'Voicing Preferences Against Gender Policing': A Critical Discourse Analysis of *Nairaland* Comments on Transgenderism and Counter-transgenderism in Nigeria

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Abstract

Through a critical discourse analysis, this study reveals how Nigeria's Nairaland forum functions as a key battleground where discourses on transgender identity fiercely clash, reproducing entrenched heteronormative and religious-conservative ideologies while also opening limited spaces for resistance. Guided by Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, the research investigates the interrelationship between textual features, discursive practices, and socio-cultural contexts in shaping online discourse. Data were purposively sampled from comment threads in *Nairaland* on transgenderism, providing a rich corpus for analysis. The findings reveal that the linguistic strategies used by commenters predominantly reproduce dominant cultural ideologies, often manifesting through derogatory labelling, stereotyping, moral framing, and appeals to tradition. These discursive patterns reflect entrenched gender norms and heteronormative worldviews while simultaneously marginalizing non-conforming identities. Still, the study also identifies instances of counter-discourse where alternative viewpoints contest mainstream narratives, thereby exposing *Nairaland* as a site of ideological struggle and negotiation. The study concludes that platforms like *Nairaland* are not merely passive spaces for sharing information but active sites of ideological contestation, where discourses on transgenderism amplify certain viewpoints while marginalizing others, reflecting the ongoing negotiation of power, identity, and ideology in Nigeria's digital public sphere.

INTRODUCTION

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as developed notably by Norman Fairclough and Teun A. van Dijk, provides an essential framework for unpacking how language serves as a site of social struggle. Fairclough (1995) emphasizes the dialectical relationship between discourse and society, suggesting that discourse both shapes and is shaped by social structures. Similarly, van Dijk (1993), in his socio-cognitive model, explains how discourse is tied to power and ideology and how it can reproduce social dominance. Discourse, as understood in critical discourse studies, refers to how language constructs and is constructed by social practices, power dynamics, and ideologies (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1993). It manifests beyond mere linguistic structure, engaging with the broader socio-political contexts in which language is produced and interpreted. In particular, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) questions the relationship between language and power, making it a fitting methodological approach for studying contested social issues such as gender identity and expression.

In the digital age, discourse is increasingly shaped by online interactions. Online commentary, particularly in a forum like *Nairaland*, one of Nigeria's largest indigenous online discussion platforms with over 3 million registered users, has emerged as a potent space where public opinion

is expressed, contested, and negotiated. *Nairaland* reflects a broad spectrum of Nigerian society, hosting millions of users who engage in discussions spanning politics, religion, entertainment, and social issues. These platforms, characterized by their immediacy and participatory nature, allow users to comment anonymously or pseudonymously, often leading to the communication of candid, unfiltered views on socially sensitive subjects. As Papacharissi (2002) notes, digital public spheres can both mirror and magnify societal ideologies, thereby becoming crucial sites for analyzing public attitudes toward discriminated groups.

One such marginalized group is the transgender community in Nigeria. Transgenderism, which refers to the condition or experience of identifying with a gender different from one's assigned sex at birth, remains a highly controversial and stigmatized subject in Nigerian society. In recent years, issues surrounding gender identity and transgender rights have gained increasing attention globally. In Nigeria, however, conversations about transgenderism remain deeply controversial, often intersecting with cultural, religious, and legal tensions. Transgender individuals in Nigeria face significant discrimination both offline and online.

The dominant socio-religious norms, largely influenced by conservative interpretations of Christianity and Islam, have contributed to the discrimination and criminalization of diverse gender-identities, according to *Amnesty International* (2020). Moreover, the legal environment, such as the *Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act of 2014*, though primarily targeted at sexual orientation, also indirectly fuels discrimination against transgender persons by reinforcing a rigid gender-binary.

The visibility of transgender identities has grown globally, but in Nigeria, public discourse surrounding transgenderism remains soaked in controversy and misunderstanding. Despite increasing awareness and occasional media coverage, societal attitudes continue to reflect deep-rooted cultural, religious, and legal resistance to unconventional gender identities. In online Nigerian discourse, particularly on *Nairaland*, discussions surrounding transgender issues often reflect a complex blend of ignorance, hostility, curiosity, and occasional empathy. Such discussions provide a valuable body for critically examining how language reinforces or resists dominant ideologies about gender and identity. By analyzing user-generated comments on *Nairaland*, this study aims to uncover the discursive strategies employed by Nigerian netizens in representing transgender individuals, with particular attention to how these strategies reflect broader socio-cultural and political ideologies. As a result, this research positions itself at the intersection of language, media, and identity, drawing upon the critical views to explore how digital discourses construct and contest notions of transgenderism in the Nigerian context, how societal ideologies are reproduced or challenged, and how discourses around transgenderism reflect broader patterns of exclusion, marginalization, and resistance.

In this climate of stigmatization, online platforms like *Nairaland* have become significant arenas where public sentiments are openly expressed. These discussions, often anonymous, reveal raw, unfiltered attitudes that are rarely captured in traditional media or formal public discourse. The few academic efforts addressing LGBTQ+ issues in Nigeria have mostly focused on sexuality, with limited attention given to gender identity, particularly transgenderism, as a distinct phenomenon, according to Awondo (2010) and Essien & Aderinto (2009). There has been little attention paid to how digital commentaries linguistically construct transgender identities and how these constructions reproduce, reinforce, or challenge hegemonic ideologies.

This study addresses this gap by undertaking a critical discourse analysis of *Nairaland* comments on transgender-related topics. It investigates the linguistic and ideological patterns embedded in these online texts, with the broader goal of understanding how digital discourse contributes to the social construction of transgender identities in Nigeria. Specifically, this study identifies the dominant discursive construction in *Nairaland* comments on transgender-related topics; analyzes the linguistic strategies used in constructing transgender identities online; and examine how these discourses reflect or challenge prevailing societal ideologies in online Nigerian communities, following Fairclough's and van Dijk's models of CDA.

The study holds theoretical and practical significance and is significant as it offers a critical understanding of how language is used to construct and negotiate transgender identities in Nigerian online discourse. Theoretically, it extends the application of Critical Discourse Analysis to African digital discourses on transgenderism, a relatively under-researched area, using Fairclough and van Dijk's frameworks. By analysing *Nairaland* comments, it reveals the ideological foundations of public attitudes toward transgenderism, contributing to scholarship in discourse analysis, gender studies, and digital communication within the Nigerian context.

The study is limited to the analysis of user-generated comments on *Nairaland (www.nairaland. com)*, specifically focusing on threads and discussions related to transgender topics in Nigeria between 2020 and 2025. It examines the language, discursive patterns, and ideological content within these comments using the framework of *Critical Discourse Analysis* (CDA). The research does not cover other social media platforms or mainstream media representations and is restricted to content written in English.

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2. NIGERIAN ONLINE DISCOURSE

Digital media platforms have become crucial in expressing public opinion, particularly in countries where formal media may be state-controlled or socially conservative. The Nigerian digital landscape is marked by linguistic diversity, cultural pluralism, and a deeply rooted social and religious fabric. Nigerian online discourse often reflects these features, with a hybrid use of English, Nigerian Pidgin, and indigenous languages. This multilingual and multicultural character shapes the tone and content of online engagements. Nigerian digital discourse frequently incorporates elements of pragmatics, including indirectness, presupposition, and inference, all serving as vehicles for ideology.

Also, digital platforms have become crucial venues for civic engagement, especially among Nigerian youths. Aina and Afolaranmi (2025) highlight the role of social media and online forums in enabling political activism, social mobilisation, and cultural expression. However, these platforms also expose the deep-seated conservatism of Nigerian society, particularly in discussions on gender and sexuality. In such contexts, online discourse often swings between progressive advocacy and regressive backlash. It is not uncommon for forums to become battlegrounds where cultural and religious ideologies clash with human rights and liberal values.

Notably, Nigerian online spaces serve as important outlets for the expression of taboo or marginalized topics. They enable the formation of virtual communities where participants can engage in debates that challenge dominant narratives. Despite this potential, these platforms also reflect broader societal prejudices, as seen in the frequent expression of hate speech, homophobia, and transphobia. The online discourse is, therefore, a microcosm of the larger social and political environment, making it an important site for linguistic and ideological analysis.

3. GENDER, GENDER IDENTITY

The concepts of gender and gender identity are foundational to any critical discourse surrounding transgenderism. In scholarly discourse, gender is widely understood not just as a biological designation but as a social and cultural construct that dictates roles, behaviours, and expectations associated with being male or female in a given society, as stated by Butler (1990) and Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2003). Butler's (1990) seminal theory of gender performativity posits that gender is not an innate quality but rather a repeated set of performances that are socially sanctioned and sustained. As a result, gender is something one does, rather than something one is.

Gender identity, on the other hand, refers to an individual's deeply felt internal sense of their own gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth, according to the *American Psychological Association* (2015). It is a subjective, psychological dimension of gender that reflects how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves, be it male, female, both, neither, or somewhere along the gender spectrum (Fausto-Sterling, 2000). Gender identity is central to personal and social identity formation and influences how individuals engage with societal norms, expectations, and institutions.

In the Nigerian social and cultural context, gender identity is often perceived in binary terms, which are male or female, deeply intertwined with religious, cultural, and patriarchal ideologies. As a result, expressions of gender that deviate from the normal binary, such as transgender identities, are frequently met with resistance, ridicule, or moral panic. Tamale (2011) argues that African societies, including Nigeria, have a complex history with gender diversity that predates colonial impositions. However, contemporary public discourse tends to reject these indigenous realities in favor of rigid Western religious constructs that frame gender fluidity as deviant.

Additionally, gender identity is increasingly being discussed and contested in digital spaces where traditional norms clash with global discourses on rights, identity, and self-expression. Online platforms such as *Nairaland* provide a discursive battleground where gender identities are negotiated, policed, or resisted. These discussions often reveal the tensions between emerging global rights discourses and local cultural-religious narratives that seek to preserve normal gender identities.

From a standpoint of discourse analysis, examining how gender and gender identity are linguistically represented in online conversations reveals how ideologies are naturalized, contested, and reproduced. Words, phrases, metaphors, and argument structures all contribute to the social construction of gender identities in discourse, Lazar (2005) says. Hence, understanding these conceptual foundations is vital for any critical engagement with how language shapes and is shaped by societal views on transgenderism.

4. TRANSGENDERISM

Transgenderism, broadly defined, refers to the experience of individuals whose gender identity or expression differs from the sex assigned at birth. Transgender individuals may seek to transition socially, medically, or legally to align their gender identity with their lived experience. It is important to note that being transgender is primarily about gender identity, not sexual orientation, and it encompasses a wide range of identities, including male, female, non-binary, and genderqueer identities. Stryker (2008) asserts that transgender identities are not merely personal experiences but are shaped and constrained by historical, cultural, and institutional forces.

Globally, transgender identities have gained increased visibility in public discourse, legal frameworks, and media representation. Many countries have enacted legislation recognizing gender diversity, ensuring protections for transgender people in areas such as healthcare, employment, and identity documentation. For example, Argentina's Gender Identity Law (2012) allows individuals to change their gender identity in official documents without requiring surgery or psychiatric diagnosis (Viterna & Cannon, 2015). In Europe, a majority of EU countries have laws allowing legal gender recognition, although procedures vary significantly in terms of accessibility and respect for human rights (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2020). However, even in global spaces, transgender people continue to face systemic marginalization, including violence, exclusion, and misrepresentation. Mainstream media and public discourse often reproduce stereotypes, framing trans identities as deceptive, dangerous, or mentally unstable. These narratives are not confined to the West as they travel across digital and cultural boundaries and influence perceptions in regions like Africa.

In African contexts such as Nigeria, transgenderism remains poorly understood and heavily stigmatized. Transgender individuals are often conflated with homosexuals, and both identities are viewed as immoral, unnatural, or foreign to African values. Cultural and religious narratives in Nigeria strongly reinforce binary gender norms. Christianity and Islam – Nigeria's two dominant religions – generally view gender as divinely ordained and immutable. Transgenderism remains a sensitive subject in Nigeria, often met with hostility from both the state and society. Media representations of transgender individuals in Nigeria often employ sensationalism, pathologization, or outright denial of their legitimacy. Social institutions, including the media and education systems, rarely acknowledge or affirm transgender lives. These portrayals reflect and reinforce societal discomfort with gender nonconformity.

Also, the public discourse surrounding transgenderism in Nigeria is shaped by a confluence of factors, including religious dogma, colonial legacies, and deeply ingrained gender binaries. Awondo (2010) argues that the political and social construction of African genders has excluded or erased non-binary and transgender identities, viewing them as threats to cultural authenticity. Consequently, transgender individuals face multiple layers of marginalization, including legal, social, and discursive. Legally, there is no recognition of gender identity outside the binary, and transgender people risk arrest, violence, or forced outing. Socially, they are often subjected to ridicule, ostracism, and economic exclusion. Discursively, they are erased or misrepresented in both mainstream media and online platforms, where they are frequently portrayed as mentally ill, morally deviant, or products

of Western influence (Essien & Aderinto, 2009; Currier, 2012).

Butler's (1990) seminal theory on gender performativity posits that gender is not a fixed identity but rather constructed through repeated linguistic and social behaviors. This idea has significantly influenced the discourse around transgender identities. Online forums such as *Nairaland* bring these discourses to the fore, often revealing the depth of societal resistance to gender diversity. This platform provides spaces where transgender issues can be discussed and, occasionally, defended. The polarized nature of these discussions makes them ripe for Critical Discourse Analysis, as they reveal the mechanisms through which societal ideologies are reproduced or contested.

5. *NAIRALAND* AS A DIGITAL PLATFORM

Nairaland, launched in 2005, is one of Nigeria's most popular and active online forums, with millions of registered users engaging in discussions on a wide range of topics. The forum is organized into thematic sections, including politics, religion, health, culture, entertainment, and romance, among others. Its minimally moderated and anonymous nature makes it an open space for the expression of diverse and often controversial opinions. *Nairaland* can be described as a digital space where Nigerian social attitudes are reflected, negotiated, and amplified.

Discussions about gender and sexuality on the platform are often laced with ideological intensity, moral judgment, and cultural conservatism. Threads related to transgender topics typically attract a wide array of responses, ranging from empathy and understanding to unfiltered hostility and dehumanisation. Despite the prevalence of hostile discourse, *Nairaland* hosts alternative voices that challenge dominant narratives. These counter-discourses often appeal to human rights, personal freedom, and scientific reasoning. The interaction between dominant and oppositional discourses makes *Nairaland* a valuable site for analysing how language is used to construct, contest, or deny social realities around gender identity.

Extant studies on LGBTQ+ issues in Nigeria have largely focused on sexuality (Adegbola, 2019: Oyebanji, 2022; Onanuga, 2022), to the neglect of gender identity studies, particularly transgenderism. For instance, Oyebanji (2022) conducted a critical discourse analysis of tweets from Nigerian *LGBTQ+* individuals, focusing on the *#EndHomophobiaInNigeria* campaign. In a related study, Onanuga (2022) examined pro-gay digital discourse in Nigeria, analyzing how *LGBTQ+* individuals navigate homophobia and reinvent their identities online. Also, Alabi (2023) studied language and identity construction on *Facebook* and *Nairaland*, focusing on how users perform and negotiate their identities in online interactions.

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Employing Butler's *theory of gender performativity* and Blumer's s*ymbolic interactionism.* However, despite this growing body of work, little attention has been paid to *Nairaland*, Nigeria's most prominent online forum, as a discursive site where ideologies around transgenderism, gender and sexuality are reproduced or resisted.

6. THEORETICAL REVIEW

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) serves as the core theoretical foundation for this study. As an interdisciplinary approach to the study of discourse, CDA seeks to understand how language functions in social contexts, particularly in the reproduction of power, dominance, and inequality. Given the controversial and ideologically-loaded nature of transgender discourse in Nigeria, CDA provides a powerful lens for unpacking the ideologies embedded in online commentary, especially within platforms like *Nairaland*. Critical Discourse Analysis is a multidisciplinary approach to studying the relationship between language and society, rooted in critical theory and linguistics. It goes beyond surface-level text analysis to examine the relationship between language and the social structures that shape it. It is concerned with how discourse reflects, sustains, and challenges power relations and ideologies. CDA views discourse as both socially shaped and socially shaping according to Fairclough (1995). Its central goal is to reveal the often-hidden ideological processes that influence how people speak, write, and think, especially with issues of power, identity, and inequality.

Critical Discourse Analysis provides a rich and flexible framework for interrogating the social meanings behind language use in specific contexts. CDA emerged from linguistic and sociological traditions, with major contributions from scholars like Norman Fairclough, Teun A. van Dijk, and Ruth Wodak. While each has a slightly different orientation, they share a commitment to uncovering hidden ideologies in discourse and exposing the mechanisms by which inequality is maintained. CDA assumes that language is not neutral and is particularly interested in how discourse contributes to the reproduction or challenge of social hierarchies. The orientations of CDA align well with this study's focus. Of the three model, Fairclough's (1995) model will be used to analyze the data. His model emphasizes the dialectical relationship between discourse and social structure. Through Fairclough's three-dimensional model and its emphasis on power, ideology, and social structure, the study paves the way for a deep and critical examination of how comments on *Nairaland* reflect and shape societal attitudes about transgender individuals in Nigeria. This model serves as a methodological blueprint for critically analyzing discourse by focusing on three interrelated levels:

Textual Analysis

This level focuses on the micro-level linguistic features of texts, such as vocabulary, grammar, modality, cohesion, and rhetorical structures.

Discursive Practice

This dimension examines how texts are produced, distributed, and consumed (i.e., how texts are interpreted and what intertextual influences shape them.

Social Practice

This broader level situates discourse within wider societal and institutional structures. It seeks to uncover how language use is influenced by and contributes to maintaining dominant ideologies, such as heteronormativity, patriarchy, or religious conservatism. In the Nigerian context, this includes how colonial, religious, and cultural histories inform attitudes toward gender non-conformity.

By linking micro-level linguistic choices with macro-level social dynamics, Fairclough's model enables researchers to critically interrogate how everyday discourse naturalizes power hierarchies and legitimizes dominant ideologies. His model is especially powerful for this study as it allows for a layered interpretation of the language users employ when discussing transgenderism, capturing not only what is said, but also how it is said and why.

This approach is especially well-suited to the present research, which analyses comments on *Nairaland*, a platform where language is not only a tool for expression but also for reinforcing or challenging dominant ideologies. Fairclough's framework is uniquely advantageous as it facilitates a layered analysis that allows for examining linguistic features and lexical choices, investigating how discourse is produced, distributed, and interpreted within this online community, and connecting these to broader sociopolitical ideologies and historical power relations. In addition, Fairclough's model, through its critical orientation, provides powerful tools to analyze how a discourse of this nature perpetuates marginalization, negotiates social norms, and contests the politics of gender identity.

7. METHODOLOGY

The primary data for this study consists of comments of users retrieved from selected threads on *Nairaland*. Due to their recency, data were collected from threads published between 2020 and 2025, across topic categories such as Religion, Politics, Culture, and Health, where discussions explicitly referenced transgender individuals or broader themes related to gender identity, sexuality, or *LGBTQ+* issues. Relevant threads were identified using a keyword search strategy incorporating terms such as "transgender,"

"trans," "gender identity," "sex change," and *"LGBTQ."* From the filtered threads, a total of 300 comments were extracted for analysis. Only comments that were topically relevant, ideologically rich, and linguistically substantive were included. The choice of *Nairaland* as a data source is grounded in its accessibility, popularity, and representativeness of Nigerian public discourse. Unlike institutional publications or journalistic reports, *Nairaland* provides spontaneous and unfiltered expressions of opinion from a broad demographic of Nigerian users.

The study employed purposive sampling as its primary sampling technique which was guided by the following criteria:

Comments must directly or indirectly relate to transgenderism or gender identity.

Comments should contain identifiable discursive strategies (e.g., naming, othering, argumentation, justification).

Comments must reflect ideological or evaluative stances, whether positive, neutral, or negative.

A range of comments was chosen to capture opposing views, ensuring thematic diversity and discursive breadth.

By focusing on ideologically-potent and textually-significant comments, the study prioritizes depth and richness of analysis over statistical universality. The data was categorized into emerging thematic domains, including morality, culture, religion, legal frameworks, and identity. Manual coding was used to ensure detailed engagement with the data, although thematic matrices were developed for consistency. The iterative process of reading, coding, and interpretation ensured that patterns and ideological undercurrents were identified and critically unpacked. The analysis was done at three levels.

7.1 Textual Analysis

This level focuses on the linguistic properties of the comments, such as vocabulary, grammar, modality, and rhetorical devices. Lexical items that signal evaluative judgment were closely examined for their ideological significance.

7.2. Discursive Practice Analysis

At this level, attention is paid to how the comments drew on and reproduced existing discourses from religious, cultural, social, and political narratives. This includes examining how users negotiated their meanings in relation to dominant cultural ideologies, how intertextual references were made, and how meaning was constructed through user-interaction.

7.3. Social Practice Analysis

This third level places the discourse within its broader sociocultural and institutional context, investigating how these digital discourses related to wider structures of power, identity politics, gender norms, and moral belief systems in Nigeria.

8. DATA ANALYSIS

Fairclough's CDA model is used to in analysing the data for this study in order to uncover how language is used to reproduce, reinforce, and contest ideologies related to gender, sexuality, and transgenderism in the Nigerian digital public space. The comments analysed reflect a range of discursive strategies, including mockery, misgendering, political referencing, and moral judgement, all of which reveal the underlying social and cultural tensions with regard to gender identity in Nigeria.

8.1 Discussion One

Bobrisky Announces Wedding Plans: Aso Ebi For □2M, Cap For □1M! by alphonsojaybaz: 6:45am On Jan 23
Nigerian socialite and internet sensation Bobrisky has officially announced plans to tie the knot in grand style, and it's already causing a buzz online. Eyes Of Lagos reports,

> Taking to Instagram, Bobrisky shared jaw-dropping details about the wedding, including Aso Ebi prices and the glamorous locations for each ceremony. According to the post, the female Aso Ebi is priced at □2 million, while men's caps will cost □1 million.
> Here's the breakdown of the star-studded wedding events:
> Introduction – Nigeria
> Engagement – London
> White Wedding – USA
> Honeymoon – Greece
> In typical Bobrisky fashion, he added a cheeky disclaimer: "Broke asses are not invited, please."
> The announcement quickly stirred reactions online, with fans and critics flooding the comment section to share their opinions.

Analysis of Selected Comments on Discussion One

"Is s/he going to be the groom or the bride?" – kingsways

The hybrid pronoun "s/he" shows the user's refusal to affirm Bobrisky's claimed gender. The binary juxtaposition of "groom" and "bride" spotlights the speaker's entrapment in a strictly binary gender framework. The speaker draws on familiar gender scripts from traditional marriage discourse. There is no recognition of transgender identities as valid or as capable of occupying a rational social role. In this comment, the term "s/he" is a lexical blend used pejoratively to erase transgender identity. This shows a wider Nigerian normativity where gender identities outside the cisgender binary are met with contempt or disbelief. The idea that a person can transition and claim a new gender role is culturally unaccepted. This comment foregrounds linguistic ambiguity by making use of the gender-neutral pronoun "s/he," which reflects the poster's confusion or refusal to affirm *Bobrisky's* gender identity. At the textual level, the pronoun is a linguistic tool of dehumanisation and discursively, it mocks the complexity of gender transition by reducing it to absurdity. Socially, such terms are used widely in Nigerian digital spaces to resist Western gender discourses and assert a

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nationalist, moralistic stance rooted in *cisnormativity*. The question appears to be syntactically simple but semantically loaded. It challenges the legitimacy of *Bobrisky's* self-identification. Discursively, it taps into a broader societal unease about transgender individuals fitting into heteronormative frameworks like marriage. At the level of social practice, this comment reflects the Nigerian cultural backdrop where traditional gender roles remain rigid and deviations, particularly in the form of non-binary or transgender expressions, invite ridicule or moral questioning.

"Who is the wife or husband..." – Deathisreal2024

This continues in the same vein of binary confusion. The ellipsis at the end suggests incredulity or hesitation, perhaps conveying a sense of disbelief or mockery. On a textual level, it does not just pose a question but invokes the idea that gender roles in a marriage must be clearly defined and biologically assigned. On a discursive level, it reinforces heteronormative paradigms by insisting that one party must be "the husband" and the other "the wife", which delegitimises same-sex or queer unions. In terms of social practice, it showcases the pervasive influence of religious and cultural heteronormativity in Nigerian discourse, where traditional roles in marriage are not just normative but mandatory.

"Werey! Who dey marry who?" – Racoon

The derogatory Yoruba slang "Werey" (mad person) is used in this comment to immediately establish a tone of ridicule. Textually, the code-mixing of Pidgin English with informal English enhances the casual yet contemptuous nature of the comment. The phrase "Who dey marry who?" implies chaos and confusion, rejecting the possibility of a coherent queer relationship. On a discursive level, it suggests that non-heterosexual relationships are inherently farcical or doomed. Socially, the comment ties into moral panic around the erosion of traditional values and the fear of Western liberalism influencing Nigerian youth.

"Penis marrying penis? So sorry" – Asemotaaustine

This raw analogy equates same-sex marriage with absurdity or impossibility. The phrase "so sorry" is somewhat patronising. The user undermines the wedding through *biological determinism* and mock pity. This comment perpetuates the cultural rejection of same-sex intimacy and union, expressing how marriage is still fiercely guarded as a heterosexual institution. This comment is brief but charged. It reduces the wedding to the perceived physical genitalia of both parties, ignoring gender identity altogether. Textually, the pairing of "penis marrying penis" is designed for shock and ridicule. Discursively, it reaffirms heteronormative expectations for marriage, rooted in binary anatomy. Socially, it is emblematic of Nigeria's legal and moral rejection of same-sex marriages, reinforcing the narrative that such unions are unnatural and unacceptable.

Shim will come up with one excuse after them don buy clothes finish." – Foodqueen

"Shim" is a common transphobic term blending "she" and "him." The comment implies deceit and unreliability. The use of derogatory pronouns and Pidgin English reinforces cultural contempt. It implies the trans identity is a ruse for attention or manipulation. This reflects suspicion toward transgender people, often perceived as dishonest or unserious. This uses the derogatory pronoun "shim" (she + him), which is textually crafted to insult. The rest of the sentence implies that *Bobrisky* might cancel the wedding after people have already invested in *Aso Ebi*. Discursively, it casts doubt on the sincerity of the wedding and portrays Bobrisky as deceitful or performative. Socially, this aligns with broader skepticism about the validity or seriousness of queer milestones, painting them as spectacle rather than sincere events.

"A part of me believes it is more honourable to be transgender than to be gay." –NwaAmaikpe

This comment offers a slightly unexpected view. On the surface, this appears to be a subtle endorsement of transgender identity. Textually, the phrase "a part of me" indicates inner conflict or ambivalence. It suggests a hierarchy within queer identities, positioning transgender people as slightly more acceptable. Discursively, this ranking still implies deviance but in relative degrees, which ultimately upholds heteronormativity by placing queer identities in a moral spectrum. At the level of social practice, it may indicate a shifting awareness among Nigerians that transgender identity, especially when accompanied by economic or aesthetic success, might be gaining more visibility than homosexuality.

"Research has proven that most straight men who would never imagine themselves stroking the cock of another man are more receptive to shagging a transgender." – NwaAmaikpe

This comment follows from the same user in comment 6. This provocative and explicit statement draws on *pseudo-scientific* authority ("research has proven") to rationalize trans attraction. Textually, the use of crude language ("stroking the cock") juxtaposed with "transgender" introduces a conflict between eroticism and stigma. On a discursive level, it reflects the fetishization of transgender women, positioning them as sexual curiosities rather than human beings. Socially, it suggests a tension in Nigerian masculinity which turns out to be one that is curious, repressed, and yet drawn to gender variance even while disavowing it publicly.

8.2 Discussion Two

Female Chorister Discovered To Be A Man After Death In Port Harcourt (Photos) by TMS Media: 7:11pm On Feb 05, 2023

Emmanuella Adaolisa, a singer at St. John's Catholic

Church in Iwofe, Port Harcourt was discovered to be a trans woman after death. IGBERETV learnt that Emmanuella Adaolisa who had been identified as a lady died in a Keke accident. Church members claim they had no knowledge that Emmanuella was a man until mortuary attendants made the discovery.

However, the word 'Trans' is seen on Emmanuella Adaolisa's Facebook profile.

Chukwuka Gabriel Eseh shared the story on Facebook. He wrote;

"What our clime has turned into... A certain Emmanuel Nwaolisa. A Pharmacist who graduated from UNIPORT. (Emmanuella Adaolisa as facebook name.) Until the unthinkable happened on the 31st January 2023. Nobody knew he was a transgender.

On that fateful 31st of January, after evening Programme in the church, on her way home, she met her Waterloo.

She was seen in a tricycle (Keke) inside a gutter, bleeding all around her face.

After been there for a while with little or know rescue, the info got to the church choir members who went there to confirm the story to be true.

There and then, she was taken to a military hospital around Rumuola PH. On getting there, she was confirmed dead on arrival (DOA).

> Furthermore, she was to be dressed by the mortuary attendants, it was there they discovered that she was a he......

> The mortuary attendants then called on the church choir master to interview him on the gender they deposited with them, the choir master responded that it was a female.

> But when he and his team was led to really confirm their position, low and behold.... The choir team were bewildered by what they saw that they have been dealing with a man but not a woman as she claimed. Many other stories about him started surfacing from people that knew him before. Please my people, let's be vigilant at all times."

Analysis of Selected Comments on Discussion Two

"No tears for the dead, esp for homos n tranies" – Angrygoat

Blatantly hostile. "Homos" and "tranies" are derogatory terms. The refusal to mourn reflects deep-seated prejudice. Enforces a moral hierarchy in death. The trans person's identity invalidates the person's worth, even in death. This reflects the intensity of homophobia and transphobia in religious and patriarchal Nigerian cultures, where non-conformity is seen as deserving divine punishment. This comment is steeped in overt transphobia and homophobia. The phrase "No tears for the dead" implies that transgender individuals are undeserving of sympathy. The use of slurs ("homos,"

"tranies") dehumanizes the deceased, reducing them to pejorative identities. Discursively, the comment reveals the undercurrent of hostility present in conservative

circles, where trans existence is not only unacceptable but seen as punishable. On a social level, it reflects how entrenched religious morality and gender essentialism shape public reactions, often with violent implications. It denies the humanity of the deceased and reinforces social hierarchies based on rigid gender conformity.

> *"Nnkan nbe! Few weeks ago, I received a shocking news that a brother (or so we thought) I know very well has become a woman after undergoing a surgery."* – ImoleNaija

"Nnkan nbe" is a Yoruba expression meaning "*things dey happen*," often used to express disbelief. The anecdotal structure of the comment introduces a personal witness account to support the narrative of gender transition being both surprising and unnatural. Discursively, the speaker attempts to validate the shock factor through personal proximity to another transgender person. This helps reinforce social norms that treat transpeople's identities as rare disruptions rather than normalized experiences. Socially, the comment strengthens the prevailing view of transgenderism as both a betrayal and a transformation that upends communal expectations than identity, reinforcing the tendency to reduce trans existence to spectacle.

> *"Trans and bisexuals deserves death punishment. Not in this country"* – Thebadpolitican(m)

This is an extremely violent and dehumanizing statement. It contains a call for capital punishment directed at "Trans and bisexuals," using the term "deserves" to legitimize such punishment. The phrase "Not in this country" invokes nationalism to reinforce exclusion. The comment reproduces homophobic and transphobic discourses

grounded in punitive morality. It reflects extremist ideologies often fueled by religious or legal rhetoric, particularly in contexts where homosexuality and gender non-conformity are criminalized or socially ostracized. It also aligns with a form of "us vs. them" discourse that views sexual and gender minorities as threats to cultural or religious purity. This comment exemplifies the normalization of hate speech in online Nigerian discourse. It is indicative of a wider sociopolitical climate where state laws (such as the *Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act of 2014*) and public sentiment often intersect to justify violence against *LGBTQ+* people. It calls attention to the dangerous implications of such rhetoric in reinforcing state-sanctioned discrimination.

> *"I'm confused. What's his/her crime?"* – EpicNigerian(m)

This comment is a direct rhetorical question. The use of "his/her" reflects ongoing ambiguity or intentional provocation and questions the moral panic surrounding the event, possibly serving as subtle criticism of others' hostility. It also suggests a minority voice attempting to interrogate the dominant framing of transpeople's identity as deceptive or sinful. This rhetorical question

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functions as a critique of the moral panic surrounding the revelation of the deceased's gender identity. Textually, the oscillation between "his/her" mimics societal confusion or sarcasm about gender binaries. The commenter challenges the unspoken assumption that transgender identity is inherently deceptive or criminal. From a discursive standpoint, the question destabilizes the dominant framing of *trans* identity as deviant, subtly asking for justification of the outrage. Socially, this could be seen as a voice of resistance, calling for introspection within a society quick to condemn without cause.

"If him say he be she, then so be it na." – OgwuEgo

Pidgin English is used here to signal resignation or informal acceptance: "If him say he be she…". This comment adopts a non-confrontational stance, reflecting a kind of pragmatic tolerance or apathy. It indicates how some Nigerians are indifferent or weary of moral debates on gender, choosing to "live and let live". This comment is brief but progressive in tone. It centers individual self-identification: "If him say he be she," emphasising the speaker's willingness to accept a person's stated identity. The Nigerian *Pidgin-English* structure ("so be it na") softens the tone, making it more palatable and dismissive of unnecessary drama. Discursively, the statement breaks from the dominant discourse of denial or ridicule and adopts a *live-and-let-live* stance. On a broader social level, it reflects a minority position in Nigerian society accepting gender self-determination without theological or cultural contestation. However, its casual tone might also suggest apathy rather than full endorsement.

"Even trans men are still better than some women in being a woman" – olaeffect(m)

This comment serves as a satirical compliment. It subtly destabilizes the idea of womanhood as biologically fixed. It reflects how transgender issues can blur cultural norms in unexpected ways. This comment offers a contradictory critique wrapped in a backhanded compliment. While seemingly praising *trans*women for performing femininity "better," the comment ultimately diminishes both cisgender women and trans identity. The phrase "still better than some women" uses comparison as a rhetorical tool, suggesting failure on the part of women rather than praising trans people sincerely. Discursively, it plays into misogynistic and transphobic tropes, where femininity is commodified and performed rather than embodied. Socially, it reinforces the view that gender is performative but still ranks individuals hierarchically based on appearance and behavior.

"Being a man… is more stressful and less adored." – abidem4real

The comment takes a somewhat sympathetic stance, suggesting that the decision to transition might be economically or emotionally motivated. It contrasts the experiences of men and women, implying that masculinity is burdensome ("more stressful") and femininity is more rewarding ("less adored"). This perspective introduces a socio-economic dimension to gender discourse. It reflects a utilitarian view of gender, suggesting that people may adopt gender identities strategically based on perceived social or emotional advantages. The use of dual pronouns shows ambivalence but also an attempt to be inclusive. The comment situates gender transition within broader social inequalities, such as the crisis of masculinity or the emotional toll of performing traditional male roles. While this framing risks essentializing gender experiences, it also opens up a nuanced criticism of patriarchy by acknowledging that men too face systemic burdens that may influence identity decisions.

8.3. Discussion Three

Man Sparks Outrage After Getting A New 'Female Organ': 4:35pm On Aug 27, 2024

A recent social media post has ignited a firestorm of reactions after a man shared his excitement about getting a "new pussy." In his viral post, he proudly held two small balls in both hands in neatly wrapped package, captioning it with, "Just got my new pussy!!! Here I am holding my balls with my husband and my nicely wrapped and protected pussy!!" shocked

While some netizens were quick to condemn him, believing he had undergone surgery to remove his testicles and replace them with a "surgical pussy," others surprisingly voiced their support, praising him for his boldness and authenticity. embarassed

The controversy has sparked intense debate online, with many labeling it as a sign of the "end times," while others argue for individual freedom and self-expression. As the discussions continue to heat up, it's clear this post has struck a chord, stirring emotions and opinions across the board.

Analysis of Selected Comments on Discussion Three

"Tomorrow he will call himself a woman and will want to compete in women sports, lol! MADNESS OF THE WORLD WE LIVE IN TODAY... reminds me of these 3

women below celebrating getting rid of their tittays,lol:" – MrBrownJay1(m):

In this comment, the user expresses disdain toward the *trans* individual's surgical transition, using sports competition as a metaphorical site of perceived gender distortion. Textually, the speaker employs sarcasm ("lol," "madness of the world") and informal vulgarity to trivialise and ridicule transgender identity. Discursively, this mirrors common conservative narratives that delegitimise *trans* women by invoking fears of unfair competition in women's sports, a recurring trope in right-wing media globally. The intertextual reference to "three women celebrating" emphasises a perceived global epidemic of 'gender madness,' fueling the narrative that gender affirmation procedures are irrational acts. Socially,

this aligns with a cisnormative worldview that views transgender visibility as evidence of social decay. This discourse contributes to the moral panic surrounding *LGBTQ+* presence and reinforces the notion of societal degeneration in the digital Nigerian public sphere.

"Old man with Beards & Toto. Yuck. Maybe he wants to get ffuucckked the rest of his life"– EmekaBlue(m)

This statement is viscerally transphobic and sexually derogatory. Textually, it employs shock value, using crass language ("Yuck," "ffuucckked") to elicit revulsion. The juggling of masculine and feminine traits, "beards" and "toto" (vagina), is used to undermine the authenticity of the transition. Discursively, the speaker reinforces the binary logic that views gender as fixed and non-negotiable. The insinuation that the individual's transition is merely a gateway to being penetrated casts *trans* women in a hypersexualized and objectified role. Socially, this dehumanizes *trans* persons, perpetuating dangerous stereotypes of deviance, immorality, and psychological abnormality, particularly within a Nigerian context where masculinity is closely tied to sexual dominance.

"No one can change his or her gender or sex, surgical or otherwise."– lexy2014

This is declarative and absolute, insisting on biological essentialism. It dismisses trans experiences as invalid, denying any social or medical legitimacy and embodies conservative ideology that views gender as fixed and divinely assigned. This comment is declarative and definitive, articulating a biologically deterministic stance. Textually, the user relies on traditional binary language ("his or her"), suggesting that gender is immutable and biologically ordained. Discursively, this echoes dominant scientific and religious discourses that position transgender identity as delusional or unnatural. Socially, this perspective has deep roots in Nigerian conservative and Christian ideologies, where sex is viewed as *God-given* and unchangeable. By dismissing the legitimacy of surgical transition, the speaker negates *trans* identities and upholds a rigid gender binary that excludes all forms of variance.

"Fake organ.. Why will a male ever want to turn female if not mental illness?"– flokii

The derogatory label ("fake organ") links transgender identity with pathology ("mental illness"). It frames trans identity as a deception and psychological deviance. It reinforces dangerous stereotypes that can justify exclusion, violence, or conversion attempts. Here, the user pathologizes transgender identity outright. The term "fake organ" reflects a rejection of gender-affirming surgery as legitimate medical practice. The rhetorical question that follows criminalizes or medicalizes the desire to transition, equating it with mental illness. Textually, the comment is succinct yet aggressive. Discursively, this reflects widespread stigmatization of mental health

in Nigeria and the use of psychiatric terminology to discredit non-normative identities. Socially, the framing of *transness* as madness makes illegitimate the individual's autonomy, contributing to systemic violence and societal exclusion against *trans* persons.

"Why not just go with the gender that have the natural ones... This thing is really demonic."– Kekydiv(m)

This comment spiritualizes trans identity by labeling it "demonic", uses rhetorical questioning to suggest irrationality. It deploys religious term to reject and demonise bodily autonomy. It reflects Pentecostal-inflected Nigerian culture where transgression from norms is spiritualized and moralized. This comment combines confusion, ridicule, and theological condemnation. The speaker cannot rationalize why someone assigned male at birth would opt for surgery instead of dating women. Textually, there's a personal tone ("I will still not understand"), indicating that the speaker frames their ignorance as common sense. The use of "demonic" introduces a moral-religious discourse that equates gender transition with spiritual corruption. Discursively, this reflects both ignorance about gender dysphoria and a binary understanding of sexual attraction. Socially, such views are grounded in *Pentecostal Christian demonology* prevalent in Nigeria, which frequently associates queerness with satanic influence, thus endorsing its social and spiritual rejection.

"Confused people everywhere. Some ladies are crying for a life partner this one still dares to join them again."– abbeyd2(m)

This comment reveals a gender-competitive anxiety, wherein trans women are perceived as rivals to CIS women in heterosexual dating markets. Textually, the comment uses a lamentation format ("What kind of world…") to signal distress at changing norms. The juggling between CIS women's struggles for partners and the entry of *trans* women into dating spaces suggests a *zero-sum* view of romantic opportunity. Discursively, the speaker constructs *trans* women as interlopers and deceivers in cisgender spaces. Socially, this echoes a broader pattern of scapegoating trans individuals for societal dysfunctions, particularly in contexts of romantic scarcity or gendered expectations.

"Congratulations to him her. He She made it to the list of ex-men association..."– Urgent1Million

This user employs irony and grammatical dissonance to point out perceived confusion around gender identity. Textually, the use of alternating pronouns ("he/she," "her/his") serves to mock non-binary identity, presenting it as linguistically and socially incoherent. The term "ex-men association" is a *tongue-in-cheek* metaphor that casts transition as an abandonment or betrayal of masculinity. Discursively, the mention of *Bobrisky* again reinforces the narrative that trans identity is attention-seeking or celebrity-linked. Socially, it reflects the

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anxiety surrounding the fluidity of gender, especially as it concerns traditional patriarchal norms. The construction of a metaphorical "association" of *ex-men* also suggests the speaker's perception of transness as a collective departure from accepted social order.

> *"Let him also get a female womb and fix in his body system so he can get pregnant and giving birth to children..,you cannot mock God that created you well."*– ufotunang

The speaker employs sarcasm and religious appeal to delegitimize the *trans* individual's gender affirmation surgery. The conditional imperative "let him also get a womb" is used mockingly to emphasise the perceived futility or incompleteness of gender transition. The phrase "mock God" frames transgender identity as blasphemous. This comment draws from a deeply *religious discourse*, especially within conservative Christian communities, which regards gender roles and bodily integrity as divinely ordained. There's a reliance on *naturalistic fallacy*, suggesting that deviation from one's birth sex is a rejection of God's intention. In Nigerian society where religion is tightly woven into public morality, the speaker invokes divine authority to condemn gender variance. The act of surgically altering one's genitalia is framed as not just unnatural but heretical. This comment reinforces *transphobic theological discourse* and contributes to broader societal exclusion and spiritual policing of nonconforming identities.

> *"The way, I see this, these sick transgender fuckers are just lab rats."*–TheBillyonaire

This is a profoundly dehumanizing and violently transphobic statement. The use of "sick" and "lab rats" casts *trans* individuals as diseased experiments, devoid of human dignity. The expletive "fuckers" heightens the aggression and vilification. The language borrows from *scientific horror and pathology discourse,* portraying transgenderism as unnatural and experimental. It reflects fears of medical intervention being used to override what the speaker sees as 'natural biology'. The comment reflects how *trans* people are often seen not as autonomous individuals but as *cultural threats* or guinea pigs for liberal agendas. Such statements contribute to *stigmatization and violence*, further marginalizing an already vulnerable group.

> *"Mental homes are no longer functional... People who are threat to the sanity of a nation now formed the LGBTQ..."*– IamtheTruth1(m)

This comment frames *LGBTQ+* individuals as mentally unstable and dangerous to national sanity. The comment deploys institutional language ("mental homes") to justify exclusion. It also conflates mental illness with non-normative identity as a form of social control. It reinforces pathological narratives that are often used to strip *LGBTQ+* persons of rights and humanity. The comment associates *LGBTQ+*

identities with mental illness and systemic dysfunction. The repetition of "madness" both opens and closes the statement, emphasizing perceived psychological deviance. This draws heavily from *psychiatric pathologization*, a discourse once used to criminalize queerness in psychiatry. It also employs a *nationalist-moralist discourse*, portraying the *LGBTQ+* community as a societal threat. The idea that *LGBTQ+* people "formed" to collectively destabilize national sanity mirrors *conspiratorial rhetoric* prevalent in many African nations. It bolsters public perception that queerness is both imported and destructive, reinforcing calls for *exclusionary nationalism* and religious moral policing.

> *"These are the transgenders I truly respect, he went all the way... I would be comfortable with him in a ladies toilet."*– 1Sharon(f)

Unlike the preceding comment, this one shows an unusual form of conditional approval. The speaker distinguishes between what she terms 'serious' and 'superficial' *trans* individuals, valuing bodily modification over performative gender expression. The phrasing "he went all the way" conveys respect not for identity, but for the perceived completeness of the transition. Textually, there's an underlying contradiction: despite referring to the subject as "he," the user still expresses "comfort" with the individual using female spaces, revealing an ambiguous stance. Discursively, this reflects a common "gatekeeping" discourse, where acceptance of *trans* identities is contingent on surgical conformity to gender norms. Socially, it points to the ongoing debate about bathroom access for trans individuals, with implications about safety, privacy, and bodily autonomy in Nigerian spaces that are heavily influenced by religious and moralist ideologies.

> *"This man has challenged BOBRISKY"*– dynicks(m)

This is a simple statement that positions the subject in competition with Bobrisky, Nigeria's most visible trans figure. Reflects framing of gender non-conformity as spectacle or celebrity status. Shows how trans visibility in Nigeria is often associated with entertainment and public intrigue, not identity legitimacy. Here, the user places the trans individual in direct symbolic competition with **Bobrisky**, Nigeria's most visible transgender figure. This comment is textually brief, with a tone of jest and entertainment. Discursively, the remark situates transgender identity as part of celebrity culture or attention economy, where visibility is treated as performative rather than political or existential. The word "challenged" hints at a rivalry or succession, suggesting that ***trans*** identity is a spectacle. Socially, this reduces the gravity of gender affirmation to a pop-cultural narrative, denying the lived experiences of trans individuals. This trivialization is common in Nigerian social commentary, where gender variance is sensationalized and linked to fame or notoriety.

9. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study presents a comprehensive and in-depth discussion of the findings of this study. It applies Fairclough's three-dimensional model of *Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)*, focusing on the textual, discursive, and social practices, to evaluate how Nigerian internet users linguistically construct and contest transgender identities on a widely used public forum, *Nairaland*. The study aimed not just to describe the surface meanings of users' comments but to expose the deep-seated ideologies, social structures, and intertextual connections that shape those utterances.

One of the most dominant and striking findings from the data is the persistent reinforcement of binary gender norms. A large proportion of commenters expressed confusion, disgust, and disdain toward the transgender individual in question, repeatedly calling into question their biological identity with statements like: "No one can change his or her gender or sex, surgical or otherwise," or "He cut them? No side effects?" These expressions reflect a deeply entrenched belief in the *biological essentialism of gender*, the idea that gender is fixed at birth and determined strictly by genitalia. Such views resonate with the findings of Alichie (2022), who notes that Nigerian online spaces tend to privilege a rigid, biologically determinist framework for understanding gender, rejecting any form of fluidity or transformation. In this worldview, gender reassignment is not seen as a legitimate identity formation process but as an act of deceit, rebellion, or mental illness. Moreover, the repetition of phrases like "he cannot mock God" and "he will never be a woman" for a trans woman, signify a discursive strategy of invalidation. These utterances perform more than denial; they serve to make illegitimate the lived realities of *trans* people by refusing their chosen identities and forcibly imposing normative gender expectations on them. Thus, the digital space becomes a site of symbolic violence, where language is used to discipline and suppress perceived deviance.

Another key finding in the study is the moral and religious framing of transgender identities as violations of divine order. Comments such as "this is ending time madness," and "Sodom and Gomorrah thought they were prosperous until wrath came upon them," illustrate how many users interpret gender nonconformity not merely as a personal decision but as a *spiritual transgression*. Religion remains a key structuring force in Nigerian sociolinguistic spaces, shaping not only personal beliefs but also public discourse and political attitudes. The comments in this study reinforce their assertion that religious dogma, especially *Christian Pentecostal theology*, frames *LGBTQ+* expressions as signs of the devil's influence, Western corruption, or end-time prophecy. This moral framing contributes to what Alichie (2022) terms the *moral panic phenomenon*, where

gender variance becomes a metonym for broader societal collapse. The man's decision to undergo gender-affirming surgery is not simply rejected, it is feared, condemned, and viewed as an existential threat to the nation's moral fabric. Such rhetoric not only ostracizes *trans* individuals but also silences any attempts at understanding them by casting their actions in the realm of spiritual warfare.

A third finding is the prevalence of dehumanizing language, mockery, and explicit verbal abuse. Terms such as "lab rats," "shim," "mental illness," and "disgusting research," as well as sarcastic expressions like "hope he gets his monthly periods," reveal the intense levels of discursive aggression that transgender individuals are subjected to in digital spaces.

According to the Transrespect Project (2015), this form of transphobia, verbal, symbolic, and rhetorical, is a form of systemic violence that functions to exclude, silence, and erase *trans* voices from public visibility. The use of sarcasm, jokes, and crude analogies (references to being "fing-shim" or "woman with beard and toto") not only ridicules the trans subject but denies their right to social personhood. This type of discursive violence also has a *regulatory function,* by mocking the transgender person, the speakers reassert their own heteronormative positions as socially and morally acceptable. This echoes Fairclough's (1995) claim that discourse is a site of struggle where dominant groups use language to maintain their hegemony. In the *Nairaland* comments, the ridicule serves to discipline dissenting identities, re-establishing gender orthodoxy and ostracizing deviance.

In addition, the study finds out that several comments reveal underlying heteropatriarchal anxieties about the erosion of traditional male dominance. Remarks such as "they will take all the men," "what's different from a real woman then?" and "did he really cut them?" convey discomfort with trans women potentially being seen as more desirable or socially functional than cisgender women. This reflects masculine fragility in digital Nigerian spaces, where male commentators fear losing control, visibility, or access to women due to the increasing visibility of gender-diverse individuals. Interestingly, women commenters also express discomfort, not necessarily with transgender identity per se, but with the idea that trans women could "take the men," reflecting competitive anxieties within heteronormative courtship structures. These anxieties often manifest in sarcastic or speculative remarks that undermine trans women's legitimacy ("hope he has periods," "so he's joining us to look for husband now?"). Such statements point out the deeply gendered economy of desire and relationship roles in Nigerian society and how the entry of trans individuals is viewed as *disruptive or threatening* to that system.

Finally, the findings reveal that while the majority of the comments are overtly transphobic, some of these netizens' express sympathy or improved understanding,

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especially when commenting on the implications of economic hardship, mental health, or societal rejection. A few remarks acknowledged that "not everyone chooses to be this way," or that "he is more woman than some women," revealing cracks in the hegemonic narrative.

Folayan et al. (2023) note in their study of Nigerian trans individuals during the **COVID-19** pandemic that transpeople in Nigeria face significant social exclusion, mental health challenges, and lack of access to healthcare, all of which complicate public perception of their identity. While most **Nairaland** comments do not make this submission, the few who do, project trans individuals not merely as deviants, but as products of structural violence and socio-political marginalization.

10. CONCLUSION

This study has critically examined *Nairaland* Comments on Transgenderism and Counter-transgenderism in Nigeria. This study confirms and extends the insights of prior literature on digital transphobia and online moral regulation. By applying Fairclough's (1995) three-tiered model of text, discourse practice, and sociocultural context, it becomes clear that transphobic discourse on *Nairaland* is not simply about individual opinion but a reflection of broader sociocultural structures and religious sentiments. The study contributes to knowledge by highlighting the role of public online forums in the reproduction and policing of gender norms. Previous Studies on transgenderism have largely focused on Western or global North platforms; this study localizes the analysis, offering empirical insights into how Nigerian grassroot digital platform, *Nairaland*, engage with gender non-conformity.

The study captures a wide cross-section of uncensored Nigerian thought, making it a unique contribution to the fields of sociolinguistics, gender studies, and digital discourse analysis. The discourse surrounding transgender identity on *Nairaland* is deeply embedded in heteronormative, religious, and binary frameworks that reject gender fluidity. The data confirms existing literature on the hostility of Nigerian digital spaces toward trans identities and reveals the specific discursive tools used to enforce social conformity, sarcasm, ridicule, religiosity, and moral condemnation. Irrespective of this, small traces of empathy and structural awareness suggest a potential discursive opening, however minor, toward inclusive engagement. Future research may examine how Nigerian LGBTQ+ communities create counter-narratives in other safer digital spaces. The study concluded that there is the need for continued research, digital literacy, and counter-narratives that challenge harmful ideologies and create more inclusive digital spaces in Nigeria.

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