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Assessment of Skit Making as an Advocacy Tool Against the Lawlessness of Nigerian Policemen

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Abstract

In the current dispensation of democracy, law enforcement challenges persist in Nigeria, particularly concerning police misconduct, corruption, and human rights abuses. Skit-making, a form of online advocacy with a hint of entertainment, has emerged as a tool to address these issues. Hence, this study explores the effectiveness, themes, and challenges of skit-based advocacy against police lawlessness in the country. The role of skits in shaping public perception and motivating social action is equally examined. A qualitative research approach was employed, where interviews were conducted with a sample size of 30 persons using the snowball sampling technique. Findings show that by actively engaging the audience and involving stakeholders, skits can serve as a viable tool for advocacy. However, creating skits on such a delicate topic is not without challenges, such as an imbalance in the use of humor for such a societal issue and fear of litigation, among others. Thus, this study recommends that skit-makers should not shy away from bringing to the limelight the underlying systemic issues, such as institutionalized corruption or lack of accountability within the Nigerian Police law enforcement to ensure its effectiveness.

Keywords: *Advocacy, Entertainment, Media, Nigerian Police, Police Misconduct, Skit-making.*

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Introduction

The media, often referred to as the “fourth estate,” plays a pivotal role in contemporary society, serving as a conduit for information dissemination, shaping public opinion, and holding institutions accountable (McQuail, 2010) in Zhang & Yan (2017). In Nigeria, the media occupies a central position in the national discourse, reflecting and influencing the multifaceted realities of its populace (Hachten & Scotton, 2012), cited in Smith (2015). Every facet of Nigerian society, from the corridors of power to grassroots communities, is intricately linked to the media ecosystem, forming a symbiotic relationship wherein institutions rely on the media to convey information, while the media, in turn, sources news stories from various sectors (McQuail, 2010 in Zhang & Yan, 2017).

According to Omotola (2021), within the framework of democratic governance, Nigeria stands as a beacon of hope on the African continent, with its transition from military rule to democracy in 1999 heralding a new era of citizen empowerment and participatory governance. However, challenges persist, particularly within the realm of law enforcement. The Nigerian police force, entrusted with maintaining law and order, has faced widespread criticism for instances of misconduct, brutality, and abuse of power (*Human Rights Watch*, 2020). Reports of extrajudicial killings, torture, and extortion perpetrated by some police officers have eroded public trust and confidence in the institution, exacerbating tensions between law enforcement authorities and the communities they serve (*Human Rights Watch*, 2020). A report by Salako (2022), January to September 2021, had a record of 164 extrajudicial killings. Obiezu (2023) in another report records that 848 extrajudicial killings were executed in Nigeria between 2020 and June 2023, based on a published report by Global Rights.

Social media emerged as a potent force during the *EndSARS* protests, catalyzing mobilization, organization, and advocacy (Omotola, 2021). The democratization of information dissemination has enabled ordinary citizens to challenge existing power structures, demand accountability, and advocate for social change (Chadwick, 2013). Online content creators have utilized short-form videos known as skits to engage audiences, provoke critical reflection, and advocate for justice (Onuoha, 2020). Notable examples of skits on the Nigerian Police

lawlessness on social media (YouTube) include: “Nigeria Police Reformed” by the cute Abiola, “The brutal Nigerian Police Force” by Young Elder GCFR, and “why you should never argue with Nigeria Police” by House of Ajebo. These examples provide a scenario of lawlessness by the Police that stems from trivial issues such as the appearance of people, refusal to give bribes, as well as people’s attempts to stand up for their rights. Amidst all these, comic relief is seen in the mode of interaction, dressing, and dialogue.

Statement of the Problem

Despite Nigeria’s transition to democracy and the existence of democratic institutions, challenges persist within the country’s law enforcement apparatus. The Nigerian police force, entrusted with the maintenance of law and order, has been plagued by reports of misconduct, corruption, and human rights abuses. Instances of police brutality, extortion, and extrajudicial killings have undermined public trust in the institution and eroded confidence in the rule of law (*Human Rights Watch, 2020*).

The culmination of these grievances was witnessed during the *EndSARS* protests of October 2020, which erupted nationwide in response to years of systemic injustice and police brutality (*Amnesty International, 2020*). While the protests succeeded in drawing attention to the issue, challenges remain in addressing the root causes of police lawlessness and fostering accountability within the law enforcement sector. In this context, the emergence of social media as a platform for civic engagement and advocacy has provided new avenues for challenging institutional failures and promoting social justice. Online content creators, particularly through the medium of skit-making, have leveraged social media to highlight issues of police lawlessness and advocate for reform (*Omotola, 2021*).

However, despite the potential of skit-making as a tool for advocacy, there is a need for systematic analysis and evaluation of its effectiveness in addressing the problem of police lawlessness in Nigeria. Key questions remain regarding the reach, impact, and sustainability of skit-based advocacy campaigns, as well as the extent to which they contribute to meaningful change within the law

enforcement sector. Therefore, the central problem addressed in this study is: How effective is skit-making as a channel for advocacy against lawlessness by the Nigerian Police, and what are the key factors influencing its impact and sustainability?

Against this backdrop, this study seeks to analyze skit-making as a channel for advocacy against lawlessness by the Nigerian Police. By examining the content, strategies, and impact of skit-based advocacy campaigns, this research aims to elucidate the role of creative media in fostering accountability and driving societal change. Through a comprehensive analysis of skit-making initiatives, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of contemporary advocacy efforts in Nigeria and explore avenues for leveraging creative media to promote police accountability and uphold the principles of justice and the rule of law. By addressing this problem, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of advocacy efforts in Nigeria and provide insights into the role of creative media in promoting police accountability and upholding the rule of law.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

- i. Examine the role of skit-making in raising awareness about police misconduct in Nigeria.
- ii. Determine specific police misconduct portrayed in the skit.
- iii. Examine the effectiveness of skits in addressing police misconduct.
- iv. Identify challenges in skit making directed at the advocacy of misconduct by policemen.

Conceptual Clarification

For clarity, skit-making, advocacy, and the Nigerian Police will be reviewed in this section.

Skit-making

Skit-making, as defined by Onuoha (2020), encapsulates the creation and dissemination of short-form videos infused with humour, satire, and storytelling techniques to convey social messages or critique societal issues. This creative form of expression has garnered considerable attention from scholars, who recognize its significance as a vehicle for cultural commentary and social advocacy, particularly among contemporary audiences. Through the lens of Onuoha's definition, skit-making emerges not only as a source of entertainment but also as a potent tool for engaging viewers, stimulating critical reflection, and catalyzing social change.

The proliferation of skit-based content is facilitated by various online platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook. These digital spaces democratize the dissemination of skits, allowing content creators to express information according to Congge et al (2023) that reaches diverse audiences beyond the confines of traditional media channels. Leveraging the virality and shareability of social media, skits harness the power of visual storytelling to capture audience attention and spark conversations around pressing social issues. In essence, skit-making thrives in the digital ecosystem, where it catalyzes social commentary and community engagement. Moreover, the interplay between humour and social media has been a subject of scholarly inquiry, shedding light on how comedic content shapes online discourse and mobilizes users around various issues. Deuze (2011), cited in Smith (2015), highlights the role of humour in mediating online interactions, fostering engagement, and building virtual communities. Similarly, Elder and Hargittai (2020) explore the use of humour in engaging users around scientific and environmental topics, underscoring its potential to facilitate public dialogue and knowledge dissemination.

Furthermore, Burgess and Green (2018) examine the transformative impact of YouTube on online video production and participatory culture, emphasizing its role as a platform for creative expression and grassroots activism. Lobato, Thomas, and Hesmondhalgh (2019) delve into the dynamics of media production in the digital age, exploring how digital technologies have reshaped content creation practices and distribution channels. Additionally, Hjorth and

Lim (2012) in Zhang and Yan (2017) offer insights into mobile social media usage in Southeast Asia, illuminating how platforms such as YouTube and TikTok are integrated into everyday communication practices.

Advocacy

Advocacy encompasses a variety of activities that are aimed at promoting social change by influencing public opinion and advancing specific causes or interests (Bennett, 2017). For this study, the definition by Bennett (2017), which conceptualizes advocacy as “the process of influencing public opinion and decision-making to advance a cause or bring about social change,” will be adopted. Based on media context, advocacy takes various forms, including storytelling through films, drama, and performing arts. The media, through storytelling, play a crucial role in advocacy by raising awareness, shaping perceptions, and mobilizing support for social issues (Jacobs, 2014). Films such as ‘Dry,’ which advocates against girl-child marriage, and ‘One Too Many,’ which highlights police brutality and lawlessness, serve as powerful examples of storytelling for advocacy. These films utilize narrative techniques to evoke empathy, provoke reflection, and inspire action among audiences.

Similarly, television series like ‘Village Headmaster,’ which advocates for unity and community cohesion, demonstrate the enduring impact of storytelling in promoting social values and fostering positive change. In addition to spreading knowledge, Udoudam et al (2023) opine that media advocacy can engage and encourage communication among stakeholders. Media advocacy is a social change catalyst that raises awareness of legal injustices and amplifies the voices of marginalised communities. Using the #EndSARS as an example of online advocacy, Dambo et al. (2020) are of the view that Nigeria’s political environment has the potential to hinder the success of social movements despite the arguments from critics that the #EndSARS movement fell short due to slacktivism.

Nigerian Police Misconduct

Nigerian Police lawlessness represents a multifaceted phenomenon entrenched within the fabric of law enforcement in Nigeria. Chukwu et al. (2020) opine that it encompasses a wide spectrum of misconduct, ranging from flagrant violations of human rights to institutionalized corruption and abuse of power. Instances of police brutality, characterized by excessive use of force, torture, and extrajudicial killings, are not uncommon, perpetuating a climate of fear and impunity among the populace. Moreover, cases of extortion, bribery, and arbitrary arrests further erode public trust in the Nigerian Police Force, undermining its legitimacy and effectiveness in maintaining law and order. Furthermore, Aborisade and Fayemi (2015) are of the view that the prevalence of Nigerian Police lawlessness underscores deep-rooted structural and systemic challenges within the law enforcement apparatus inherent in historical factors such as the colonial creation of the police as opined by Amusa and Luqman (2020) which have far-reaching implications for the country's democratic governance and social cohesion. Despite the existence of legal frameworks and oversight mechanisms, enforcement remains lax, enabling impunity to thrive within the ranks of the police force. This culture of impunity not only undermines the rule of law but also perpetuates cycles of violence and injustice, particularly affecting marginalized and vulnerable communities.

Scholarly investigations, exemplified by the extensive research conducted by *Human Rights Watch* (2020), provide compelling evidence of the widespread nature and severity of police misconduct in Nigeria. Through rigorous documentation and advocacy efforts, organizations like Human Rights Watch have shed light on the systemic failures and human rights abuses perpetrated by law enforcement authorities. Their findings are a stark reminder of the urgent need for comprehensive reform within the Nigerian Police Force, which includes addressing the root causes of lawlessness and promoting accountability, transparency, and respect for human rights (*Human Rights Watch*, 2020).

Furthermore, academic discourse and public discourse, such as Zhang and Yan (2017), Smith (2015), and Saraf and Balamurugan (2018), have increasingly scrutinized the role of law enforcement agencies in Nigerian society, interrogating power dynamics and institutional structures that perpetuate injustice and

inequality. Scholars from diverse fields, including criminology, sociology, and political science, have contributed valuable insights into the complex interplay of factors shaping police behaviour and the socio-political context in which it operates. Their research serves as a foundation for understanding the underlying causes of Nigerian Police lawlessness and devising evidence-based strategies for reform and accountability.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Agenda-Setting theory, a seminal concept proposed by McCombs and Shaw in 1972, which posits that the media exerts significant influence over public perception of societal issues by selecting and framing certain topics for attention. The assumption of the theory, as cited in Okocha and Akpe (2023), is that the mass media can influence and shape public opinion in decision-making based on the media's ability to hold the audience captive to its contents. McCombs and Shaw (1972) found that mass media had have certain percentage of those members of the public who frequently referred to information as provided by the media. Such a percentage is increased for those who are driven with enthusiasm in following up with information on the presidential campaign. Based on research done by McCombs and Shaw (1993), they think that the public agenda has a certain effect on the media agenda. To a certain extent, the mass media have to follow the demands of the public or the media audiences' interests. These can be seen from the ratings, audience studies, market research, and surveys, and the audiences' consumption patterns (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). This is acceptable since the mass media are still connected to the surroundings of business and the market. And, such surroundings are driven by the interests of the public and the public agenda. The mass media are obliged to respond to what their audiences want and what they know will attract and sell to the media audiences (Krugman, 1963).

Within the context of Nigeria's pervasive issue of police lawlessness, this theory becomes particularly relevant as it elucidates how media, including skits and online activism, shape public discourse and awareness. Skits, as a form of mediated communication, leverage elements such as humour, satire, and storytelling to effectively convey messages and sway public opinion on pertinent

issues, including police misconduct. Similarly, online activism harnesses the power of digital platforms to set the agenda by spotlighting specific concerns, rallying public support, and advocating for institutional change.

In Nigeria, where instances of police brutality and abuse of power are widespread, the media, including skits and online activism, play a critical role in bringing attention to these issues and mobilizing public sentiment for reform. Skits, often disseminated through social media platforms like X, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, employ creative narratives and visual storytelling to engage audiences and provoke critical reflection on societal injustices. Likewise, online activism capitalizes on the viral nature of digital communication to amplify voices, facilitate collective action, and hold authorities accountable for their actions. Together, these forms of media advocacy contribute to shaping public perceptions, challenging existing power structures, and advocating for meaningful change within the Nigerian Police Force.

By employing the Agenda-Setting theory as the theoretical framework for this study, it will help in understanding how skit-making and online activism influence public perceptions of Nigerian Police lawlessness. Through qualitative analysis, the study will delve into how these communication channels prioritize and frame the issue within the public discourse, shedding light on their role in shaping attitudes and motivating action among diverse audiences. Furthermore, an examination of the mechanisms through which skits and online activism disseminate information and engage with audiences can provide insights into their efficacy in addressing the underlying causes of police misconduct and abuse of power.

Literature Review

Skit Making as an Advocacy Tool

Beyond its entertainment value and allowing creatives to earn a living, skit-making can also serve as a powerful tool for advocacy aimed at raising awareness about issues such as police misconduct in Nigeria. Through the use of humour and relatable scenarios, compelling storytelling can go beyond the likes and raise awareness on societal issues because of the following:

- 1. Engaging and Memorable:** Skits are a dynamic and engaging form of storytelling that can capture the attention of the audience quickly. They are short and grab the attention of viewers through the use of humour. According to Schumann (2020), comedy can play an important role in harnessing people to address critical societal issues because it attracts people; thus, creating a positive emotional connection, which inspires engagement and action. Furthermore, Reason (2022) opines that people remember jokes and comical content more than they do serious messages.
- 2. Accessibility:** This refers to the use of skits in addressing topics that are sometimes termed as taboo. Through the use of comedy, critical issues can be addressed. Furthermore, Ojomo and Sodeinde (2021) opine that the availability of digital media such as smartphones and the presence of social media allow for a global view of these skits by making it accessible to a wide range of audiences, including those with varying levels of literacy or education.
- 3. Awareness on Societal Issues:** Comedy skits serve as a powerful tool for information dissemination and correction of societal ills. In a study by Ihua et al. (2021), 9 in 10 (91%) Nigerians believe that comedy skits can be used to raise awareness about trends in society. The study further provides insights from skit makers such as “Mr. Macaroni”, “MC Casino”, “Lasisi Elenu”, and “Taooma”, amongst others, who say that they generate their skit contents based on the everyday happenings in Nigeria. Thus, it can be deduced that skits can shed light on systemic and societal issues at play in the country in a meaningful way.
- 4. Call to Action:** Effective skits often include a call to action or a message that inspires viewers to get involved or make a difference. Whether it is encouraging

people to report misconduct, support advocacy efforts, or seek accountability from authorities, skits can motivate individuals to take concrete steps towards addressing the issue at hand. This call to action can turn passive viewers into active advocates for change (Paul, 2022).

Therefore, skit-making serves as a creative and impactful advocacy tool against police misconduct by engaging audiences, fostering empathy, creating awareness, and inspiring action. By harnessing the storytelling power of skits, advocates can drive positive change in addressing issues of police misconduct and foster accountability.

Online Activism and Advocacy

Online activism has emerged as a critical component of advocacy efforts, such that scholars have extensively analysed the role of online activism in addressing social and political issues, highlighting its potential to amplify marginalised voices and catalyse collective action. For instance, Chadwick (2013) emphasises the importance of social media platforms as “networked structures of information,” enabling activists to disseminate information rapidly and mobilise resources for advocacy campaigns. Similarly, Tufekci (2017) explores the concept of “networked social movements,” emphasising the role of digital networks in facilitating decentralised forms of activism. Also, Okocha and Dapoet (2022) opine that social media has revolutionised communication and changed how people connect and engage in activities of activism. However, Milosevic-Dordevic & Zezelj (2017) posit that citizens could be very active in their immediate community, through some diverse sets of actions in real life and on their online platforms. Since the advent of the Internet, there has been continual debate about the impact of online activism on real-life activism: whilst some claim that “clicktivism” creates the false sense of making a difference, and undermines real-life activities, others say it fosters it (Noland, 2017).

In Nigeria, social media has played a crucial role in galvanising public outrage and mobilising support for movements such as the #EndSARS, which sought to address police brutality and misconduct (Uwalaka & Nwala, 2023). Platforms like Twitter and Instagram have served as virtual town halls, where citizens

share first-hand accounts of police abuses, document human rights violations, and demand justice for victims. Additionally, online activism has facilitated global solidarity, with international audiences joining in advocacy efforts and amplifying the voices of Nigerian activists on the world stage. However, Moses et al. (2022) opine that online activism in Nigeria is not devoid of challenges such as sentiments, digital divide, illiteracy, and the cost of internet subscription. Despite these obstacles, the power of online activism to effect change should not be underestimated. By leveraging the connectivity of digital networks and harnessing the collective power of online communities, activists can continue to push for accountability, transparency, and reform within the Nigerian Police Force, ultimately contributing to the promotion of justice and the protection of human rights (Olabode, 2021).

The political role of the press in Africa and Nigeria in particular vis-à-vis the contemporary activities of alternative journalism has been that of social political interventionism (Skjerdal, 2012 in Nwofe, 2019). Journalism in Nigeria has remained in the form of protest, from contesting the authority of the colonial order and demanding self-rule, to becoming a political instrument of class struggle, political manoeuvring, and a tool for inter-ethnic competition for power and authority (Nwofe, 2019). Furthermore, Nwofe (2019) posits that the affordances of the internet among increasingly literate Nigerians have increased political participation and awareness, thus revolutionising social-political mobilisation and activism. As the mass media tries to wield its agenda-setting powers, the audience has found solace in the interactivity of the internet through social networking sites to not only engender diversified views of national issues, but also provide platforms which enable them to set the agenda for the mass media practitioners.

Bennett, Segerberg, and Walker (2014) argue that digital media allows activists and their supporters to instigate shared grievances, form collective identities, and coordinate protest activities with different degrees of peer-to-peer production, knowledge, skills, and commitment. In many countries of Africa, such as Nigeria, analysis of the role of digital media in social mobilisation is still anecdotal, limiting the knowledge about variations of activists' digital media practices in the protest movement. Many studies have reported various

dimensions through which digital media is enabling individuals to contribute to social mobilisation in protest movements (Nwofe, 2019).

The Perceived Challenges of Skit Making for Advocacy

Skit making for advocacy, despite its efficacy, encounters multifaceted challenges that content creators must confront. One notable challenge is the limitation of resources, which encompasses financial constraints, technical limitations, and access to necessary equipment and facilities (Deuze, 2017). These constraints hinder the production quality and scope of skits, impacting their ability to effectively engage and resonate with audiences.

Moreover, skit makers often face censorship and resistance from authorities or conservative groups, who may perceive their content as provocative or subversive (Burgess & Green, 2009). This censorship can stifle creative expression and limit the scope of advocacy messages, particularly on sensitive or contentious issues such as police lawlessness. Crafting compelling advocacy messages through skits also requires a nuanced understanding of cultural sensitivities, audience preferences, and the delicate balance between entertainment and advocacy objectives (Burgess & Green, 2019). Content creators must navigate cultural contexts and societal norms to ensure their messages resonate with diverse audiences while effectively conveying the intended advocacy goals.

Furthermore, the rapid dissemination and consumption of skit-based content on social media platforms present challenges related to misinformation, polarisation, and message dilution (Gladwell, 2020). According to Bennett, Segerberg, & Walker (2014), in an era of information overload, skit makers must contend with competing narratives and the risk of their messages being overshadowed or distorted in the digital landscape. In navigating these challenges, skit makers must adopt strategic approaches to optimise the impact and effectiveness of their advocacy efforts. This entails leveraging available resources creatively, engaging with diverse stakeholders, and employing storytelling techniques that captivate and mobilise audiences (Bennett, 2019). Despite the obstacles, skit making remains a potent tool for advocacy, offering innovative opportunities to engage, educate, and empower communities in

addressing pressing social issues.

Focusing on police misconduct in Nigeria, Hassan et al (2024) note that it is important for skit makers to know that there is an interplay between defamation laws and skit making, shaped by the convergence of traditional defamation laws, digital content creation, and the dynamic landscape of social and cultural expressions. Thus, skit makers should work within the premise of defamation laws such as libel and slander when they exercise their legal rights of freedom of expression and speech to avoid legal actions (Audu, 2022). The nature of skits involves the use of satire and humour; thus, as they try to engage a diverse audience, there is a need for cultural sensitivity, ensuring that the portrayal of events is respectful to the Nigerian Police Force and sensitive to victims of police brutality (Alabi, 2021).

Methodology

The study employed the use of qualitative research methodology, and as such, interviews were conducted from the 30th of April to the 16th of May, 2024, until the point of saturation, where interviewees were having a similar flow of thoughts. Each interview was conducted via telephone and online calls, which lasted for about 20 minutes. According to Kadiri (2015) qualitative research method is best suitable for studies seeking to test people's perception of issues. The instrument employed for this study was the interview guide which was conducted across a total of 30 persons ranging from communication lecturers, clergymen, parents, security personnel, staff of the National Orientation Agency (NOA) and youth, using the snow-ball sampling technique; where connections to people from various categories were made based on recommendations from other respondents; hence, respondents were from different parts of the country.

Data Analysis

Analysis was done based on statements made by the interviewees and categorising them following the research objectives.

Table 1: Demography of Respondents

Characteristics		Frequency
Sex	Male	16
	Female	14
	Total	30
Age Range	21-25	5
	26-30	2
	31-35	6
	36-40	4
	41-45	6
	46-50	4
	50 and above	3
	Total	30
Occupation	Lecturers	5
	Clergy Men	5
	NOA Staff	5
	Parents	5
	Youth	5
	Security Personnel	5
	Total	30

Source: Field Study, 2024.

Table 1 shows that both sexes were well represented in the study and that different brackets drawn from various occupations were accommodated in the research. This implies that the sample was representative.

RO1: The role of skit making in raising awareness on Police misconduct in Nigeria.

From the data collected, respondents are aware of skit-making and agree that skit-making is effective and has a way of reaching out to people who come across it. Common to the responses was that skits have a way of passing on messages to the audience in a subtle manner that is easily relatable and entertaining by introducing humour. According to interviewee A1, “skits are a familiar form of short comedic performances or videos used to convey messages”. This is seconded by interviewees A3-A5, who believe that skits are a form of communication which are shared through digital platforms which including social media platforms. Interviewee A2 believes that Skit making involves crafting short videos or performances that use humour or satire to address social issues, including police lawlessness, aiming to spark dialogue and awareness. This is similar to what interviewees A3 and A21 said that skit making involves the creation of short comedic performances or videos that aim to entertain through humour while conveying social messages or critiques, typically in a light-hearted manner.

Interviewee A6 said, “Using skit to address the lawlessness of Nigerian Police through a creative approach, which also conveys an important message in a relatable and entertaining way is a powerful tool”. In agreement, interviewees A8 and A23 point out that using skits for advocacy suggests that it can be used to examine the consequences of police lawlessness through satire or dramatic re-enactment. It can also be used to bring attention to systemic issues and inspire actions by presenting a scenario that resonates with the audience. Though the awareness of skit making is popular amongst the respondents, they also believed that some aspects of skit making have not sufficiently covered the societal issue of police misconduct efficiently. Interviewee A3 noted that “while skits are effective at highlighting specific incidents or behaviour, they may not always address underlying systemic issues within law enforcement, such as institutionalised corruption or lack of accountability”. Thus, interviewees see skits as a viable tool to be used in curbing the menace of lawlessness by the Nigerian police. However, the findings reveal that there are challenges that these skit makers face and have to deal with to carry out their activities effectively.

They believe that there are things that hinder skit makers from being able to create this awareness effectively.

RO2: Specific Police misconduct portrayed in skits.

The specific police misconduct portrayed in skits revolves around the dominant theme found in skit-making related to the Nigerian Police lawlessness. According to data collected, unprofessionalism by officers in the form of corruption and abuse of power is largely portrayed. According to interviewee A2, "Skits addressing police lawlessness often centre on themes such as abuse of power, corruption, impunity, and lack of accountability within law enforcement." Seconding this, interviewee A3 connotes that "skits addressing police lawlessness often focus on police misconduct such as abuse of authority, exploitation, impunity, and the erosion of trust between law enforcement and the community, and lack of culpability". Similarly, interviewees agree that skits on police misconduct revolving around corruption, brutality, harassment, lack of accountability, bribery, abuse of power, and disregard for human rights are common.

As unprofessionalism within the police force is portrayed, also central to skits on police misconduct mentioned by the interviewees is social change. Interviewee A13 believes that "skits advocate for systemic reforms within law enforcement, including increased transparency, accountability, and respect for human rights, aiming to restore public trust and ensure justice for all." Interviewees A4, A7, A15, and A27 suggest that skits advocate for reforms within law enforcement, including increased transparency, accountability, and respect for human rights. On the other hand, interviewee A1 posits that skits often advocate for social changes such as police accountability, respect for human rights, and improved governance in law enforcement. Therefore, the responses received are relevant because they depict the Nigerian Police as lawless based on their experiences. They equally believe that skits have the potential to influence public opinion and pressure authorities to address issues of police lawlessness, as interviewees agree that the attitude of the Nigerian police has been well captured in skits.

RO3: Examine the effectiveness of skits in addressing police misconduct

The effectiveness of skits in addressing police misconduct is seen in the way and manner the skits are performed. Thus, the scripts, audio, and visual elements must be carried out with a sense of professionalism, even though they are inclined towards humour. Interviewee A19 said the sound effect of police sirens, gunshot, or verbal commands such as 'Hey!', 'Oga, park here!' makes it known that it is a police scene in a skit. According to interviewee A27, normal settings used for police skits include road blocks, bad roads, police uniforms, and vans. Furthermore, interviewees A5, A3, and A15 argue that visual elements may include exaggerated facial expressions, gestures, and the use of props to convey humour or emphasise some of the conditions that trigger police lawlessness. According to interviewee A2, "Visual elements in police skits may include depictions of police brutality, misconduct, or interactions with citizens. These visual elements in police skits may also include dramatised scenes of police-citizen interactions, protest demonstrations, or satirical portrayals of authority figures, and the list continues."

The audio and visual elements depict everyday encounters between the Nigerian police officers and community members. Interviewee A18 lists more visual elements to include interaction in police stations between officers, suspects, and members reporting crimes or seeking assistance. In agreement, interviewee A3 believes that "Skits may be set in familiar locations such as police stations, streets, or homes, featuring diverse characters and situations that resonate with viewers' everyday experiences. Skits often utilise everyday settings, recognisable props, and relatable characters to create immersive narratives that resonate with the audience."

Therefore, if the representation of the police misconduct is evident through the audio and visual elements, then the aim of the skit can be achieved, which is to be effective in raising awareness of police misconduct. As the audience resonates with what they see, the message is disseminated, and a desired outcome can be achieved, such as taking action against the police.

RO4: The challenges and prospects of skit making.

The challenges of skit-making, as mentioned by interviewees A22 and A26, include censorship, backlash from authorities, financial constraints, and the risk of physical harm or legal repercussions. Similarly, interviewee A1 connotes that “skit makers may face trouble from authorities or conservative groups who view their content as subversive or controversial”. A3 then opines that such a topic is sensitive in the country. Topics like religion, culture, and politics might not be well understood by the viewers of these skits, and in turn, may receive a backlash from the public when they get to see this content when they are released.

Interviewees A11 and A12 opine that content sensitivity is a major challenge due to the inability of content creators to balance their humour with social issues and cultural norms, which could be offensive. In agreement, A25, A15, and A18 believe some of the content to be controversial, offensive, and insensitive, which may lead to backlash from viewers, critics, or authorities. Contents that cross legal or ethical boundaries may result in legal actions, which may cause damage to the skit makers’ reputation. Interviewee A16 said: “Making skits on police lawlessness is not a bad thing to do; however, it becomes offensive when skit makers do away with discipline and respect for the police force by depicting poor conditions of the police uniforms, thereby abusing them.”

Interviewees A17 and A18 strongly agree with the abuse of the Nigerian police uniform. Looking at the prospects of skit-making as an advocacy tool, interviewees suggest that the government can support skit makers through training programs, workshops, and mentorship opportunities to help skit makers develop tactical skills, including writing, acting, producing, and directing. Grants, access to resources, protection from the law, and inclusion of skits in awareness campaigns on such a topic should be provided by the government. However, interviewees also agree that skit makers are not taken seriously in Nigeria.

Interviewee A22 says, “People engage with skits for laughs and gags.” It can be taken seriously through acknowledgement, collaboration with mainstream media, and its incorporation into the policymaking process. To second this,

interviewee A5 opines that ‘While the contributions of skit makers are gaining recognition, more support from academia, policymakers, and the public is essential to amplify their voices and effect meaningful change.’ Hence, findings from the responses are significant as they reveal that though skits on police lawlessness in Nigeria pose a positive outcome of advocacy. Responses reveal the difficulties that may arise in the course of carrying out a duty or responsibilities that may hinder, and or affect the core of the message.

Discussion of Findings

The first objective, which is to examine the role of skit making in raising awareness about police misconduct in Nigeria, was achieved based on the responses of the interviewees. From the data gathered, it was revealed that the respondents feel that the usage of skits in raising awareness against the lawlessness by the Nigerian police has, over time, been effective. Analysis of the data shows that skits can be used as an effective tool for advocacy and in raising awareness because they can reach out to the audience in a relatable manner. Through social media, skits can be used to set the agenda for media and public discourse, which is in agreement with the agenda-setting theory assumption that the media can be used to raise awareness and drive policies. This is in agreement with Chadwick (2013) and Tufekci (2017), who stated the importance of social media platforms as networked structures of information enabling activists to disseminate information rapidly and mobilise resources for advocacy campaigns. The data also posits that skits are a viable tool for advocacy, especially when the context of the advocacy might be a sensitive matter, such as the lawlessness of the Nigerian police. This, therefore, implies that audience members need to be very active on the platforms where skits on the lawlessness of the Nigerian Police are disseminated so that their use for advocacy can be made effective through online available tools such as ‘shares’, ‘likes’, and ‘hashtags.’

The second objective was to determine specific police misconduct portrayed in skits, and according to data obtained, this was identified based on the themes common in skits portraying the lawlessness of the Nigerian Police. Findings show that common themes include unprofessionalism by officers, brutality,

disregard for human rights, and social change. Zhang and Yan (2017), Smith (2015), and Saraf and Balamurugan (2018) have increasingly scrutinised the role of law enforcement agencies in Nigerian society, interrogating power dynamics and institutional structures that perpetuate injustice and inequality, which are depicted in skits. These themes have been made known through the numerous skits available on social media, which is in agreement with the agenda-setting theory, as social media has made this issue available for public discourse by providing the public with what to think about. This, therefore, implies that social media is a strong tool that aids advocacy and hence, should be utilised to expose other societal issues confronting Nigerian society.

Furthermore, the third objective, which was to examine the effectiveness of skits in addressing police misconduct, was understood to emanate from the visual and audio elements that could be found in skits that discuss the lawlessness of the Nigerian police. According to the data, the use of sound effects, music, dialogue, and props contains humour. Reason (2022) opines that people remember jokes and comical content rather than they do serious messages. Deuze (2011), cited in Smith (2015), highlights the role of humour in mediating online interactions, fostering engagement, and building virtual communities. Similarly, Elder and Hargittai (2020) explore the use of humour in engaging users around scientific and environmental topics, underscoring its potential to facilitate public dialogue and knowledge dissemination. This is therefore in line with the agenda-setting theory as humour sticks in the mind of the audience, giving them what to think about. However, skit makers need to remain within the confines of the law to avoid litigation as they tell short stories about happenings in society using their craft in a meaningful way.

Finally, the challenges of skit-making were examined, and according to the data collected from the study, the challenges of skit-making lie in censorship, backlash from authorities, financial constraints, and the risk of physical harm or legal repercussions. Data analysed also opine that content sensitivity is a major challenge due to the inability of content creators to balance their humour with social issues and cultural norms. Hence, skit makers get into trouble with either the police or the government, which hinders the application of the tenets of agenda setting theory, as such content can be removed from

cyberspace. This is in agreement with Burgess and Green (2019), who believe that crafting compelling advocacy messages through skits also requires a nuanced understanding of cultural sensitivities, audience preferences, and the delicate balance between entertainment and advocacy objectives. As a social implication, data revealed that the contributions of skit makers would be more profound if they paid attention to details such as the quality of production and engaging stakeholders. Besides these challenges, some prospects can be achieved through government intervention by offering training programmes, workshops, and mentorship opportunities to help skit makers develop their tactical skills, including writing, acting, producing, and directing.

Conclusion

The analysis of skit making for advocacy against lawlessness by the Nigerian police underscores the significant role that creative media and digital activism play in addressing societal challenges and promoting accountability within law enforcement institutions. Through skits, content creators harness the power of humour, satire, and storytelling to raise awareness, provoke critical reflection, and mobilise public action against police misconduct and abuse of power. The research has highlighted the effectiveness of skit-making as a viable tool for advocacy, as evidenced by the widespread dissemination and impact of skit-based campaigns during events such as the *EndSARS* protests. Skits serve as a democratized platform for citizen engagement, enabling individuals and communities to amplify their voices, challenge existing power structures, and demand accountability from authorities. The analysis has identified common themes and visual elements prevalent in skits addressing police lawlessness, reflecting the diverse experiences and perspectives of Nigerian citizens. This study, therefore, concludes that these skits often advocate for systemic reforms, accountability mechanisms, and respect for human rights within the Nigerian Police Force, contributing to broader efforts to promote justice, transparency, and good governance. Despite the challenges faced by skit makers, including censorship, harassment, and legal threats, this research reveals that skit makers are resilient and committed to driving positive change through creative expression and digital activism. Hence, it is imperative to support and empower

skit-makers through capacity-building initiatives, collaborative partnerships, and advocacy efforts aimed at addressing the root causes of police lawlessness and promoting institutional reform.

Recommendations

This study recommends the following:

1. Skit-makers should go beyond entertainment and be more intentional in creating contents that drive advocacy in the fight against the Nigerian Police lawlessness.
2. Skit-makers should not shy away from bringing to light the underlying systemic issues within the Nigerian Police law enforcement, such as institutionalised corruption or a lack of accountability for more effectiveness.
3. The portrayal of the Nigerian Police by skit-makers should include proper representation by showing respect to their uniforms and using befitting props and sounds that do not depict contempt for the system.
4. Skit-makers should enhance their craft through continuous learning, collaboration with other creators, and leverage emerging technologies for effective storytelling to arouse the need for using their creativity as advocacy tools.

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