

Patriarchy and the door through the glass-ceiling in Genevieve Nnaji's *Lion Heart*

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ABSTRACT: This study examined the concept of patriarchy in a typical African family setting and interrogated how the glass-ceiling was shattered in the film, *Lion Heart*. The study unravelled the ways patriarchy hindered the working class female characters in the film from competing effectively with their male counterparts. It also interrogated how the female characters negotiated with the patriarchal impediments and showcased instances of societal expectations that were not coherent with hegemonic patriarchy. The study adopted an ethnographic research design by utilizing non-participant observation and content analysis for the purpose of data collection and analysis respectively. The study revealed that patriarchy hindered the working class female characters from competing effectively with their male counterparts as evident in men's domineering attitude and tendencies in the movie. It was also found that female characters negotiated with patriarchal impediments by extricating themselves from embarrassing situations. The study revealed that the girl-child can occupy leadership position in family businesses and perform effectively which is contrary to the typical societal expectations in African hegemonic patriarchal society. In the movie, the female protagonist (Adaeze) demonstrated leadership skills which changed the narrative of hegemonic patriarchy. The study concluded that movies could be used as instruments in advocating for gender equality and social change in the society as well as for disseminating information to the general public.

KEYWORDS: Adaeze, Glass-Ceiling, *Lion Heart*, Nollywood, Patriarchy

I. INTRODUCTION

Patriarchy and the glass-ceiling are prominent phenomena in gender studies and they feature as major themes in Nigerian films. The Nigerian film industry produce movies popularly referred to as 'Nollywood.' They depict the totality of activities that take place in the film industry in Nigeria which has grown to become one of Africa's most famous industries whose movies have spread across Africa and the diaspora (Doghudje, 2020). The films are instruments for expressing popular opinion for impacting the people's culture and the African identity. Also, they convey the values of contemporary societies and for projecting major themes that form the basis for social discourse. Hence, they play major roles in reinforcing patriarchy which is a common practice in Nigeria. This implies that they accentuate male chauvinism and patriarchy. Patriarchy refers to a system characterised by unequal power relations between men and women and a systematic organisation of male supremacy and female subordination (Jimi, Salau&Folarin, 2022). Furthermore, it is a social system in which men hold primary power and dominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property (Aromona, 2016). Patriarchy is deeply entrenched in Nigeria such that power and authority are regarded as the prerogatives of men. This implies that the society emphasizes material advantages to males

and believes that leadership positions and power belong to them, while simultaneously placing constraints on the roles and activities of females (Ibbi, 2017).

Patriarchy and the glass-ceiling both combine to create barriers to women's advancement to top managerial positions in work environments. Specifically, the glass-ceiling is the invisible hard-to-see informal barriers to success that many women contend with in the work environment and that keeps them from getting pay raises and further opportunities (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 2014). It is an invisible but real barrier through which the next level of advancement can be seen but cannot be reached by a section of qualified and deserving employees who are mainly females or who are in the minority. This practice is discriminatory and has significant impact on women. The glass-ceiling metaphor in Nollywood films is the effect of the socio-cultural roles ascribed to women in Nigerian (Doghudje, 2020).

Most Nollywood movies portray women as victims of patriarchy and the glass-ceiling. Hence, their purpose of shooting these movies is to propagate stereotypical beliefs about men and women to viewers. Women often take up traditional roles and are portrayed as dependent, passive, weak and unable to advance in their careers, while men take up leadership and professional roles and are presented as dominant, aggressive and confident (Okafor, 2017; Okunna, 2005). For instance, these themes were depicted in the following movies, *King of boys*, *Gone forever*, *Sleep Walker and Tears and Sorrow*, where the central female characters were portrayed as helpless, subordinate and lacking confidence (Aromona, 2016; Amobi, 2013). These films portray women in a manner that reinforces their marginalisation.

The Nigerian film industry is prominent in portraying the subjugation of women in society especially through movies. For instance, citing Okome (1997), Uchendu and Shaka (2012) stated that despite the fact that the movie, *Living in Bondage* (1992) was released a long time ago, Nollywood movies have preferred themes centred on the idea of inherited patriarchal stereotypes of women. There is need for a change in this narrative such that salient issues that focus on gender equality, social change and the breaking down of unseen barriers to women's advancement are projected. That is why Olayiwola (2023) affirmed that, "While early Nollywood films may be guilty of female subjugation in its portraiture of the female gender as inferior and subservient to the male species, contemporary Nollywood films are changing this oppressive narrative in the way they position women in relation to men." Patriarchy is now being criticised in contemporary Nollywood movies but not much has been done in portraying women breaking through patriarchy and the glass-ceiling in Nollywood movies. Hence, this constitutes a gap in knowledge which this study intends to fill by examining patriarchy and the door through the glass-ceiling using Genevieve Nnaji's *Lion Heart* (December 21, 2018), a stereotype defying movie that presents a woman who is able to overcome the force of patriarchy and break through the glass-ceiling due to her competence and skill. It is a tale of women's strength and perseverance (Faniyi, 2019). This study therefore examined the concept of patriarchy in a typical African family setting and interrogated how the glass-ceiling in the movie was shattered by Adaye, the central character. It elucidated ways patriarchy impeded the working class females from competing effectively with their male counterparts in the film. It also examined how the female characters in the movie negotiated with the patriarchal impediments by illustrating instances of societal expectations that were not in line with hegemonic patriarchy.

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- a. What are the ways in which patriarchy impeded the working female characters from competing fairly with their male counterparts in Genevieve Nnaji's *Lion Heart*?
- b. How did the female characters in the film negotiate with the patriarchal impediments?
- c. What are some of the instances of societal expectations that were not coherent with hegemonic patriarchy in the film, *Lion Heart*?

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 The implications of patriarchy and the glass-ceiling on female work experiences.

Patriarchy is a male-dominated system that oppresses women through its social, political and economic institutions where men hold primary power and predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property (Makama, 2013). It is a system of social stratification and differentiation on the basis of sex that provides material advantages to males and places severe constraints on the roles and activities of females (Ademiluka, 2018). Patriarchy also refers to a social system that promotes male authority, dominance and supremacy over females in all areas of human endeavour (Ezenwa-Ohaeto, 2015). It does not recognise equality between men and women. For instance, in a patriarchal society, decent and traditional methods of sustaining ancestry or lineage are traceable through the males without any consideration of the females (Onwutuebe, 2019).

The glass-ceiling is an unacknowledged barrier to advancement in a profession, which mostly affect women and members of minorities. These barriers, according to Kagan (2022) are often unwritten and they restrict women from advancing. The glass-ceiling exists in virtually all work environments across the globe. The proportion of women in top management positions remains very low in most countries. In Malaysia, the participation of women in the workforce increased from 45.9% in 2005 to 54.3% in 2016. There was an obvious increase in female participation in the workforce but their representation in top management positions is still very low (Jauhar, 2018).

Patriarchy and the glass ceiling are major themes that feature in the Nigerian film industry. Doghudje (2019) affirmed that the movies feature men as aggressive and dominant characters who regularly occupy leadership positions in their professions. They are rarely portrayed in domestic settings or seen engaging in chores such as cooking, cleaning and taking care of children. Women are portrayed as weak, passive and dependent on men. Opeyemi (2008) noted that the Nigerian film industry portrays and reinforces the ideals of masculinity such that men are always in control, while women are subjugated and stereotyped. Okunna (2005) affirmed that the representation of women in Nigerian films remains “business as usual” and that the media are powerful for influencing what people think and talk about. Examples of Nollywood movies that depict instances of patriarchy and the glass-ceiling are: Kemi Adetiba’s *King of Boys* and Genevieve Nnaji’s *Lion Heart*. The former portrayed women as weak and dependent, and must remain as subordinates to their male counterparts. For instance, in the initial scene of the movie the central character’s mother was portrayed as a victim of gender-based violence from her husband. The central character (Eniola) goes through a lot in the hands of her male enemies while vying for a post in the political sphere (Osakpolor, 2021). On the other hand, *Lion Heart* changed the narrative by portraying women as people capable of occupying leadership positions and able to compete effectively with their male counterparts in organizations (Onwutuebe, 2019). It is an amazing story of the feminine chivalry of the protagonist, Adaeze, who fought through to thwart the schemes of misogynistic characters who tried to belittle her abilities (Faniyi, 2019). She showcased her ability to take charge of challenging situations pertaining to her father’s transport business. She rescued the company from bankruptcy, secured a merger with a Northern Transport Company and ensured a more virile and productive business; and at the end of the movie, she became the managing director of the company. In view of this, Olayiwola (2023) noted that Adaeze is a rare and brave character who makes *Lion Heart* a stereotype defying movie that has attempted to break the glass-ceiling. Hence, the film *Lion Heart* has championed gender equality issues and has been able to key into the sustainable development goal which focuses on achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls. In support of this, Onwutuebe (2019) affirmed that women can now get involved in filmmaking and with them being at the helm of affairs, more compelling tales about how patriarchy is conquered would be told. Furthermore, the film provides a way forward for the discussion of gender issues

and also acts as a benchmark for other female directors willing to portray women's roles in a way that is more genuine and reflective of their abilities and capacities (Doghudje, 2020). The media have long been identified as a tool for advocating gender stereotypes in the society. As a matter of fact, the digital media in particular have helped in institutionalising the gender stereotypes that existed in the past with a vulnerable youth audience (Akalili& Sari, 2021). In recent times, the media, through their exhibition of contemporary movies now serve as instruments in portraying women as people who possess the power to generate good images for women sometimes to the denigration of the other gender (Olayiwola, 2023).

3.2 Strategies for breaking the glass-ceiling and overcoming patriarchal impediments for females

Women, who are victims of patriarchy, are now beginning to stand in the face of any gender bias and harassment. They now speak bluntly about how they are maltreated in workplaces either by their managers or male colleagues (Think Marketing, 2022). Apart from being able to speak out in the face of maltreatment, women embrace "openness" which is a positive influence that empowers them to break the glass-ceiling for career advancement. The characteristics of openness are honesty, candidness, forward thinking and willing to learn (Bassir et. al, 2022).

Olayiwola (2023) observed that contemporary cinema in Nigeria has showcased just a few female producers and directors. They are however, gradually but efficiently changing the narration of women stories in Nigeria. Prominent among these women producers and directors are Genevieve Nnaji who directed with *Lion Heart*, Jadesola Osiberu who produced and directed *Isoken*, Kemi Adetiba who also directed *King of Boys* and *Wedding Party*. *Lion Heart* is a movie in which the protagonist's (Adaeze) competence and strength as a woman was tested by patriarchy in the face of several oppositions by male family members but she prevailed and her father's company which was almost bankrupt was handed over to her to lead (Doghudje, 2019). She was able to overcome the patriarchal impediments in the movie by avoiding embarrassing situations posed by her male counterparts and patriarchy apologist (Samuel Akah) during a Board Meeting. Ukpong (2012) suggested that training women to be assertive is another effective strategy for breaking the glass-ceiling and for overcoming patriarchal impediments in the work environment and for challenging the patriarchal structure of the African society. In the movie, another female character (Onyinye) overcame patriarchal impediment by being assertive and bold in scolding a police officer who locked Adaeze up in a cell.

Competence and requisite skills are also necessary tools required by women to compete effectively in a male dominated environment. Wirth (2001) suggested that potential women managers need to acquire training in different areas in order to gain broader experience. This would help increase their presence in the pool of future managers and they would eventually be equipped with the skills for successful and higher-level management positions. For instance, in the movie *Lion Heart*, the competence and professional skills of the female character (Adaeze) gave her the leverage to take over the management of her father's company due to his failing health.

3.3 Societal expectations incoherent with patriarchy and hegemony

Women have gradually started to occupy leadership positions in workplaces while some succeed their fathers who are business owners. The Nigerian film industry has started to showcase a few women as producers and directors. This is affirmed by Olayiwola (2023) who reiterated that the contemporary cinema in Nigeria has showcased few women as producers and directors, but that they are gradually changing the narration of women stories in the industry.

The prominent female character Adaeze is portrayed in roles that are traditionally associated with men in Nollywood movies and this is evidence of expectations incoherent with patriarchy and hegemony. She is portrayed as professionally inclined, highly educated, skilled, competent and intelligent. Furthermore, she is presented as a quintessential modern woman, powerful, ambitious and able to take control. She is a confident

woman who can contend with her oppressive male counterparts. These traits are mostly characteristics of men in Nollywood films and evidence of expectations incoherent with patriarchy and hegemony in a typical African society, including Nigeria (Naufina, 2021).

It is a common occurrence in recent times for male business owners to handover their companies to their daughters unlike in previous years when it was strictly the privilege and rights of sons. It has been realised that the female child could be more skilled and have a better understanding of the business than the male child. Hence, the impetus to bequeath the business to her. This is clear evidence of societal expectation that is incoherent with patriarchy and hegemony in African society. However, in cases where the male child does not signify interest in taking over the business, he receives support from his immediate family members to pursue his own dreams, provided that he excels in the career (Ogbogu, 2021).

IV. SYNOPSIS OF GENEVIEVE NNAJI'S *LIONHEART*

The movie was released on December 21, 2018, produced by Chinny Onwugbenu and directed by Genevieve Nnaji, a leading actress in the Nollywood industry. The movie revolved around the major character, Adaeze Obiagu, who happened to be the daughter of a renowned transport business owner, Chief Ernest Obiagu. He fell ill and was not able to oversee the affairs of the company, as a result of this, leadership positions had to be reshuffled within the company. He appointed his brother (Godswill Obiagu), a shrewd business man and the managing director of the company's branch in Owerri to oversee the day-to-day running of the various departments within the company, while Adaeze retained her position as the director of logistics. Initially, Adaeze became disappointed because her father did not entrust her with the company but having listened to her mother's advice she understood that her uncle's presence was for a good purpose. Later on, the company had liquidity challenges and almost led to it being sold. Adaeze and her uncle took up the challenge in saving the company from being bought by wolves in the form of an insider and a business rival.

It was a real bumpy-ride for Adaeze and her uncle in their attempt to save the family company. They both tried all they could to obtain loan from various banks but all efforts proved abortive. Later on, their efforts yielded positive results because Adaeze was able to come up with a better plan. She was able to locate a merger who happened to be a popular transport business owner from Northern Nigeria (Alhaji Mai-Kano). This brilliant idea was not initially welcomed by her father (Chief Obiagu) but as time went on Godswill, his brother, convinced him to see reasons with his daughter (Adaeze) and agree to merge his business with that of Alhaji Mai-Kano.

Chief Ernest Obiagu was able to merge his business with that of Alhaji Mai-Kano and this yielded positive result and they were able to pay off the debt they owed. Also, Chief Obiagu retired and appointed Adaeze as the managing director of *Lion Heart* Company. This pronouncement became an embarrassment and humiliation to Samuel Akah who was at the verge of selling the company to Mr Igwe Paschal. Adaeze triumphed and broke the glass-ceiling due to her skill and competence. She was able to overcome the force of patriarchy and the company was handed over to her to lead (Ogbogu, 2021).

V. METHOD

The ethnographic research design was adopted for this study. A non-participant observation was the instrument used in gathering data, while content analysis was utilised in analysing and reporting the data. According to Gheyle & Jacobs (2017), "content analysis is a research methodology used to interpret information that can take the form of texts, images, symbols, or audio data." In addition, the method is quite adaptable in that it can be driven by either theory or empirical data (Stemler, 2015). Hammersley (2007) perceives observation as a method that entails a researcher watching and listening to actions and events within some context over some period of time, and making a record of what has been witnessed.

The researcher utilised the non-participant observation method by watching the film several times in order to answer the research questions. Also, content analysis was used in interpreting the characters' conversations for

the purpose of understanding the concept behind the movie. The analysis focused on the textual component of the film. The units of analysis for this study were primarily the lead and supporting characters because they played vital roles in the film and served as integral part of the storyline through which the film’s message and purpose were communicated. Furthermore, the demographic variables of the lead and the supporting characters were assessed and presented on tables.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the discussion of the results generated from the content analysis and non-participant observation conducted for the study. The analysis of the results and discussion were hinged on the research questions. Also, the demographics of selected characters were presented.

6.1 Discussion of the demographic variables of selected characters

The demographic variables of the selected lead and supporting characters were assessed based on their age, education and character traits that defined their ambition. The lead characters assessed were: Adaeze, Godswill Obiagu and Chief Ernest Obiagu while the supporting characters assessed were Onyinye, Samuel Akah, Igwe Paschal and Alhaji Mai-Kano. The results are presented on the table below:

Table 1: Age range of selected characters

Lead Characters	Age Range		
	Young adult (25-44)	Middle aged (44-60)	Old adults (60 & above)
Adaeze	+		
Godswill Obiagu		+	
Chief Ernest Obiagu			+
Supporting Characters			
Onyinye	+		
Samuel Akah		+	
Igwe Paschal		+	
Alhaji Mai-Kano			+

Source: World Health Organisation (2015)

Table 1 shows the age range of the selected lead and supporting characters that were featured in this study. Their ages were grouped into three major categories using World Health Organisation standard of age classification namely: Young adults (25-44), middle aged (44-60) and old adults (60 and above). The positive sign (+) was used to indicate the age range of each of the characters. The table shows that Adaeze and Onyinye were young adults whose ages fell within (25-44) years. Godswill Obiagu, Samuel Akah and Igwe Paschal were middle aged, whose ages fell within (44-60) years, while Chief Ernest Obiagu and Alhaji Mai-Kano were old adults who were 61 years and above.

Godswill Obiagu, Samuel Akah and Igwe Paschal were depicted as middle aged adults in the film and were perceived as people who have advanced in their various careers. Godswill Obiagu, for instance, was the Managing Director of *Lion Heart* Company’s branch in Owerri, Nigeria, while Samuel Akah was the Director of Engineering services. Igwe Paschal on the other hand was the Chief Executive Officer of his own company

(IG motors). These levels of advancement by each of the middle aged characters in the table above are typical achievements of average middle aged adults. Chief Ernest Obiagu and Alhaji Mai-Kano were depicted as old adults in the movie and were generally regarded as people who had reached the peak of their various careers. In most cases, a lot of them retire from active service between the ages of 65 and 70. This was evident at the end of the film when Chief Obiagu handed the company over to Adaeze and retired as the Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director. On the other hand, Alhaji Mai-Kano’s son (Hamzat) joined his father in his routine business trips in order to be well-equipped to succeed his father after he retires. These actions demonstrated by Chief Obiagu and Alhaji Mai-Kano are typical of old adults in Nigerian societies.

Table 2: Highest level of education of the selected characters

Lead Characters	Level of Education		
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Adaeze			+
Godswill Obiagu		+	
Chief Ernest Obiagu		+	
Supporting Characters			
Onyinye			+
Samuel Akah			+
Igwe Paschal			+
Alhaji Mai-Kano			+

Table 2 shows the highest level of education possessed by the selected characters. The characters with primary and secondary school levels of education refer to those with little formal education; while the characters who have acquired tertiary education are those with high level of education. The table shows that Adaeze had tertiary education credentials, hence, she was revealed to be skilful, ambitious and able to rescue her family’s company from being bought by a business rival, Igwe Paschal. This demonstrated the fact that she was highly educated. The table showed that the male lead characters, Godswill and Chief Ernest Obiagu possessed secondary education credentials, which implies that they had little formal education. It is not surprising therefore to observe that Godswill was more coherent and eloquent in his native language (Igbo) with which he used in making some derogatory expressions in the film. An illustration of one of these expressions is given below:

Onyenzuzu (A fool)

All the supporting characters possessed tertiary education credentials and were highly educated as revealed in the results on the table. Onyinye for instance was a smart and intelligent young lady who was quite knowledgeable, while Samuel Akah and Igwe Paschal though highly educated had ulterior motives for the Obiagu’s family business. Alhaji Mai-Kano brilliantly interrogated Adaeze when she initially visited him in his home to tell him about her father’s company and his intention to merge with a business mogul from Northern Nigeria. This also means that Alhaji Mai-Kano was intelligent and highly educated.

Table 3: Traits of selected lead characters

Character Traits	Adaeze	Godswill	Chief Ernest Obiagu
Warm	+	+	
Patience	+		
Intelligence	+		+
Shrewd	+		+
Smart	+	+	
Accommodating	+		+
Competence	+		+

Table 3 shows the various traits possessed by the lead characters featured in this study. Results on the table reveal that Adaeze possessed outstanding traits that made her to stand out as the protagonist in the film. She was warm, patient, intelligent and smart enough to listen and obey her uncle, Godswill and was able to take charge of the company while her father was on sick leave. Also, she was shrewd and demonstrated high level competence in her duties; this qualified her to become the Managing Director of her father’s company. On the other hand, Godswill was revealed to lack patience, competence and intelligence. He was however revealed to be a smart character that was skilful in soliciting for loans with Adaeze from various banks in order to rescue the family from imminent bankruptcy. Chief Ernest Obiagu, the father of Adaeze, demonstrated some of the positive traits stated in the table. Results on the table further revealed that, he was a wise man through his use of proverbial statements during conversations. He was also a competent and shrewd business man who was very experienced in transportation ventures and was intelligent enough to hand his business over to his daughter, Adaeze. At the end of the movie, Chief Obiagu eventually merged his transport company with that of Alhaji Mai-Kano. Although, he was a bit reluctant to do so because of tribal sentiment, however, he saw the long-term benefit and decided to merge his transport company with that of Alhaji Mai-Kano.

Table 4: Traits of selected supporting characters

Character Traits	Onyinye	Samuel Akah	Igwe Paschal	Alhaji Mai-Kano
Warm		+		+
Patience			+	+
Intelligence	+			+
Shrewd			+	+
Smart	+			+
Accommodating				+
Competence	+			+

Table 4 shows the traits of the supporting characters in the film. Onyinye, Adaeze's personal assistant, was depicted to be intelligent, smart and competent in the film. She was very hardworking and meticulous during the discharge of her duties as a personal assistant but was impatient and unaccommodating. She was a bit arrogant and rude at the police man who locked Adaeze and Godswill up in a cell. Samuel Akah showcased a lot of negative traits in the movie and as a result of that he was regarded as one of the antagonist in the movie. Although, he was naturally known to be a calm individual in the film but the negative traits of being impatient, unaccommodating and unintelligent outweighed the little positive trait he possessed. For instance, he demonstrated a great level of incompetence in the discharge of his duties as the Director of Engineering Services in the company. This was demonstrated when he attempted to tarnish the image of the company by selling it to Igwe Paschal, an unscrupulous business man. Another character who was termed as the antagonist of the film was Igwe Paschal. He was a shrewd business man who joined Samuel Akah in buying the *Lion Heart* Company but at the end of the day their efforts in doing so was futile. At the end of the movie, he was utterly disgraced when he boldly stated the fact that Chief Obiagu did not have the capital to run his business. This depicted the fact that Igwe Paschal was not intelligent to know that all his efforts in trying to sabotage *Lion Heart* Company were in vain. Hence, he was the second antagonist in the film. Alhaji Mai-Kano was revealed to have exhibited a lot of positive traits in the film, such as being warm, patient, intelligent, shrewd, smart, accommodating and competent. These were exhibited when he warmly welcomed Adaeze and Godswill to his home at the time they wanted to bring to his notice about the need to merge his transport company with *Lion Heart*. He was patient and tolerated Chief Obiagu's unwelcoming attitude at the time they were to meet and deliberate on the probability of merging their businesses.

6.2 Discussion of Research Questions

The first research question interrogated the various ways in which patriarchy impeded the working female characters from competing with their male counterparts in the movie, *Lion Heart*. Analysis of the first research question showed how the prominent working male character in *Lion Heart* (Mr Samuel Akah) always tried to dominate and control the working female characters. However, the strength and competence of the prominent female character (Adaeze) tried to fight this force of patriarchy. This is also in line with the assumption that Adaeze fought through to thwart the schemes of misogynistic oppositions who belittled her abilities (Faniyi, 2019). For instance, in the movie, Mr Samuel Akah (the Director of Engineering Services at *Lion Heart* Company) was always at loggerheads with Adaeze and contended with her. She was confident, powerful, educated and ambitious. Mr Akah's continued confrontations were targeted at sabotaging her efforts and the possibility of becoming the managing director of the company. Evidences of these are shown in the movie when a Board Meeting was to be held where Adaeze was expected to make a presentation. Mr Samuel Akah advised the owner of *Lion Heart* Company (Chief Obiagu) to hurriedly commence the meeting despite the fact that Adaeze was yet to arrive. He offered to make the presentation instead of Adaeze by claiming that he was more capable to make the presentation rather than Adaeze. This incident reinforces how patriarchy tried to impede the working female characters from competing with their male counterparts in the movie. An illustration of Mr Samuel Akah's conversation with Chief Obiagu on this is provided below:

Samuel: I think we should start now, I know just as much as Adaeze regarding this presentation, she can join us later on...

Samuel: Chief, if I may interrupt you, I believe I speak for the rest of the board when I say we really respect your judgement. We all have contributed to the success of this company, even though some more than others; you are right, this company needs someone with the right kind of vision and drive to take the wheel of this company...

Chief Obiagu: You have always been very articulate Samuel, we are all a family, and family is the ideal on which I started this company. In that spirit, I now name my replacement...

Another instance of the way patriarchy impeded the working female characters from competing fairly with their male counterparts was when Mr Igwe Paschal (Chief Executive Officer of IG motors) attempted to buy the company from Chief Obiagu. He saw Adaeze as a stumbling block in this attempt and tried to get her out of the process. Mr Igwe Paschal had a secret phone conversation with one of the bankers Adaeze and Godswill (Chief Obiagu's brother) had an appointment with in order to collect a loan that will help the company offset the huge depth incurred. In his conversation, he wanted the banker to deliberately waste their time so that their plan to get the loan would be futile and he would succeed in buying up the company so that Adaeze will not be able to succeed her father in the management of the company. Excerpts of the conversation are presented below:

Mr Paschal (on-phone): ...use that against them

Banker: Okay Sir...

Mr Paschal: Good...don't rush...take your time

Banker: Yeah...okay sir

Mr Paschal: The minute they get there...

Banker: Yeah, I think they are here already...

Mr Paschal: Good, waste their precious time

Banker: I'll handle it

Mr Paschal: I don't want to be disturbed

Banker: I'll take care of it, Sir

The conversation above indicates that Mr Igwe Paschal is a patriarchy apologist and this was depicted through the way he was hell bent on buying the company from Chief Obiagu for his own selfish interest. This equally plays out in a typical Nigerian society where women are constantly denied leadership position by the men. It also confirms that as far as the underrepresentation of women is concerned in Nigerian films, it remains "business as usual" (Okunna, 2005).

Answers to the second research questions were drawn from instances in the film that demonstrated how the female working characters were able to negotiate the patriarchal impediments. The prominent female character (Adaeze) found ways to sort herself out despite the various patriarchal impediments that threatened to constitute barriers to her advancement. A major approach she adopted was to extricate herself from any embarrassing circumstance that could make her a subject of ridicule. For instance, in the movie, Adaeze arrived late at the Board Meeting because she was involved in sorting out a major crisis that involved staff of the *Lion Heart* Company. Mr Samuel Akah, who always contended with her, was at the verge of taking over the presentation, but Adaeze stepped in. Adaeze apologised to the entire Board Members including her father Chief Obiagu for arriving late; and took over the presentation. An excerpt from the movie to support this is provided below:

Adaeze: Apologies for the lateness gentlemen, I'm sorry.

The above statement made by Adaeze showed that she extricated herself from being embarrassed and queried; and she was able to assert herself by taking over the presentation. It is worthy of note that, in most Nollywood movies, a female character like Adaeze would have opted to wait outside or not show up at the Board Meeting. Adaeze stood tall and was able to negotiate the patriarchal impediments that the incident described above would have constituted. Little research has showcased women as people who are able to extricate themselves from embarrassing situations while negotiating patriarchal impediments; hence, this finding is a novel one.

Another female character in the movie called Onyinye, who was Adaeze's personal assistant, was able to negotiate patriarchal impediments by being assertive and able to speak out. This adopted approach was able to make her overcome various instances where she would have been subjugated. For instance, in the movie Onyinye expressed her disappointment at the police and yelled at them for locking up Adaeze and Mr Godswill Obiagu (her uncle) in the cell when they were trying to solicit for loans from various Banks to offset the debt of the company. She particularly got angry with the police for not taking into consideration the positions they occupy in the company and their status before hurriedly arresting them. This is evident in Onyinye's conversation below:

Onyinye: I can't believe they would actually lock you up in here...like, una know who she be?

The patriarchal impediment in this context is the police officer, while the negotiation is the fact that Onyinye was able to speak out and scold the police officer. Another instance of how the female working characters were able to negotiate patriarchal impediments in the film was when Adaeze reprimanded Mr Samuel Akah at the Board Room for organising and inviting Mr Igwe Paschal to an emergency meeting despite the fact that he was desperate to buy up, liquidate and take over the company. This is evident in the excerpt below:

Adaeze: What is he doing here...and in my father's chair?

Samuel: Calm down, calm down. Mr Paschal Igwe is here because I invited him to come here, and because he has something important to share with the board.

Adaeze further reprimanded Samuel Akah for speaking ill of her family especially at the time that they were experiencing financial difficulty. Samuel Akah spoke evil of Adaeze and her uncle (Godswill Obiagu) and tried to malign them in the presence of the board members. However, Adaeze convinced them not to listen to Mr Samuel Akah and Mr Igwe Paschal. She also made them understand the consequences of doing so. This action by Adaeze demonstrated that her confidence and capacity to handle the situation was a strategy for negotiating the patriarchal impediment. It also corroborates the findings of Think Marketing (2022) who found that "women now speak bluntly of how they are maltreated in workplaces either by their managers and male colleagues".

The third research question interrogated instances of societal expectations that are not coherent with hegemonic patriarchy. It is a common practice in most Nigerian families and as depicted in Nollywood movies for the male chief executive officers or owners of companies to appoint their male children as their successor. Also, most of them name their businesses with the inclusion of the phrase "and sons" which is a clear demonstration of patriarchy. *Lion Heart* tried to change the narrative by providing instances that are not coherent with hegemonic patriarchy. For instance, in the film, Chief Obiagu (The Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of *Lion Heart* Company) had to step down as Executive Officer and Managing Director for a while due to health reasons but the company needed new leadership to carry on with the transactions. As a result of this, he initially appointed his brother (Godswill Obiagu) who was the Managing Director of the company's branch at Owerri to oversee the day-to-day running of the company, while Adaeze remained the Director of Logistics. The societal expectation here is that is not coherent with hegemonic patriarchy is the fact that Adaeze had to take charge of the company as a result of her father's ill-health with the help of her uncle (Godswill Obiagu). This view is corroborated by Olayiwola (2023) who observed that the central character (Adaeze) in *Lion Heart* rescued the

company from imminent bankruptcy, secured a merger with a northern transport company and ensured a more virile and productive business. If it were to be a typical Nigerian society, the entire business would have been hijacked by Godswill Obiagu while Adaeze would have been side-lined and denied the privilege of taking control of the company.

VII. CONCLUSION

Patriarchy and the glass-ceiling are the prominent phenomena in Nollywood movies and women are typically portrayed as subordinated individuals. This study has revealed that the movie, *Lion Heart*, was able to change the narrative by revealing how working female characters were able to fight the force of patriarchy through their strength and competence in the film. It also illustrated how the working female characters extricated themselves from embarrassing situations in order to negotiate the patriarchal impediments. It also demonstrated the fact that females can take up leadership roles in male-dominated environments, which is a societal expectation that is not coherent with hegemonic patriarchy. They however need to train and acquire the requisite skills to qualify for such leadership roles. This should be the driving force in choosing a successor to take up family businesses. Owners of businesses should therefore assess their children's individual abilities rather than making a biased choice due to patriarchal beliefs. This research demonstrates the fact that movies could be used as instruments of understanding and for disseminating information to the general public. Since communication could be understood in cultural contexts, televised movies such as *Lion Heart* has been used as a tool by Genevieve Nnaji in advocating for gender equality and social change in the Nigerian society.

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