstrating that leadership knowledge can be generated through culturally grounded media narratives. Previous leadership research has largely relied on Western organizational settings, often overlooking how local cultural values influence managerial behaviour and organizational decision-making (Audia & Brion, 2023; Hoque & Kaufman, 2024; Song et al., 2025). The present study extends this literature by conceptualizing Nollywood films as qualitative repositories of organizational knowledge that portray leadership practices rooted in African social institutions, indigenous values, family governance, and community-oriented management. Consequently, leadership representation in cinema should not be viewed merely as fictional storytelling but as a symbolic reflection of managerial realities that shape public understanding of organizational leadership. This perspective broadens organizational behaviour scholarship by integrating media representation into discussions of leadership development, organizational learning, and management education within culturally diverse contexts.

Leadership representation in Nollywood films constitutes a contextual managerial capability that bridges organizational behaviour theory with culturally embedded management practice. The four themes identified namely transformational leadership, authoritarian leadership, participative leadership, and context-dependent leadership effectiveness collectively demonstrate that successful leadership is inherently adaptive rather than prescriptive. Effective leaders combine strategic vision, collaborative communication, decisive authority, and cultural intelligence according to organizational circumstances, thereby strengthening employee engagement, organizational resilience,



stakeholder relationships, and long-term business sustainability. Accordingly, the study contributes theoretically by extending leadership scholarship beyond conventional organizational settings and contributes practically by recommending the integration of film-based case analysis into leadership development programmes, executive education, organizational behaviour courses, and management training. Through this interdisciplinary perspective, Nollywood cinema emerges as a valuable pedagogical and analytical resource for understanding contemporary leadership practices in dynamic and culturally diverse organizational environments.

4. Conclusions

This study examined leadership representation and managerial practices in selected contemporary Nollywood films through the perspective of organizational behaviour. The findings identified four dominant themes that characterize leadership practices within diverse organizational contexts. First, transformational leadership emerged as the most effective leadership approach for promoting organizational adaptability, employee empowerment, innovation, and long-term organizational sustainability. Second, authoritarian leadership proved effective in facilitating rapid decision-making and operational coordination during organizational crises but simultaneously constrained employee participation and organizational learning when applied beyond emergency situations. Third, participative leadership strengthened collaboration, organizational communication, employee engagement, and stakeholder relationships by encouraging shared responsibility and inclusive decision-making. Finally, the findings demonstrated that leadership effectiveness is highly contingent upon cultural values, organizational structures, and environmental conditions, indicating that successful leaders continuously adapt their leadership behaviours according to contextual demands rather than relying on a single managerial style.

The discussion further demonstrates that the findings are consistent with established leadership and organizational behaviour theories, including Transformational Leadership Theory, Contingency Theory, Leader–Member Exchange Theory, and Stakeholder Theory. More importantly, this study extends the leadership literature by positioning cinematic narratives as culturally embedded sources of managerial knowledge capable of enriching organizational behaviour research. Rather than functioning solely as entertainment, Nollywood films illustrate practical leadership challenges involving strategic decision-making, crisis management, organizational communication, employee empowerment, and stakeholder engagement. Accordingly, the study contributes theoretically by bridging film studies and business management through the concept of leadership representation as a contextual managerial capability. Practically, the findings suggest that Nollywood films may serve as valuable case-based learning resources for leadership development programmes, executive education, organizational behaviour courses, and managerial training by providing culturally grounded examples of leadership practices in emerging economies.

Despite these contributions, the study has several limitations. The analysis is limited to four purposively selected Nollywood films and relies exclusively on qualitative comparative content analysis, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings across broader organizational and cultural contexts. Furthermore, the study focuses on leadership representation within cinematic narratives without empirically examining audience interpretation, managerial perception, or organizational outcomes in real business settings. Future research is therefore encouraged to analyze a larger corpus of



African and international films, incorporate mixed-methods or quantitative research designs, and investigate how cinematic leadership representations influence leadership development, managerial decision-making, employee behaviour, and organizational performance. Comparative cross-cultural studies involving different film industries and business environments would also provide a deeper understanding of how cultural contexts shape leadership practices and organizational behaviour across diverse institutional settings.

Declaration of conflicting interests

All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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