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Shaming in digital discourses in Nigeria: Performative deliberation and agency in abba Kyari's corruption allegation

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Abstract

This article examines the use of tweets, humorous texts, and memes for shaming purposes in the corruption case of Abba Kyari, a Nigerian police chief. Using insights from Arabella Lyon's notions of agency and performative deliberation, the article argues that internet social media platforms such as Twitter have evolved into powerful cultural sites of protests and resistance for Nigerian users. Findings reveal that cultural forms of communication such as memes, humor, and tweets become tools of shaming used by Nigerian netizens to register online protests in the country. Further, the study reveals that social media platforms have made reallocation of power possible for ordinary Nigerians to have their say on political issues and to stage protests against political corruption and marginalization in society. The study orients Nigerians and others to online protest culture rhetoric in Nigeria and its social and political functions.

Keywords: Shaming; Digital communications; Performative deliberation; Agency; Political corruption; Abba Kyari

1. Introduction

On November 5, 2019, the Nigerian Senate introduced a bill titled "Protection from Internet Falsehood and Manipulations Bill." The bill was supposedly meant to criminalize what the Senate termed false information peddled on the internet by Nigerian social media users. The measure drew immediate widespread condemnation, especially from critics who saw it as part of a persistently systematic attempt by the Nigerian Government to inhibit free speech and limit criticisms of political corruption in the country (Ajibola 2021; Abdullateef 2021; Ogungbemi 2023). Nigeria has a long and tortuous history of military rule which brought about the absence of freedom of speech (Aiyede 2003; Emmanuel 2003; Ogungbemi 2024). The post-colonial history of Nigeria has been marked by more military administrations than by constitutionally and democratically elected governments. Military rule in Nigeria was oppressive and brutal, drawing parallel with the absolute powers of authoritarian regimes which glory in placing an embargo on human life (Agamben 1998; Ogungbemi 2016). Free speech, freedom of association, and culture came under attack at the hands of authoritarian leaders in Nigeria and many other countries in Africa.

According to Okuyade (2013), the 1970s witnessed a remarkable revolution in political rule in Africa: the advent of repressive authoritarian regimes. While Nigeria had military heads of state who were notoriously corrupt and brutal, the 1990s brought in Sani Abacha whose government not only continued the dictatorial politics of its predecessors but also came down heavily on social activists and journalists by jailing them without trial and killing even some without trial (Babatope 2000). Transitioning to democracy in 1999 has not ensured a free and objective media. In Nigeria, the media's objectivity in reporting corruption has been hampered by interferences from the political elite and other powerful individuals. The media is intertwined and part of the narrative itself' (Ogungbemi 2018; Komolafe, Hitchen, and Kalu-Amah 2019). Ordinary citizens do not have access to the traditional media because of differentials in power

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structures and power dynamics. Therefore, the voices of the people count for nothing even when they challenge political corruption. Besides, often officials and individuals accused of corruption get away with their actions without being punished accordingly. Most of these highly placed individuals have control and measure of influence on the media houses. However, in recent times, Nigerians are proving that they are not passive consumers of top-down rhetoric on political corruption. They are becoming participatory actors in the war on political corruption and bad governance. In this paper, I argue that Nigerian netizens use humorous tweets and memes to resist, subvert and challenge political corruption and corrupt public officials. I contend that Abba Kyari's corruption allegations provide Nigeria netizens the opportunity to shame not only Abba Kyari but also other high-profile Nigerians who are adjudged to be corrupt or have abetted corruption in the country.

The purpose of this paper is to show how Nigerian netizens utilize social media platforms as powerful tools to shame corrupt public officials and engage in deliberation that has the potential to influence mainstream media agendas, and ultimately the government. In this article, I aim to contribute to shaming literature by showing how shaming in social media discourse makes online protests and civil campaigns effective. I utilize social media culture to appraise the varied modes of performing shaming in corruption cases involving Abba Kyari.

These social media campaigns embody what Lyon calls performative deliberation and agency. For Lyon, performative deliberation involves a process of discussion where all the participants have equal power to access a common public space. Deliberation makes possible a situation whereby those with and without power can deliberate on societal issues on social media. I examine tweets and memes by ordinary Nigerians in the month of February 2022 on Abba Kyari's corruption allegations. February is a crucial month for the study because many Nigerian netizens took to social media to shame Abba Kyari and renewed their calls for his arrest following the allegation by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) that Abba Kyari and four other police officers were in an alleged case of criminal conspiracy, official corruption and tampering with exhibits in a case of illicit drug trafficking involving a transnational drug cartel.

From the foregoing, I begin with a discussion of the history/background, and context of social media movements and protests in Nigeria. Second, I explore the concepts of performative deliberation, agency, and Nigerian netizens. Performative deliberation and agency serve as the theory that guides my interpretation of data. Third, I turn attention to shaming as a performative agency, a tool utilized by Nigerian netizens to stage protests against political corruption and resist repressive governance. Lastly, I turn to the analysis and discussion of the data.

2. History/background and context of social media movements and protests in Nigeria

Since the Arab Spring protests in North Africa between 2010 and 2012, Nigerians have increasingly resorted to internet social media to mobilize against bad governance but even more important to expose government corruption and government ineptitude, and negligence (Abdullateeef 2021). For example, in April 2014 after the abduction of more than 200 girls from Government Secondary School, Chibok in Borno State, and the administration of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan administration's apathetic handling of the abduction of the school girls by Boko Haram terrorists, the #BringBackOurGirls (BBOG) movement trended on Twitter for months and became a worldwide campaign, leading to the rescue of some of the girls in the hands of the dreadful Boko Haram terrorists (Olson 2016; Chiluwa and Ifukor 2015; Maxfield 2016). The organizer of the #BringBackOurGirls movement started the campaign to jolt the seemingly indifferent administration of President Jonathan to action to confront the terrorists and rescue the abducted girls. The Internet social media was also utilized by Nigerian netizens during the #Endsars protest that began on October 8, 2020. The protest which was directed at the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a unit of the Nigeria Police started after someone uploaded a gruesome video clip of police officers shooting a young man in Ughelli, Delta State, and fleeing with his vehicle (Ugobude 2020; Oloyede and Elega 2019). The #RevolutionNow has also been used by some Nigerians to call out the federal government's mishandling of the Nigerian economy and to expose political corruption. Other such movements include the 2016 #SacktheSenate and #OccupyNASS. From the #BringBackOurGirls Twitter campaign to the recent #RevolutionNow movement, there exists a new sociopolitical order represented by a virtual public who mounts resistance to hegemonic designs of the state through satirical texts and humorous images on digital platforms

Social media platforms in Nigeria and many other countries are sites where citizens can come together voluntarily to discuss issues of public interest and attempt to influence the political handling of these public concerns. Besides the fact that social media platforms and online discussion forums create new arenas where citizens can take part in public debate, the level of flexibility, creativity, and easy circulation of information that social media platforms enable meant that people utilize them more in protests. In other words, internet social media platforms have been evolving into powerful cultural sites of protests for Nigerian users. One of the ways that Nigerian netizens protest on social media is through shaming. The peculiar forms of this cultural practice of shaming political corruption underline the present

study. A major assumption of my study, therefore, is that a culture of public shaming has underpinned social media protests against political corruption in Nigeria. Abba Kyari is one of the most decorated police officials in Nigeria in recent years. I, therefore, intend to address this issue by asking the following questions: How is the interaction of Abba Kyari's corruption cases on social media locally organized and constructed? How does this intentionally or unintentionally contribute to resistance to the hegemonic power structure in Nigeria? By applying a rhetorical perspective to the study of shaming on social media platforms, the study reveals how non-dominant groups in Nigeria benefit from the new regime of agency and self-enfranchisement that social media affords them and make them participatory actors in the political deliberations in the country. Social media provides a safe space for ordinary Nigerian netizens and empowers and gives them the visibility and voice to engage in deliberative acts. The present study contributes to political deliberation and cultural rhetoric as netizens deploy internet memes and humorous cartoons to engage in shaming corrupt public officials and their sympathizers.

3. Performative deliberation, agency, and Nigerian netizens

Performative deliberation involves reiteration and discursive norms and allows for agency and an agential being who conforms to and forms cultural and political norms. Deliberation is a performative act wherein differences are multiplicative. According to Lyon (2013, 30), deliberative rhetoric is an important constituent of the present and not a futurist discourse, "a doing based in speech and act and not in persuasion and identification." She contends that identification that is based on recognition will incorporate difference, therefore, identification is not sufficient for discourse across differences. For Lyon (2013), deliberation should not be subsumed within the rubrics of persuasive discourse. She argues that deliberation situated under persuasive discourse cannot adequately account for cross-cultural engagement and human rights because the speaker and audience do not enjoy an equal relationship. Lyon (2013) posits that interlocutors must be in an equal relationship. She also claims that deliberation must be present-oriented instead of it being futuristic. Deliberation within persuasive discourse does not recognize otherness and according to Lyon (2013, 31), "seeks to remove otherness." Lyon (2013, 28) constructs a deliberation that is devoid of hegemonic structures. She approaches "deliberation as a performative and constitutive engagement at the moment, a doing based in speech and act and not in persuasion and identification." The way Nigerian netizens utilize social media for political purposes reveals that social media have become extremely important tools and instruments for deliberation and political participation.

Just like in the 18th century, the coffee house allowed ordinary citizens the affordances to deliberate on public and political issues (Habermas 1962), social media, in the 21st century has provided ordinary citizens the affordance to lend their voices to anything and everything of public political concern. Hence, social media platforms have become the principal site of civic deliberation in the 21st century and can allow myriad millions of ordinary netizens to deliberate on issues of public concern at the same time. Since deliberation according to Lyon (2013) requires that everyone has equal to access public space, I would argue that millions of people whose voices have hitherto been stifled and muted and were denied agency for a long time in Nigerian society now utilize social media to express agency devoid of cultural and political sanctions and in the process using their agency as "performative power to lay claim to the public" (Butler 2015, 75). According to Lyon (2013, 37),

Deliberative acts define ways of responding to the world in which interlocutors exist and make claims. Deliberation considered as performance, performative, and performativity shifts the focus of deliberative theory in significant ways. Future outcomes become less significant than the current engagement, and thus success and judgment become less important than engagement. If democratic citizens and global communities do not share an end or a vision of the good life, deliberation itself may be a good life and an end, for the acts of deliberating require significant understanding of and commitment to recognition and reciprocity.

For her, human rights deliberations are performative deliberations that give affordances to knowing agents to engage with one another in specific contexts to effect change in society. Her view on deliberations comes in direct conflict with existing theories on deliberative democracy and politics. She further regards deliberation "as a dramatic event or a series of enactments" as well as "the discursive acts responsible for altering the subjectivity of the participants, their discourses, and their beliefs" (36-37). Lyon conceives deliberation as a continuous sequence of political perspectives. This calls for different interlocutors to realize the presence and value of self and the other. She claims for deliberation to be understood as a "regularly occurring human act" as this would consign recognition to deliberation and humanize the act of deliberation.

In the present study, I intend to use insights from Lyon's notions of performative deliberation and agency in analyzing selected tweets regarding the corruption allegation against Abba Kyari, a highly placed police officer in Nigeria. I

observe that shaming is a cultural tool utilized by Nigerian netizens to protest corrupt practices and the hegemonic power structure in society.

Contrary to the claims made by Neuman, Bimber, and Hindman (2011) and Freelon (2015) that debates taking place in discussion forums and comment sections on social media platforms are unsuitable for facilitating deliberation, the present study becomes significant as it claims that social media platforms have become the principal site of civic deliberation in the 21st century and can allow myriad millions of ordinary netizens to deliberate on issues of public concerns at the same time to effect changes in society. The study also contributes to shaming discourse by showing how shaming in social media discourse makes online protests and civil campaigns effective. In what follows, I discuss the frame of shaming.

4. The frame of shaming as a performative agency

Framing involves selecting what Entman (1993, 52) describes as "some aspects of a perceived reality" and making "them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/ or treatment recommendation for the item being described." Sometimes individuals can utilize different modes of communication in making perceived reality more salient. Social media users in Nigeria deploy viral internet memes, online humor, and language through which Nigerian netizens shame corrupt government officials and perform resistance to official mismanagement and other disempowering postcolonial conditions. According to Ogbodo, Onwe, Chukwu, Nwasum, Nwakpu, Nwankwo, and Ogbaeja (2020), frames recognize the capability of media to describe a situation. In the Nigerian context, netizens utilize shaming to shine a spotlight on a deviant behavior or reveal the identity and/ or alleged guilt of an individual, with the goal of public shaming and punishment. Within the context of the present study, Nigerian netizens on Twitter and other social media platforms shine a spotlight on Abba Kyari's corrupt practices calling for his prosecution and trial.

The rhetorical strategy of shaming involves rhetorical coercion that individuals, societies, or states can deploy to enact changes in the behavior of an actor or individual. The individual at which the shaming is directed is adjudged to have been involved in actions that contradict accepted norms. Thus, the coercer or shamer desires to impose material or symbolic costs on the shamed, forcing the shamed into conforming to appropriate conduct. Shaming is heavily dependent on the public broadcast of illegal condut to let targeted individuals feel alarmed about the effects of their illegitimate actions. Online shaming is a strategy that aligns with the tenets of deliberation and extends the benefits of deliberation in rhetoric studies. A distinguishing feature of this research becomes evident in the way it introduces shaming as a rhetorical strategy in online deliberation in the Nigerian context.

The advent of social media has had a profound impact on how netizens utilize shaming as a punishment tool. Digital media powered by internet technologies have increased the effectiveness of shaming as the acts of shaming can now be seen and heard by a wide range of audiences. Many a time, the shamed individual is openly ridiculed on a global stage. The effectiveness of shaming on social media is well documented. Nilsson (2022) examines how communities of South Asian diasporic (desi) people deploy shaming as a weapon on social media platforms to criticize those who wore Indo Chic, accusing them of cultural appropriation. Studies on anticorruption activities in China have documented the successes of publicizing the sins and transgressions of errant or deviant individuals to shame and punish them to restore legal or moral justice (Herold 2011; Ong 2012; Chang and Leung 2015). Netizens have provided information or given clues about deviant behaviors and alleged cyberbullies and online child-predators in society and public-shamed the perpetrators, leading to the arrest of such individuals (Chang & Leung, 2015).

Compared with the stifling atmosphere of the pre-social media era that muted the voice of ordinary people in Nigerian society, social media has brought about a reallocation of power, with ordinary people now having the ability to provide surveillance on others in society and reprimand them when they deviate from expected social norms (Ingraham and Reeves, 2016). The practice of shaming has underpinned the discourse of social media critique of corruption in Nigeria, even long before the recent rise of the *#MeToo* movement in the US. For many Nigerian users, to protest corruption and corrupt practices is to expose them by publicly shaming and ridiculing them. That the Nigerian Federal Government attempted to legislate against and curtail such social media protests and criticisms perhaps points to the relative effectiveness of shaming as a protest strategy against political corruption. I focus exclusively on ordinary Nigerians who utilize memes, humor, and tweets as cultural tools of performative citizenship.

5. Performative agency in the post-FBI indictment of Abba Kyari tweets and memes by netizens in Nigeria

Most of the tweets following the indictment of Abba Kyari in the high-profile case of Ramon Abbas nicknamed, Hushpuppi, an internet scammer were sarcastic and scornful. These tweets were targeted at Abba Kyari, the Nigeria police, and the President Buhari-led administration by some netizens who call out the corruption that pervades the country's political leadership. Tweeters and meme creators on social media platforms in Nigeria reacted to the accusation by the FBI of Abba Kyari's involvement in the scam and the response provided by the accused, Abba Kyari in defending himself. Some of the tweets also responded to how the political leadership in Nigeria has refused to bring Abba Kyari to justice. These tweets and memes become powerful tools of shaming and social criticism by ordinary Nigerian netizens, criticizing political corruption in the country. These mocking and scornful tweets and memes posted by Nigerian netizens on social media platforms focused on shaming public officers and resisting the political leadership and their negligence.

Nigerian netizens take to social media to express their agential power. The social actions and politicized commentaries emanating from them reveal this agential power. Following the observation of Yeku James, Nigerian netizens collectively exercise political influence when they express their agency. The Nigeria Police as an institution has been alleged to be corrupt, however, there are individual police officials who through dedication to work have created a niche for themselves. Abba Kyari was one of such officers described in the Nigerian media and by the Nigeria Police as 'a super cop' and had won various awards for his meritorious service especially as it relates to solving complex criminal and kidnapping cases in Nigeria.

However, towards the end of the year 2021, he was accused by the FBI of having received almost 1.1 million dollars from a notorious Internet scammer, Ramon Abbas. Abba Kyari reacted to the allegation by the FBI as untrue and claimed that he only assisted the fraudster in buying some clothes in Nigeria. While the Nigeria Police were delaying arresting him or handing him over to the FBI, Nigeria netizens went to Twitter and other social media platforms to expose and shame Abba Kyari and the Nigeria Police. Next, I consider the first tweet by Editi Effiong who enjoys a huge following on Twitter with 158,000 followers. He came up with a tweet reminding Nigerians of how the Nigeria Police has failed to bring Abba Kyari to book on the criminal charges against him by the FBI and other local indictments. His tweet is both an indictment of the Nigeria Police and Abba Kyari. The tweet deploys irony in highlighting the hypocrisy of the Nigeria Police in their war on corruption.
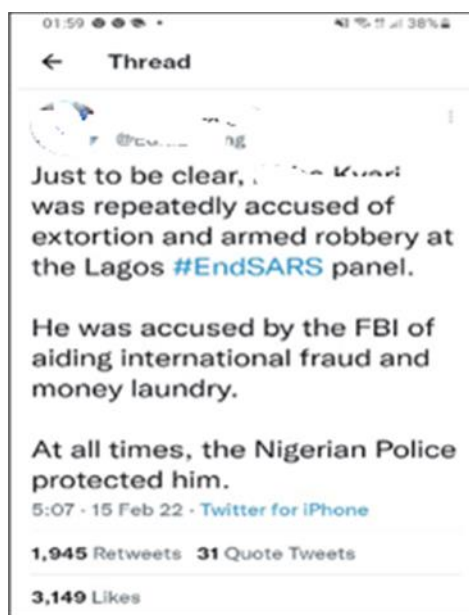

Figure 1 A Tweet indicting Abba Kyari and the Nigeria Police

The Twitter user in Figure 1 performs his agency as an ordinary citizen of Nigeria by rousing Nigerians indirectly, reminding them of how Abba Kyari has been accused of extortion and armed robbery at the #Endsars panel organized after the October 2020 #Endsars protests that rocked different cities and towns in Nigeria, leading to the death of many civilians and police officers. The Nigeria Police offered Abba Kyari protection, according to Editi Effiong, by appearing

indifferent to the allegation of corruption on Abba Kyari and refusing to arrest him and try him for corruption After the FBI had accused and indicted Abba Kyari in the case involving Ramon Abass, and the local and international attention that the case has attracted, The tweet reveals that the Nigeria Police was protecting him. Perhaps the most beneficial explanation of the tweet comes from taking cues from the activities of the Nigeria Police. The Nigeria Police and other sister agencies have been given the mandate to rid the Nigerian society of corrupt practices and criminals. It then becomes ironic that the Nigerian police that claim to fight criminalities and corrupt practices are being called out for shielding a criminal under their nose. This tweet overtly critiques the Nigeria Police and by extension the Nigerian state and their response to corrupt practices. This is one of the cultural forms through which Nigerian netizens and ordinary Nigerians contribute their quotas to ensure that corrupt officials are tried and punished for their corruption. The tweet remonstrates the fact the Nigeria Police has turned a blind eye to the numerous allegations both and demonstrates an idea: The Nigeria Police is aiding and abetting corruption and members of Nigeria who are corrupt. Further, the tweet functions as a text calling attention to the hypocrisy of Nigeria's Police and a change to the status quo.

If humor does not lead directly to revolutions or rebellions, it serves other useful purposes for the masses. Figure 2, digitally manipulated and dialogic represents a meme wherein the photograph of the immediate past president of Nigeria, President Goodluck Jonathan, is used in place of that of Abba Kyari. The creator, Adisa89 on *Nairaland Forum*, humorously created a conversation between the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Abba Kyari. The meme illustrates the use of humor as a weapon and strategy of resistance. In the Nigerian context, humor operates as a useful tool of engagement and subversion in the uneasy relationship between the subaltern and the political leadership in the country.
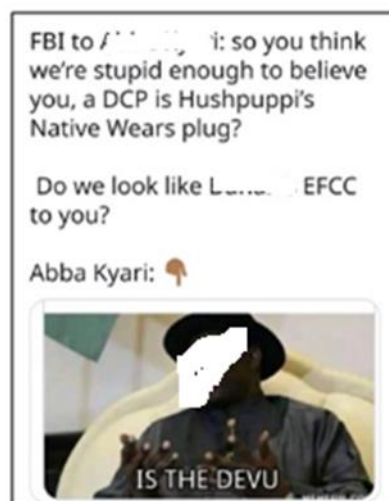
Source: Abba Kyari/Hushpuppi: My Collection Of Funny Reactions By Nigerians

Figure 2 Photoshopped image of Goodluck Jonathan (A Nigeria's former president) as Abba Kyari to mock the ineffectuality of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission in Nigeria

The strategy of humor serves dual purposes in Fig. 2. It mocks and shames several public and political actors in the country viz: Abba Kyari, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), President Buhari, and by extension former President Goodluck Jonathan whose picture appears in the meme. The supposed conversation between the FBI and Abba Kyari is a satire mobilized to undermine and critique the power and authority of the political leadership in Nigeria. The meme responds directly to the response given by Abba Kyari after he was shamed and mocked on social media following his indictment by the FBI in the internet scam case involving Ramon Abbas. In defending himself, Abba Kyari had said the following on his verified Facebook account, "…He saw some of my native Clothes and Caps on my social media page and he said he likes them, and he was connected to the person selling the clothes and he sent about 300k directly to the person's account." He later deleted the comments when Nigerian netizens called him out and shamed him for lying.

Fig. 2 is a humorous invention of a conversation that never be between the FBI and Abba Kyari. The FBI was represented to have asked Abba Kyari if he thought they would believe the weak excuse and explanation he provided to explain his role in the humongous amount of money that Ramon transferred to his account and his indictment in the trial of Ramon Abbas in the United States. The second question in the meme: Do we look like Buhari's EFCC to you? effectively indicts the President and the EFCC who has the mandate to cleanse the country of economic and financial crimes. The rhetorical question in this humorous and invented conversation between the FBI and Abba Kyari suggests that the EFCC has not

lived up to its mandate and President Buhari has not been able to do anything about the failure of the EFCC in tackling financial and political corruption in the country. The meme becomes a strategy and weapon to challenge the ineffectuality of both the EFCC and the political leadership in the country and to charge them to be alive to their duties and do more in the war on economic and political corruption. Besides, Fig 2 gives us the affordances to locate a second-order signification especially when we pay close attention to the deliberate use of the photograph of the immediate president of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan to represent Abba Kyari. By using the photograph of President Jonathan as the indicted Abba Kyari, the meme creator suggests that the entire political structure and leadership in the country is corrupt.

In addition, many ordinary Nigerian netizens use humor to subvert, deconstruct, and resist the state and its agents. Social media allows Nigerian netizens to humorously express sentiments and discontent that they cannot express publicly. Hence, humor becomes a powerful tool to challenge power and speak the truth to it. According to Goldstein, "humour is one of the fugitive forms of insubordination" (2003, 5). Fig. 3 below demonstrates how humor can be used to resist the state and its agents.
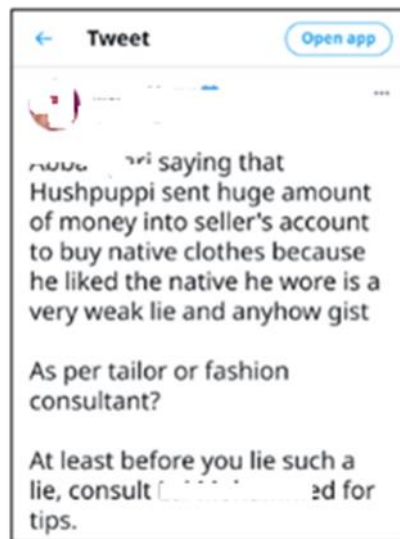
Figure 3 A tweet accusing Abba Kyari of lying and insinuating that Lai Mohammed is a professional liar

In response to Abba Kyari's claim, the Twitter user in Figure 3 used his tweet to counter Abba Kyari's claim that he only connected Ramon Abbas to a fashion stylist, and humorously asked the question, "As per tailor or fashion consultant?" Morris Monye does not agree with the explanation provided by Abba Kyari and concludes that Abba Kyari was simply lying. The duties of a police officer in Nigeria and elsewhere in the world do not include consultancy on fashion or tailoring. The rhetorical question posed by Morris Monye in Fig 3 discredits Abba Kyari's explanation or defense.

Following Yeku's observation that the "production of humor in digital media is a site of individuated resistance," (158) I would read the humor embedded in the last sentence in Fig 3 as a shaming strategy to call out Lai Mohammed who is the current Minister of Information under the President Buhari led administration. As the face and the spokesperson of the Buhari-led administration, Lai Mohammed has been alleged to tell lies on many occasions by Nigerian netizens. The tweet portrays Lai Mohammed as a grand liar who understands the act and art of lying to a fault and who should be consulted for others who are dishonest like Abba Kyari. Morris Monye relies on puns and wordplay between the noun "lie" and "Lai," the first name of the Minister of Information Lai Mohammed. In addition to accusing Mr. Lai Mohammed of lying effortlessly and being a professional liar, the similarity in the pronunciation of "lie" and "Lai" helps Morris Monye to achieve punning in the humorous tweet.

Further, in Nigerian social media culture, humor is one of the ways through which Nigerian netizens express their outrage at the corruption and other challenges besetting the country. Fig. 4 is a tweet by Wale Adetona who has 199, 000 followers on Twitter. Wale Adetona's tweet is a reaction to Abba Kyaris's response to the allegation against him by the FBI. Abba Kyari had claimed that he only acted to connect Ramon Abbas to a fashion stylist who made some native attires for him, Abba Kyari.

Figure 4 A tweet expressing surprise that DCP Abba Kyari was a fashion stylist and owambe cloth distributor

In the tweet, he was reporting what Abba Kyari said after he was indicted in the trial of Ramon Abbas in the United States. The use of certain expressions in the second sentence of the tweet ('a fashion stylist' and '*owambe* cloth distributor') shows the hilarity contained in the tweet and how the tweet has been utilized for shaming purposes. Wale Adetona knew that Abba Kyari was a police officer and of course not a fashion stylist. 'Owambe' is a Yoruba word used to refer to partying and merriment, especially by the Yoruba in Nigeria. Abba Kyari not being a businessman could not have been involved in the sale of clothes for parties in Nigeria. The sentence foregrounds the shaming that is directed in the way of the accused police officer. It shows the dissatisfaction of the common man with lame excuses that someone as highly ranked as Abba Kyari in the Nigeria Police could provide as an explanation for his alleged corrupt practices. For Nigeria's underclass, humor becomes a potent and cultural weapon to resist the dominance of the ruling class. Humor as observed by Goldstein (2003,10) "opens up a discursive space" for the underclass to air their views and deliberate on subjects that are usually out of their reach and exclusive to the ruling class, and traditional media.

The image in Fig. 5 is hilariously deployed to shame Abba Kyari and to make him realize that Nigerians are not fools and are not buying the explanation he shoved down their throats. Reno Omokri created and tweeted the photoshopped image. Mr. Omokri has 1.4 million followers on Twitter and usually tweets on socio-cultural and political issues on Twitter. Using rhetorical questions, Reno Omokri makes it abundantly clear that Abba Kyari's clients in the fashion biz are criminals, fraudsters, and "Yahoo boys" the local label for internet scammers in Nigeria. Questions such as "Do you know a fraudster or notorious yahoo boy?" "What are you waiting for?" does not require answers. They are deliberately deployed to shame and mock the highly decorated police officer, Abba Kyari. Reno Omokri calls on Nigerians to share Abba Kyari's mobile number with other internet scammers known locally as "Yahoo Boys" since he admitted having served as a consultant for Ramon Abbas.

Figure 5 A photoshopped tweet/meme of Abba Kyari as a tailor

The tweet contains a photoshopped image of Abba Kyari as a tailor. The image of the highly ranked police officer turned tailor has implications beyond the tweet itself. The meaning becomes clearer when put in conversation with the FBI allegation that Abba Kyari is working in conjunction with a notorious fraudster, Abbas Ramon who is currently being

tried in the United States, and the response of Abba Kyari that he only helped the fraudster to purchase some traditional attires. To an unsuspecting reader, the tweet is just an advertisement especially if the first sentence of the tweet is isolated and considered. The real importance of the tweet becomes evident in the second sentence. Abba Kyari ostensibly fights crime during the day and conducts business with the high and mighty in the world of crime in the dead of the night. In the first sentence of the tweet, mockery is the underlying intention of Reno Omokri who recommends Abba Kyari to Nigerians who want to sew or buy native attires.

The tweet in Fig. 6 represents a form of resistance and expression of outrage against a hegemonic culture that protects the high and mighty in Nigerian society. It was another tweet from Reno Omokri and discusses the more recent allegations brought against Abba Kyari and how security agencies in the country are biased in their handling of the case.

Figure 6 A tweet condemning the hegemonic culture that protects the mighty and condemns the common man

While Nigerians were still to come to terms with Abba Kyari's indictment by the FBI, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency accused Abba Kyari as complicit in illegal drug deals. According to Reno Omokri, one would have expected the different security agencies to swiftly arrest him and parade him as it is the custom of others who have been accused of illegality in Nigeria. That was not the case at the time Reno Omokri tweeted. In the tweet, Reno Omokri touches on the perceived discrimination in arresting alleged offenders in Nigeria. For the high and mighty in Nigeria, the law enforcement agents turn a blind eye to their crimes but are swift to clamp down on ordinary Nigerians who are alleged to constitute a nuisance in society. The tweet speaks to a culture of resistance and expressive agency. Reno Omokri is not afraid to call out security agencies who are accused of aiding the accused police chief and drug baron. Reno Omokri points out that the NDLEA was quick to parade a young boy caught with marijuana but Abba Kyari who was implicated in a multi-million-dollar cocaine deal is being protected and shielded from the public.

6. Conclusion

Nigerian netizens deploy humorous tweets and internet memes as popular culture genres deployed to shame corrupt public officials and political corruption. These popular cultural genres enable them to participate in politics-themed conversations. My paper is interested in finding answers to the following questions: How is the interaction of Abba Kyari's corruption allegation on social media locally organized and constructed? How does this intentionally or unintentionally contribute to resistance to the hegemonic power structure in Nigeria? A study of the humorous tweets and memes circulated on social media following the allegations brought against Abba Kyari by the FBI and NDLEA reveals that Nigerian netizens use these cultural forms for shaming purposes, to express their agency, and to subvert and resist political corruption and oppression. The increasingly pervasive digital culture has made this new democratic gain possible for Nigerians whose agential powers have been denied for too long a time. Memes, tweets, and online comments constitute shaming strategies through which netizens in the country retool hegemonic culture that bothers on abusive power from the political class and political leadership.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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