



Journal of Natural Language and Linguistics (JNLL)

ISSN: 2995-9837 (ONLINE)

VOLUME 4 ISSUE 1 (2026)



ABC



PUBLISHED BY
E-PALLI PUBLISHERS, DELAWARE, USA

Wasted Sperms, Lost Ovaries: Linguistic Opposition and Reception of Cross-Dressing in the Nigerian Social Media Space

Abideen David Amodu¹, Kingsley Okwuruoha Ikeokwu², Abiodun Peter Ekundayo²

Article Information

Received: April 05, 2025

Accepted: May 08, 2025

Published: February 1, 2026

Keywords

*Critical Discourse Analysis,
Cultural Studies, Digital Media,
Language, Nigerian Queer,
Sexualities*

ABSTRACT

The representations and receptions of gender and sexuality borderline-crossing actions, such as cross-dressing, or homosexuality and homosexual narratives, have always sparked negative reactions among Nigerians in real-life or digital spaces. This paper approaches the discourse from another perspective by paying attention to the ‘minorities within a minority,’ which are MtF cross-dressers. We examined public engagements and reactions to a video of one of Nigeria’s famous cross-dressers and self-proclaimed drag queen, James Brown, which was posted on a Facebook platform. We sampled 20 of the comments to examine the perspectives of Nigerians concerning MtF cross-dressing. Through the comments, we examined how opposition to MtF cross-dressing is communicated through various linguistic tropes or markers by the commenters, using Critical Discourse Analysis as a framework. The reception of MtF cross-dressing in Nigeria is negative, and in line with the findings of previous studies, Nigerians draw upon culture, religion, and standards of sanctity to substantiate their opposition against cross-dressing.

INTRODUCTION

“If only your dad used condom that day. Wasted sperm”. Although we live in a world where boundaries are pushed, there are limits to ‘pushing’ in Nigerian society, especially when it involves men’s gendered roles and constructs (Hyson, 2021). Most narratives about men taking up the roles that have been socially constructed roles of women are often met with strong debates including opposition and blatant rejection (Lavenda, 2023). The discourse has become more intense with the presence of social media, which has the affordance of communicating information to a large heterogeneous audience; and in the same vein, allows people to connect online without having to know each other before (Odedairo, 2023).

The problem of gender roles and norms transcends real-life experiences to include debates on social media. Speaking of gender behaviour, in particular, dressing is one of the markers of gender boundaries in Nigeria. There are kinds of dressing approved for men and women, which both sexes are expected to adhere to (Nwigwe, 2022). However, there are boundary pushers in Nigeria today; people who disagree with the social construction of gendered dressing. These people have often termed cross-dressers because they wear clothing and apparel that do not socially belong to their gender. In Nigeria, there are very few cross-dressers and many of them are celebrities in their own rights. They include the 1981-born Denrele Edun (popularly known as Denrele), the 1991-born Idris Okunleye Olarenwaju (popularly known as Bobrisky), the 1998-born Anthony Daniel (popularly known as Jay Boogie), and the youngest, whose video analysis is also the focus of this research is the 1999-born, James Chukwueze Obialor (popularly known as James Brown). These cross-dressers are males

by sex but identify as ‘women’ and model as female.

While some Nigerians show support for homosexuality and cross-dressing, many other Nigerians, including social groups, institutions, and scholars in academia have rebuffed cross-dressing and homosexuality in general (Nwigwe, 2022; Onanuga, 2023). Therefore, in this study, we examine the reactions of Nigerians to cross-dressing based on a video of one of Nigeria’s cross-dressers, James Chukwueze Obialor popularly known as James Brown, which was posted on the Facebook page of AKPraise.com on May 28, 2022, and had gathered more than 68,000 views in less than 2 hours after it was posted. Despite Nigerians’ resentment towards dressing, cross-dressing has been existing even before the advent of social media in Nigeria. There are quite a number of cross-dressers in Nigeria but, four of them remain the most popular: Denrele Edun, Idris Olarenwaju Okuneye Anthony Daniel, and James Chukwueze Obialor, became famous after a television interview where he was interviewed alongside other suspected ‘gay’ men who were arrested in 2018. He quickly drew the media’s attention when he said repeatedly, “They didn’t caught me”. Between publicly making a grammatical blunder and the justification of an unwarranted arrest, the attention of Nigerians was drawn to him. James’ position was that the Nigerian law prohibiting same-sex marriage and relationships stated that people caught in the act would be prosecuted. James however claimed that he was not caught in the act; therefore, he should not have been arrested. He was however moved to the Ikoyi Correctional Facility alongside 46 others where they awaited trial for one month after which the case was dismissed by Justice Rilwan Aikawa because of the “lack of diligent prosecution” (Okanlawon, 2020). Since

¹ Institute for Social Science Research, University of Queensland, Australia

² Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria

* Corresponding author’s e-mail: abideend18@gmail.com

then, the young now-media personality has continued to increase his media visibility on Instagram and Facebook. However, this study is not concerned with all or other aspects of his personality, but the comments on his video are used to map and analyse Nigerian's perception and reception of MtF cross-dressing.

Language is a tool of communication; it is a conglomerate of conventional signs and symbols; a medium through which we express our ideas, feelings, thoughts, and emotions as human beings (Harris, 1996; Wilce, 2009). Language is the currency of the internet, and as such, it allows for a diverse range of expressions and interactions (Baron, 2003; Paolillo, 2001). In online spaces, just as in offline spaces, language is used to express support or opposition for various causes (Onanuga, 2023). The digital world amplifies these expressions, making them accessible to a global audience and allowing for the rapid dissemination of ideas and beliefs (Haythornthwaite, 2005; Westera, 2012).

In the context of non-normative sexualities or boundary-crossing gender expressions, netizens often adopt language that leverages the affordances of free communication to make comments and voice opinions online, regardless of their severity (Alexander, 2002; Amodu, 2024; Onanuga, 2022). The internet promises a degree of anonymity, enabling users to position themselves in ways that may not be possible in face-to-face interactions (Kang *et al.*, 2013; Saunders *et al.*, 2015). This anonymity can embolden individuals to express controversial or extreme viewpoints without fear of immediate repercussion. For example, discussions around cross-dressing and gender nonconformity can attract a wide range of comments, from supportive affirmations to vehement opposition, reflecting the varied societal attitudes towards these issues (Irvine, 2005; Onanuga, 2023)

Nevertheless, language plays a significant role in the ways opposition to cross-dressing is expressed in online spaces. The choice of words used in these discussions is often heavily influenced by the social, cultural, and religious contexts of the individuals involved (Boneta & Fuentes, 2022). These contexts provide the backgrounds and pretexts for language construction and usage, shaping how messages are framed and understood. For instance, in more conservative societies, language opposing cross-dressing may stem from religious doctrines or traditional gender norms, while in more liberal environments, the discourse may center on personal freedom and individual rights (Ghalzai, 2020). Thus, the linguistic landscape of the internet becomes a battleground where differing worldviews and ideologies clash, with language serving as both the weapon and the shield in these interactions (Onanuga, 2023). This paper critically examines how Nigerians express opposition to male-to-female (MtF) cross-dressing through linguistic markers in Facebook comments, using public reactions to a video of James Brown as a case study. It explores how cultural, religious, and moral arguments are deployed to reject gender nonconformity in Nigerian digital spaces.

Homosexuality and cross-dressing in Nigeria

Ranked as the most unsafe country for homosexuals in the world by Forbes, there is a sentence of up to 14 years imprisonment for homosexuals, and 10 years imprisonment for anyone belonging or having affiliation with suchlike an association (Amodu, 2022). The law prohibiting homosexuality, known as the Same-sex marriage Prohibition Act (SSMPA) was passed into law in January 2014 under the administration of the former president of Nigeria, Dr Goodluck Ebele Jonathan. By a bigger token, 12 of Nigeria's 36 states have enacted the Sharia Law, which has its roots in Islam, the predominant religion of Northern Nigerians (Adejuwon, 2020; Amodu & Adereti, 2025; Osteien, 2007). The Sharia Law has a death sentence for homosexuals. Despite rigid legal frameworks and defined legal process for handling such cases, Nigerians who have anti-LGBT opinions continue to use social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to express their opposition toward transwomen and cross-dresses in the country (Onanuga, 2020). Despite these strong oppositions, four Nigerian cross-dressers, Denrele, Bobrisky, Jay Boogie, and James Brown, continue to expand their fan base through social media content creation and as such, whenever they are on the news, blogs or mainstream, and posted on social media, they spark adverse reactions from other Nigerians who express their views of despising them for cross-dressing.

While crossdressing which is essentially artistic and does not necessarily have to do with sexuality or sexual preferences, in Nigeria, crossing gender boundaries in form of representation and appearance is strongly linked to homosexuality. The reception of homosexuality in Nigeria has always been more negative than positive; thus, this position has been substantiated by studies related to homosexuality reception and homophobia in Nigeria such as the works of Adamu (2019), Amengaghawon & Ayantade (2019), Okanlawon (2019), (Onanuga, 2020, 2021, 2022), Onanuga & Alade (2020), and Ukou *et al* (2020). The degree of risk ranging from minor injuries to major injuries, mental affliction and ultimately death, homosexuals experience in Nigeria has made it less possible for them to come out of their closets and publicly display or navigate their sexualities. There is a nexus between the negative perceptions and reception and risks and resilience of Nigerian homosexuals. This translates that while being homosexual is illegal in Nigeria, Nigerian homosexuals face the double problems of negative perception and reception of their sexualities, and the risks (and possible resilience) in navigating their sexualities in a homophobic society (Igundunasse, Odiase, & Alao, 2019; Oginni, Okanlawon & Ogunbajo, 2021; Okanlawon, 2017, 2019, & 2020).

The degree of negativity towards homosexuality varies from perspectives of reportage, angles of seeing, as well as notions of politics and religion; however, Nigerians seem not to stop at the SSMPA but continue to victimise homosexuality via various available and utilisable platforms.

For example, apart from field research on perceptions of homosexuality as the experiences of homosexuality in Nigeria, various avenues have also been used to further strengthen homophobic discourses and propaganda in Nigeria. For instance, Amengaghawon and Ayantade (2019) examine one of Nigeria's leading newspapers, *The Punch*, and how news concerning homosexuality is framed therein. After a thorough sampling and research, they found out that homosexuality is "framed mainly as illegality and negativity; not acceptable to the citizens". Similarly, Adamu (2019) corroborates the idea on a larger scale. She too, confirms that following the criminalisation of homosexuality in Nigeria, "the country's legislators enjoyed overwhelming support from the population on the issue".

However, it would be a brutal argument whether homosexuality is good or not or whether the SSMPA is right or not. While Onanuga and Alade (2020) argued that homosexuals should be left alone since they are only asserting their sexualities; on the other hand, Chinedu-Okeke and Obi (2021) argue that "the culture of homosexuality has become a canker worm eating into every fabric of society and leaving in its trail tales of woes as it has negatively impacted the lives of not only those involved in the act but has brought about a negative image of the Country". In the aspect of religion, Adejuwon's (2020) opinion is that the church should accept homosexuals who are prospective saints as they become willing to mend their ways should also be given the chance by the church", but this counters Okanlawon's findings that some heterosexual students show support for homosexuals and even "recommended non-discrimination of LGB (lesbian, gay, and bisexual) people" (parenthesis content mine), and Onanuga and Schmied's (2022) recommendation that homosexuals should be 'humanised' which means that issues concerning homosexuality should be looked into from the viewpoint of humanity, that they, like everybody else, are human first, and as such, should not be politicised. Another striking contribution is that of Odiase-Alegimenlen & Garuba (2014) who seem not to have taken a side but arguably have taken. In their paper, they argue that the criminalisation of homosexuality has been repelled by the international community "championed by Nations Human Rights Council, which say the present law against same-sex marriage is anti-human rights". In the same vein, they cited the Canadian government's call on Nigeria's passage of the bill criminalising same-sex marriage [and homosexuality at large] into law. They then asked:

If a sovereign state is free to govern its state and its citizenry in accordance with the laws of its land. Is it appropriate therefore for such State to be coerced into accepting a practice which it finds not compatible with its cultural values and customs as they offend natural justice equity and good conscience as well as public policy and morality?

While this question could be used to assert their views on homosexuality in Nigeria, I also feel that it is not enough

parameter to judge so, I present the last paragraphs of their conclusion. Finally, they concluded that:

The whole idea of same-sex marriage couples is about adult pleasure desires and nothing more. This, in our opinion, could be achieved without seeking the instrumentality of the law to gain recognition and legitimacy without tinkering with the traditional conception of marriage. Same-sex couples could as well go about their activities without seeking any license from the state or government for any form of legitimacy so long as the law of the land permits them. (Emphasis mine)

This means that the only thing they believe that same-sex marriage is all about is pleasure; they disagree with other advantages such as intimacy, the right to raise a child, and the positive impacts it has on reducing segregation, homophobic violence and its effects on society. The clause "so long the law of the land permits them" is also in furtherance of the opposition to homosexuality and the stance of the law which counters the first. They assert that homosexuals do not need the "instrumentality of the law to gain recognition and legitimacy without tinkering with the traditional conception of marriage". In Nigeria, if same-sex marriage must occur, it means that the traditional concepts of marriage (as something between or a man and other women), would be gone against. In the same vein, it states that "Same-sex couples could as well go about their activities without seeking any license from the state or government for any form of legitimacy so long as the law of the land permits them". This also means that gay people do not need statutory legislations to protect them from the hands of legal and illegal enforcers and it would also be important to inquire which law of the land permits such unions.

Since the criminalisation of homosexuality in Nigeria, it became inherently illegal to be homosexual in Nigeria, therefore, institutions do not make provisions that cater for homosexual persons. Considering what it means to be gay in Nigeria, Igundunasse, Odiase, and Alao (2019) investigated the phenomenon by interviewing Nigerian homosexuals. Their study explored the perceptions of homosexuality among the selected population as well as their hopes and aspirations. However, despite the hostility against homosexuals, they indirectly confirm fairly known places within the "Lagos metropolis with a larger gay population". From their findings, they underline body that the feeling of rejection runs through Nigerian homosexuals and given the fact that homosexuality is criminalised compounds the problem, which in turn, makes the Nigerian gay experience unique. Despite these difficulties, the research also finds out that homosexuals want to retain their identities even as the impulse to abide by the law is a constant pressure.

Despite strengthening opposition of queer sexualities in Nigeria, Nigerian homosexuals have also been coming out via various strategies, especially on social media platforms. In the same vein, they have also been using social media to garner support for homosexuality. Social media is also being used through various coming-out strategies

(Akinfenwa, 2021; Enodong & Calvin, 2018, Onanuga, 2020, 2021). Akinfenwa, for *The Guardian* (2021) pointed to Grindr's report that Nigeria ranked #3 in the number of users. He further states that "Social media now allows queer Nigerians unapologetically own and express their sexuality, for example, they incorporate vocabulary such as "gay," "homo" and "queer" in their profiles. They use the rainbow, a global emblem of LGBTQ activism in their handles and addresses". Onanuga (2020) affirms that the Nigerian queer community understands the potential and roles of social media platforms in communicating their views to the world. This is also corroborated by the affordance of social media to allow a virtual community where people can air their views and contend with social and political views. It can therefore be said that social media platforms have created novel public "public space for political discussion" and serve as an important tool for "political underdogs" (Gillmor, 2004; Lamidi, 2019; and Larsson, 2014). These communities may contain individuals who may or may not have like minds, but these virtual communities "are communities which are not restricted to a particular place or time" (Lamidi 2019, p. 79). Therefore, social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook have created spaces for people to talk about sexualities online, camping for or against, and contend or support discourses on sexuality, to which cross-dressing is systematically related. In addition, Nigerian major cross-dressers, and the one, who is in the video for this discussion, are social media influencers; therefore, no matter how infinitesimal or gigantic, there is a nexus between social media influencing and cross-dressing in Nigeria. Hence, the subsequent parts of this paper examine this nexus.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Cross-dressing is becoming a popular pathway to fame on and off social media in Nigeria. The number of 'celebrity cross-dressers' in Nigeria is increasing despite the hate comments on any of their posts on social media. The resilience of these cross-dressers and their ability to go on with their 'thing' set the motivation for this research. This study is based on Facebook's audience reaction to cross-dressing by James Brown, who is a very popular Nigerian cross-dresser. The choice of basing the study on James Brown is that even though he is not one with the most followers, he is the youngest and the one who, in these past months, has always had a vibrant media presence. On 28 May 2022, two hours after the administrator(s) of a Facebook fan page, AKPraise.com, posted a 22-second video clip of James Brown giving comments in a party and was wearing a black see-through swimsuit, the video had quickly generated over 68,000 views. In the second hour after the video was posted, using purposive sampling, the comments were sampled, collected, and classified based on thematic categories of expressions. After filtering them, they remained 20. The comments were collected between May 28 and June 8, 2022. The filtration of the comments was purposive and

manual such that the comments selected are the ones whose linguistic components suggest opposition to cross-dressing; hence, they lean more towards being categorised as hate comments. The comments are grouped into five categories A to E, where A = abomination, cultural advocacy/social sanity; B=Sickness /Mental illness; C= Religion/Demonic possession/ Religious Allusions; D = Birth Control; E = Waste/Wastage. However, some comments intersect more than one category. The originality of the comments is preserved by not too altering the grammatical inaccuracies in the comments which could change its pragmatic meaning entirely.

Theoretical Framework

We adopted the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), a branch of Discourse Analysis (DA). Discourse analysis (DA) is a broad field of study that draws some of its theories and methods of analysis from disciplines such as linguistics, sociology, philosophy and psychology (Kamalu and Osinsanwo 2016, p. 169). This study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to investigate how Nigerians articulate opposition to male-to-female (MtF) cross-dressing in Facebook comments, using reactions to a video of James Brown as a case study. It examines the linguistic markers through which cultural, religious, and moral arguments are mobilized to reject gender non-conformity in Nigerian digital spaces. Discourse could also be considered as part of language where the language is used in social contexts. Discourse requires social interaction, expressing feelings, ideas, and beliefs through which language is used for communication (Van Dijk, 1997, 1998; Hashemi and Na, 2021), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) can be regarded as a branch of discourse analysis which examines language use in multidimensional ways and the language is used in social expression and context. In the same vein, CDA examines "the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context" (van Dijk 2001, p. 352). CDA is primarily interested in and motivated by pressing social issues, which is an attempt to better understand through discourse analysis (Van Dijk, 1988). Fairclough and Wodak (1997) point out four aspects of CDA and these are: (i) the address of social problems; (ii) the ideological work (ii) it constitutes society and culture; and (iv) it is interpretative and explanatory. The relevance of CDA to this research necessitates its adoption. Cross-dressing, in the sense of this research, is addressed as a social issue which is negotiated in a public space and such discourses give room for the expression of ideology. To analyse the comments on cross-dressing in online spaces, this paper adopts the approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as articulated by Fairclough and Wodak (1997), which identifies four key aspects: addressing social problems, performing ideological work, constituting society and culture, and being interpretative and explanatory. This approach is particularly relevant as it allows for a comprehensive examination of how

language in online comments reflects and perpetuates social power dynamics, ideological positions, and cultural norms. By focusing on the social problem of cross-dressing, the analysis scrutinises how commenters construct and communicate their ideological stances, revealing underlying societal values and power relations. The comments are interpreted within their broader social and cultural contexts, providing insights into how cross-dressing is contested and negotiated in public discourse. This method not only interprets the explicit content of the comments but also explains the broader societal and cultural implications, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the discursive processes that shape public perceptions and attitudes towards non-normative gender expressions.

Discussion and Analysis of Data

We adopted the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), a branch of Discourse Analysis (DA). Discourse analysis (DA) is a broad field of study that draws some of its theories and methods of analysis from disciplines such as linguistics, sociology, philosophy and psychology (Kamalu & Osinsanwo 2016). Discourse could also be considered as part of language where the language is used in social contexts. Discourse requires social interaction, expressing feelings, ideas, and beliefs through which language is used for communication (Van Dijk, 1997, 1998; Hashemi & Na, 2021), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) can be regarded as a branch of discourse analysis which examines language use in multidimensional ways and the language is used in social expression and context. In the same vein, CDA examines “the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (van Dijk 2001). CDA is primarily interested in and motivated by pressing social issues, which is an attempt to better understand through discourse analysis (Van Dijk, 1988). Fairclough and Wodak (1997) point out four aspects of CDA and these are: (i) the address of social problems; (ii) the ideological work (ii) it constitutes society and culture; and (iv) it is interpretative and explanatory. The relevance of CDA to this research necessitates its adoption. Cross-dressing, in the sense of this research, is addressed as a social issue which is negotiated in a public space and such discourses give room for the expression of ideology.

In this part of the study, We discuss the data, which are the comments culled from reactions to the video, and we analyse them based on the aforementioned taxonomy. The data selected for this analysis reveal a few things which include the strategic yet unfiltered use of language to express opposition and antipathy for cross-dressing and cross-dressers. Furthermore, five broad perspectives are commonly found in the comments which reveal the ideologies and strategies of commenters to strengthen their opposition using social, moral and religious yardsticks.

Category A: Abomination, Cultural Advocacy and the Campaign for Social Sanity



Figure 1: What the cross-dresser (James Brown) was wearing in the video (Photo screenshot from the video data; facebook.com/akpraise, 2022)

Comment 1

Subconsciously, this cultural abomination is seemingly becoming something acceptable in our society today.

Comment 2

It can never be accepted in our society, abomination is abomination. If he foolishly show[s] openly here, guys will correct him.

Comment 3

The way our society is now, I don't know what the future holds. This is an abomination. If men were God, honestly.

Comment 1 suggests that the growing acceptance of cross-dressing, which society seems to be tolerating without intervention, is a cultural disruption. The term “abomination” is used to underline the belief that cross-dressing challenges societal norms and values. Durkheim (1912) argues that social order is maintained through collective adherence to norms, and deviations from these norms threaten societal cohesion. The commenter implies that such practices, if left unchecked, undermine cultural integrity, which calls for action to restore traditional values. In this view, cross-dressing is seen as an affront to the social fabric, destabilising established norms and risking social disintegration.

Similarly, Comment 2 reinforces this argument by asserting that, despite its growing acceptance, cross-dressing remains an “abomination” that should not be permitted. The phrase “Abomination is abomination” stresses the belief that the practice is fundamentally at odds with societal expectations. The suggestion that “Guys will correct him” highlights a proposed corrective action, which aligns with Durkheim’s assertion that societal groups respond to deviance by reinforcing norms. Cross-dressing, like other forms of cultural change such as same-sex marriage and gender reassignment, challenges traditional values. As public institutions and legal systems increasingly accommodate these practices, it creates tensions between evolving social norms and deeply rooted cultural traditions (Adamu, 2019). These comments thus express a desire for societal mechanisms

to restore the perceived natural order.

Comment 4

This is a display of shame. This madness should be done in your closets. Crying out loud. How did we get here [?] I think the law enforcement [agencies] should help bring back sanity to our communities. This [is] appalling. Not funny at all.

Comment 5

And why were [there] they laughing? What is funny about this rubbish? This guy should not be allowed to attend any event with normal people.

Comment 4 refers to the public appearance of a cross-dresser as a ‘display of shame’. The commenter also suggests that cross-dressing should not be made public rather, cross-dressers should cross-dress in their closet. The expression “How did we get here” reflects social metamorphosis, which metaphorically indicates that societies progress, hence, there is, in the same way, the possibility of regression. The commenter suggests that the ability of cross-dressers to show themselves in public is associated with society’s degenerative metamorphosis, which allows things that are not supposed to be accepted. There is a call to action of law enforcement agencies to restore ‘sanity’, which also implies that cross-dressers breach social sanity. Finally, the comment concludes that while the crowd were busy cheering the cross-dresser, the whole thing is both not acceptable and not funny. The same ideology is furthered in Comment 5, in which the commenter also condemns the social acceptance of cross-dressers referring to both the cross-dressed and cross-dressing as ‘rubbish’. The commenter also draws on the precepts of social and mental sanity. It is their opinion that the cross-dresser is not socially and mentally normal and therefore should be restricted from social gatherings with ‘normal people’. The implicature that the cross-dresser is mentally ill is furthered by the comments in Category B (Comments 6-8).

Category B: Sickness/Mental Illness

The comments in this category suggest that cross-dressing is a manifestation of mental illness, a form and display of madness, and as such, cross-dressers need help with their mental health.

Comment 6

Psychiatric evaluation is needed for this guy. And children would be watching too.

Comment 7

The country is sick and you need to do something about it.

Comment 8

This is total madness. Absolutely, nothing is funny about this nonsense.

The commenter of Comment 6 suggests that James Brown is mentally ill therefore, there is a need for him to be checked mentally to confirm if he is sick or not. The second sentence “And children would be watching too” suggests the non-censorship of inappropriate content such that children are exposed to the. This idea is corroborated by comment 7, where the commenter believes that that the country is sick, and someone has to do something about it. The suggestion that the country is ‘sick’ intersects many things including the permissiveness of cross-dressing, its public display, and the exposure of children to content like this. The writer of comment 7 suggests that the task of restoring social sanity is unspecific. The use of ‘you’ suggests its openness, that is, it is a task open to everyone. Comment 8 suggests that cross-dressing is total madness, which grounds the speculation in comment 6, that is, while the commenter of comment 6 suggests the need for a psychiatric evaluation to ascertain if James Brown is suffering from a mental illness or not, comment 8 grounds the suggestions into a fact, that is, James Brown is already mentally ill.

Category C: Religion/Demonic Possession/ Religious Allusions

Comment 9

Because sentence against evil is not speedily executed, men of the world go deeper and deeper in disgusting acts. And one thing is sure, his fans are as guilty as he is says the scripture.

Comment 10

Son of perdition.

Comment 11

You are one of the reasons God regretted [for] creating man.

Comments in this category reflect the commenters’ perspectives of “upholding religious precepts to affirm their stances” (Onanuga 2021). Nigeria is undoubtedly a religious nation with the population slashed almost into equal halves between Christianity and Islam and a handful of others practising the African traditional religion (Aboi, 2024). Nigerians tend to justify their individual perceptions of morality or immorality using religious precepts, and thus makes Nigerians strongly oppose things or attitudes that are against their religion (Amodu, 2023). Comment 9 suggests that cross-dressing is ‘evil’ and should not be accommodated in society. Aside from that it also references cross-dressing as a ‘disgusting act’, in the commenter’s opinion, cross-dressing is both evil and disgusting and the fact that God or society is not acting swiftly against it makes it more popular, therefore, people go “deeper and deeper” in it. In the same vein, the commenter also establishes their stance on collective responsibility and guilt, drawing from the ‘Bible’ that those who support cross-dressing, which is evil, are also ‘evil’. Comment 11 is a one-sentence expression - “Son of perdition”. The origin of the word ‘perdition’ is Christian

theology, which The Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defined as "eternal damnation". The Oxford Languages Dictionary does more to refer to it as "a state of eternal punishment and damnation into which a sinful and unrepentant person passes after death" (oxfordlanguages.com). The commenter draws upon Christian theology to express their opinion about the cross-dresser, that is, the person rather than the act. Their opinion is that the cross-dresser is 'condemned to eternal damnation or suffering' as it is for 'sinners' in Christian theology and cosmology. Comment 11, like comment 10, blames the cross-dresser rather than cross-dressing insinuating that the cross-dresser is one of the reasons why God regretted he created man. The statement draws its stance from Genesis 6:6 which says, "And the LORD regretted that he had made man in the earth, and it grieved him to his heart" (English Standard Version). There is a parallel between the comment and the content of Genesis 6:6, which translates that they draw their opinion from religion, precisely, Christianity.

Comment 12

When this one people were busy shouting "It's a baby boy" not knowing that the Devil has a different plan.

Comment 13

Agents of darkness destroying and misleading the younger generation. [The] Devil will punish you more. The commenter of comment 12 believes that cross-dressing or effeminacy so to speak is a result of the Devil's plan. The same ideology is shared by the commenter of comment 13 who also believes that "Agents of darkness" are the cause of cross-dressing and that is a scheme that has been developed to destroy and mislead young people. The second part of comment 13 is a declaration and an insult that the Devil will punish the cross-dresser more. This is also a reflection of a religious ideology, especially Christianity, where it is believed that people who do not do what God wants would have their souls punished by the Devil in eternal perdition (which correlates with the ideology in comment 10), and as such, it is their belief that when the cross-dresser die, their soul would be eternally punished.

Category D: Birth Control

Comment 14

Disadvantage of not using condom.

Comment 15

#200 condom would have save[d] us from all this mess.

Comment 16

Most times [.] having an abortion is really not a crime, it prevents greater crime. The commenters in this category advocate for birth control, specifically condom use, as a means of preventing pregnancy (comments 14 and 15), with comment 16 also suggesting abortion as a potential solution. Both

comments assume that married couples, including the parents of the cross-dresser in question, can and should use condoms to prevent pregnancy. Comment 15 highlights the affordability of condoms, priced at #200 (USD\$0.48), and sarcastically suggests that the parents of the cross-dresser should have used this contraceptive to avoid the "mess" their child has caused. This comment reflects the belief that the actions of the cross-dresser have wider societal implications, affecting not just the individual but also the community at large. Comment 16 implies that abortion, which is culturally frowned upon should not be criminalised because to them, it prevents greater crime. This suggests that cross-dressers are criminals such that if they had been aborted as foetuses, the "greater crime" they commit as adults would have been prevented by their inexistence. While abortions may not be regarded as a birth control strategy, it is however a way in which some people reduce births, which is why it falls into this category.

Category E: Waste/Wastage

Comment 17

What a waste of child to think that the mum carried him for 9 months in pains and sleepless nights.

Comment 18

Waste of human being.

Comment 19

If only your dad uses condom that day. Wasted sperm.

Comment 20

Someone wasted sperm and [a] nine-month journey. Comments 17 to 20 oppose cross-dressing, grounding their objections in the notion of wastefulness, particularly in relation to the effort and investment involved in childbearing and upbringing. Comment 17, for instance, describes cross-dressers as "a waste of child," alluding to the hardship of pregnancy, including the physical discomfort and sacrifices associated with carrying a child for nine months. In Nigerian and broader African cultures, childbearing is seen as a significant investment requiring considerable effort (Ajayi *et al.*, 2023). The commenter views the emergence of a cross-dressing child as the fruit of such efforts going to waste. Similarly, Comment 18 condemns the cross-dresser as "a waste of human being," implying a deeper, more expansive loss. Here, the term "human being" generalises the loss, suggesting that the individual's potential has been squandered, not only as a child but as a full member of society. The use of both 'child' and 'human being' thus intensifies the sense of wasted potential, framing the loss as not just the waste of an individual but a broader societal failing. On the other hand, comments 19 and 20 suggest 'waste' on a smaller scale. There is an underlying notion of masculinity and the role of men in procreation, especially in comment 19. It is the opinion of the commenter that the father of the 'subject' could have prevented the event

and ultimately, James Brown's birth if he had used a condom the day he had sex with his mother. Subtly, the commenter puts the responsibility of contraceptive use on the man putting the man as the decision-maker about having children, which I regard as another manifestation of masculinity. The man is given the role to act, which furthers the ideology that the man is the 'giving partner' and the woman, the 'receiving partner,' this ideology is however countered by Comment 20. Comment 20 regards childbearing to be a collective task and that both parties are active decision-makers, hence, they both have lost something. For the man, the 'loss' is the sperm which was ejaculated during intercourse, and which functioned for fertilisation. For the woman, it is the nine-month journey, which signifies the journey from conception to delivery. Therefore, there is an underlying ideology that having cross-dressing children is a waste, a waste of time and effort. It is unarguable that the journey from intercourse through conception to delivery and from delivery through parenting are huge tasks and, in some cultures, especially cultures across Nigeria, it is regarded as an investment because Nigerians and Africans generally, hold a very high prestige for children (Dimka & Dien, 2013). For this category of commenters, having cross-dressers are children are waste of time, energy, and resources, therefore, people who have cross-dressing children should not regard them as children because they signify efforts that have gone down the drain.

CONCLUSION

Cross-dressing, for some, represents a challenge to traditional gender roles and cultural norms, perceived as a disruption to the natural order and divine design. As seen in the comments, critics link it to the belief that it is a rejection of natural gender, and they also argue that it undermines God's perfection by embodying imperfection. Crossdressing is also perceived as equitable to homosexuality; the ideology relayed is that only homosexuals cross-dress. However, whether cross-dressing constitutes a genuine cultural and social problem remains debatable. Far from betraying "natural" or divine order, cross-dressing now functions as deliberate self-expression and gender improvisation (Christel *et al.*, 2016; Lowe & Anspach, 1978). Reynolds and Caron (2000) show that shuttling between feminine and masculine registers enlarges, rather than erodes, the sense of being human, while Goffman's (1959) dramaturgy frames the practice as a staged release of socially compressed identities. Conflating it with homosexuality is empirically false and ideologically motivated; trolling and parental shaming merely expose the fragility of rigid norms.

REFERENCES

Aboi, E. J. (2024). Religious, ethnic and regional identities in Nigerian politics: a shared interest theory. *African Identities*, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14725843.2024.2394181>.

Adamu, H. (2019). The Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition

Act 2014: Nigeria's rejection of a Western secular trend. *Usmanu Danfodio University Sokoto Law Journal*, 1(1), 160–183.

Adejuwon, E. A. (2020). Homosexuality: An African Christian perspective. *International Journal of Innovative Social Sciences & Humanities Research*, 8(1), 159–168.

Ajayi, A. I., Athero, S., Muga, W., & Kabiru, C. W. (2023). Lived experiences of pregnant and parenting adolescents in Africa: A scoping review. *Reproductive Health*, 20(1), Article 113. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12978-023-01619-7>

Akinfenwa, D. (2021, January 14). How social media is helping queer Nigerians come out, find community. *The Guardian Nigeria*. <https://guardian.ng/life/how-social-media-is-helping-queer-nigerians-come-out-find-community/>

Alexander, J. (2002). Queer webs: Representations of LGBT people and communities on the World Wide Web. *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies*, 7(2–3), 77–84. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1015801926205>

Amenaghawon, F., & Ayantade, J. (2019). Homosexuality framing by a Nigerian newspaper. *Covenant Journal of Communication*, 6(1), 72–88.

Amodu, A. D. (2023). Literature and notions of Black lesbian solidarity in Chinelo Okparanta's Under the Udala Trees. *Gender Questions*, 11(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.25159/2412-8457/12433>

Amodu, A. D. (2024). Sex panics: Queer (counter) publics, networking, and sociality in Nigeria. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 72(3), 478–500. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2023.2214906>.

Amodu, A. D., & Adereti, O. A. (2025). Queer Identity Politics and Exclusion: A Discourse on Chinelo Okparanta's Under the Udala Trees. *Awka Journal of English Language and Literary Studies*, 12(2), 268–294.

Baron, N. S. (2003). Language of the Internet. In A. Farghaly (Ed.), *The Stanford handbook for language engineers* (pp. 59–127). CSLI Publications.

Boneta, N., & Fuentes, A. (2022). Exploring safety and agency in social media: A case study of online cross-dressing. *Investigaciones Feministas*, 13(2), 759–778. <https://doi.org/10.5209/infe.82430>

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge.

Chinedu-Okeke, C. F., & Obi, I. (2021). The dialectics in the discourse of homosexuality in Nigeria. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research*, 9(2), 44–55.

Christel, D. A., O'Donnell, N. H., & Bradley, L. A. (2016). Coping by cross-dressing: An exploration of exercise clothing for obese heterosexual women. *Fashion and Textiles*, 3, Article 11. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40691-016-0065-7>

Durkheim, É. (1912). *The elementary forms of the religious life* (J. W. Swain, Trans.). Free Press. (Original work published 1912)

Enodong, F., & Calvin, P. (2015). Christian resistance

- to gay-proselytism in a secular Nigeria: Anathema or social heroism? *European Review of Applied Sociology*, 8(11), 6–13.
- Fairclough, N., & Wodak, R. (1997). Critical discourse analysis. In T. A. van Dijk (Ed.), *Discourse as social interaction* (Vol. 2, pp. 258–284). Sage.
- Gillmor, D. (2004). *We the media: Grassroots journalism by the people, for the people*. O'Reilly Media.
- Harris, R. (1996). *Signs, language, and communication: Integrational and segregational approaches*. Psychology Press.
- Hashemi, A., & Na, K. S. (2021). A critical discourse analysis of a news report on two mosques shooting in Christchurch, New Zealand. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Education Research*, 7(1), 15–24.
- Haythornthwaite, C. (2005). Social networks and Internet connectivity effects. *Information, Communication & Society*, 8(2), 125–147. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691180500146185>
- Howard, J. E. (1998). Cross-dressing, the theatre, and gender struggle in early modern England. *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 39(4), 418–440. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2870706>
- Hyson, A. R. (2021). *Pushing boundaries: Young people's experiences developing and expressing intersecting identities* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota]. University of Minnesota Digital Conservancy. <https://hdl.handle.net/11299/225078>
- Igudunasse, A., Odiase, N., & Alao, T. (2019). What is it like for a gay, Nigerian male living in Nigeria? *American Journal of Qualitative Research*, 3(1), 20–36. <https://doi.org/10.29333/ajqr/5811>
- Irvine, J. M. (2005). Anti-gay politics online: A study of sexuality and stigma on national websites. *Sexuality Research & Social Policy*, 2(2), 3–21. <https://doi.org/10.1525/srsp.2005.2.2.3>
- Kang, R., Brown, S., & Kiesler, S. (2013). Why do people seek anonymity on the Internet? Informing policy and design. In *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 2657–2666). ACM. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2470654.2481368>
- Lamidi, I. M. (2019). Conflict-management in the Nairaland virtual community. Oye: *Journal of Language, Literature and Popular Culture*, 1(1), 78–91.
- Larsson, S. (2014). Battling mainstream media: Commentators' and organized debaters' experiences from citizens' online opinion writing in Sweden. *Nordicom Review*, 35(2), 77–89. <https://doi.org/10.2478/nor-2014-0016>
- Levanda, L. (2023). *Does being rejected mean you're not a man? Linking traditional masculinity ideology and rejection sensitivity* [Doctoral dissertation, Alliant International University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Lowe, E. D., & Anspach, K. A. (1978). Freedom of dress: A search for related factors. *Home Economics Research Journal*, 7(2), 121–127. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077727X7800700204>
- Nwigwe, C. (2022). Breaking the code: Female cross-dressing in southeastern Nigeria. *Fashion Theory*, 26(1), 67–89. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2021.1874281>
- Odedairo, O. D. (2023). Promiscuous technologies: Shifting notions of gender and sexuality in Nigeria's digital public sphere. *Saudi Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 8(10), 311–317. <https://doi.org/10.36348/sjhss.2023.v08i10.002>
- Odiase-Alegimenlen, O. A., & Garuba, J. O. (2014). Same-sex marriage: Nigeria at the middle of Western politics. *Oromia Law Journal*, 3(1), 1–31.
- Oginni, O. A., Okanlawon, K., & Ogunbajo, A. (2021). A commentary on COVID-19 and the LGBT community in Nigeria: Risks and resilience. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000476>
- Okanlawon, K. (2017). Homophobic bullying in Nigerian schools: The experiences of LGBT university students. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 14(1), 51–70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2016.1196953>
- Okanlawon, K. (2018). Cultures of public intervention regarding LGBTQ issues after Nigeria's Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act (SSMPA). *College Literature*, 45(4), 641–651. <https://doi.org/10.1353/lit.2018.0034>
- Okanlawon, K. (2020). Perceptions and attitudes of heterosexual Nigerian university students towards homosexuality and LGB persons. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 17(2), 149–176. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2019.1620665>
- Okanlawon, K. (2021). Homophobia in Nigerian schools and universities: Victimization, mental-health issues, resilience of the LGBT students and support from straight allies—A literature review. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 18(4), 327–359. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2020.1749211>
- Okanlawon, T. (2020, October 28). Court dismisses homosexuality case against Instagram celebrity, 46 others. *PM News*. <https://pmnewsnigeria.com/2020/10/28/court-dismisses-homosexuality-case-against-instagram-celebrity-james-brown-46-others/>
- Onanuga, P. (2020). Coming out and reaching out: Linguistic advocacy on queer Nigerian Twitter. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 33(3), 297–312. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13696815.2020.1806799>
- Onanuga, P. A. (2022). Navigating homophobia and reinventing the self: An analysis of Nigerian digital pro-gay discourse. *Gender & Language*, 16(1), 81–102. <https://doi.org/10.1558/genl.20496>
- Onanuga, P. A. (2023). #ArewaAgainstLGBTQ discourse: A vent for anti-homonationalist ideology in Nigerian twittersphere? *African Identities*, 21(4), 703–725. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14725843.2022.2151371>
- Onanuga, P. A., & Alade, B. M. (2020). Ideological portrayal and perceptions of homosexuality in

- selected Nollywood movies. *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 37(6), 598–629. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509208.2020.1756109>
- Onanuga, P. A., & Schmied, J. (2022). Policing sexuality? Corpus-linguistic perspectives to ‘government’ in homosexuality narratives on Nigerian Twitter. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 31(6), 649–663. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2022.2066638>
- Onanuga, P. A. (2021). God in the middle: A discursive analysis of religious contestations in Nigerian homosexuality tweets. In A. Odebunmi & A. Eyoh (Eds.), *Critical discourse analysis and the linguistics of social media interaction: Essays in honour of Rotimi Taiwo* (pp. 69–86). College Press.
- Ostien, P. (2007). *Sharia implementation in Northern Nigeria 1999–2006: A sourcebook*. Spectrum Books.
- Paolillo, J. C. (2001). Language variation on Internet Relay Chat: A social network approach. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 5(2), 180–213. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9481.00147>
- Pilla, R. S. (2019). An essay on cross-dressing with special reference to Kottamkulangara Chamayavilkku. *Afro Asian Journal of Social Sciences*, 10(1), 1–11.
- Reynolds, A. L., & Caron, S. L. (2000). How intimate relationships are impacted when heterosexual men crossdress. *Journal of Psychology & Human Sexuality*, 12(3), 63–77. https://doi.org/10.1300/J056v12n03_05
- Saunders, B., Kitzinger, J., & Kitzinger, C. (2015). Participant anonymity in the Internet age: From theory to practice. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 12(2), 125–137. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2014.948820>
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1988). News as discourse. Erlbaum.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1997). The study of discourse. In T. A. van Dijk (Ed.), *Discourse as structure and process* (Vol. 1, pp. 1–35). Sage.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1998). *Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach*. Sage.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2001). Critical discourse analysis. In D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen, & H. E. Hamilton (Eds.), *The handbook of discourse analysis* (pp. 352–371). Blackwell.
- Westera, W. (2012). *The digital turn: How the Internet transforms our existence*. AuthorHouse.