

**MEDIA PORTRAYAL OF CROSS DRESSERS IN NIGERIA: POSITIVE OR
NEGATIVE INFLUENCE ON THE SOCIETY?**

AYOMIDE J. FAJOYE

**Department of Mass Communication
Redeemer's University
Ede, Osun State**

fajoye8658@run.edu.ng +2348165145978

BERNICE O. SANUSI (PhD)

**Department of Mass Communication
Redeemer's University
Ede, Osun State**

sanusib@run.edu.ng +2347037205256

OMIPIDAN, ISMAIL

**Department of Mass Communication
Redeemer's University
Ede, Osun State**

smileomi@yahoo.com +2348188808053

Abstract

Cross-dressing is more common than ever before. Even in Nigerian society, there are cross-dressers. Cross-dressers come in various forms, each with a unique motivation for engaging in these behaviours. The media influence public opinion about problems, events, happenings, or people, since cross-dressers were previously not widely accepted in society due to cultural norms and values, but now that they are well-publicised as a result of media attention. Therefore, it is necessary to examine out the various media platforms that promote cross-dressers in Nigeria and investigate if the prominence given to cross-dressers by the media in Nigeria influences how people view cross-dressers. Status Conferral Theory and Agenda Setting Theory formed as basis for this study. Findings showed that media portrayal often reinforces negative stereotypes and leads to increased stigma and discrimination against transgender individuals. Findings also showed that contribute to negative stereotypes and increased discrimination and stigmatisation. This can lead to negative mental health outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and social isolation, as well as other negative consequences such as employment discrimination and violence. Hence, this study concluded that the media portrayal of cross-dressers in Nigeria can significantly impact their lives and well-being, while media portrayal can increase visibility and promote social acceptance.

Keywords: Media, Cross-dresser, Development, Undergraduates

Introduction

Nowadays, cross-dressing is more common than ever before. Even in Nigerian society, there are cross-dressers. Cross-dressers come in various forms, each with a unique motivation for engaging in these behaviours. Cross-dressing is typically done for personal preference of attire associated with the opposite sex, shock value, to question social standards, or to rise to prominence in society. According to Farooq (2020), men and women have been observed to dress in atypical ways of their genders to shock others, subvert societal conventions, or advance in social standing. He continues by pointing out that, despite society's mockery or disdain, it is believed that women who dress like males are doing it to project masculinity and power, whereas men do so primarily in order to earn renown that is mostly covered by the media.

According to Oluwaseun and Olubunmi (2020), the media has taken on a crucial function in society as a profession or institution tasked with controlling information flow. Moreover, Bellos and Sanusi (2022) noted that the media had been characterised as having the strength, capability, and size to bring to light something previously unknown. Before, cross-dressers were not acknowledged and publicly recognised in society (Farooq, 2020). However, due to the power of the media to make an unfamiliar personality, issue, or event when covered by the media become instantly widespread, cross-dressers are now well known to the public. They are slowly being acknowledged in society. According to Bellos and Sanusi (2022), who cited Harry (2016), cross-dressers can also get recognition through the media. Sood (2018) further states that the media influence public opinion about problems, events, happenings, or people. Since cross-dressers were previously not widely accepted in society due to cultural norms and values, but now that they are well-publicised as a result of media attention, it is necessary to therefore investigate media portrayal of cross dressers in Nigeria: positive or negative influence on the society.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Status Conferral Theory

The idea of status conferral holds that the person or group being covered gets singled out and given importance due to journalistic portrayal. "If you are in the media, then you matter," goes the 1948 premise of the Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton theory. From the perspective of Lazarsfeld and Merton (1996), being noticed by the media is a sign of success, significant enough to have been chosen out of the vast, faceless multitudes and significant enough for one's actions and thoughts to merit public attention. In other words, through elevating their social stature and bestowing prestige upon them, the media. The theory assumes that by often featuring people in the media, people are given status, according to Anaeto et al. (2008). This demonstrates that individuals prefer to view some persons as significant members of society the more the media highlights and portrays them. This is because the media cannot feature individuals irrelevant to society. According to the theory of status conferral, which contends that the mass media give status and legitimacy to individuals, ideas, and organisations, the media emphasises those seen as prominent figures in society and increases their popularity. This suggests that media attention increases the attention paid to persons, subjects, and issues; media portrayal gives people

and issues importance. This theory is relevant to the study's focus, which is how the media in Nigeria glorifies cross-dressers.

Agenda Setting Theory

McCombs and Shaw put forth the agenda-setting theory in 1968. According to the theory, the media can influence public opinion by choosing which topics receive the most attention. The theory's main premise is that the public follows the media's agenda. According to the theory, most of the images we store in our minds, most of the concerns or thoughts we have, and most of the topics we talk about are influenced by what we have read, heard, or seen in various forms of mass media (Edegoh, Asemah&Udeh-Akpe, 2013). The media influences our thoughts and feelings about many topics, leading us to believe that some topics are more crucial to our society than others. According to the agenda-setting theory, the media may not dictate our thoughts, but they can influence the topics that occupy our thoughts.

Consequently, editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters significantly influence the public agenda by selecting and presenting news. The quantity of information presented in a news article, as well as its placement, conveys to readers not only details about a specific matter but also the level of significance that should be attributed to it. The amount of information in a news story and its position tells readers about a topic and how much priority to assign (Anwumabelem&Asemah, 2021). Wimmer and Dominick (2000) note that the theory on agenda setting by the media contends that what the media choose to publicise significantly influences what kinds of issues people debate, think about, and worry about. This indicates that if the media decides to devote the greatest time and attention to covering cross-dressers, this subject will take centre stage in the viewers' minds. The aforementioned says that when the media "plays the drums," we start dancing to their song's beat. This theory is relevant to this study because it clarifies how the media shapes public perceptions of cross-dressers in Nigeria. This is because cross-dressers in Nigeria have received favourable media portrayal.

Method

This study examines media portrayal of cross dressers in Nigeria: positive or negative influence on the society?. Secondary data was retrieved from this study as the research design used was documentary. Secondary sources of data collection were from published and unpublished materials like books, research papers and periodicals relevant to the subject matter under study.

Conceptual Review

Farooq's (2020) study on Eroticism and Mysteries of Cross-Dressing: Increasing Trends of Male to Female Cross-Dressing in Pakistani Society. This article focuses on men who challenge societal expectations surrounding gender roles. The research delves into the practice of male-to-female (MTF) cross-dressing within the Sufi tradition in the Indian subcontinent. This article delves into the lives of notable Sufi mystic poets from the Indian subcontinent, including Ameer Khusro, Khawaja Nzaamud Din, Bulleh Shah, and Shah Anayat, as well as contemporary Pakistani cross-dressers. Its focus is on individuals who

identify as male-to-female transgender. The article examines instances of male-to-female cross-dressing in literature, drama, and theatre, with the aim of assessing psychological theories on male cross-dressing tendencies. It also analyzes the experiences of cross-dressers in real-life situations within both Pakistani and Western societies. The research discusses the eroticism of this transvestitism. This fetish transvestitism also has an erotic impact on both viewers and the cross-dresser. The investigation utilized a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies to explore the enigmatic aspects of male-to-female (MTF) cross-dressing. The study's primary focus was to examine Pakistani cross-dressers, historical Sufi poets, novels, dramas, and researchers. Respective books, articles, and research thesis were explored for help and guidance. The case study approach was utilized to analyze various events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions, and systems. Additionally, a survey was conducted to demonstrate the actual occurrence of cross-dressing and the reaction it receives from Pakistanis.

The study's results dispel the misconception that cross-dressers are predominantly homosexual, bisexual, or transgender. The majority of cross-dressers are actually heterosexual men, and in reality, there are more heterosexual cross-dressers than homosexual or bisexual ones. The impulse to wear women's clothing, including provocative underwear and bras, arises from the same source as the desire for sexual penetration. In addition, MTF cross-dressers not only stimulate their own sexual organs but also the senses of their audience. Through their dancing bodies, they actively engage with the sensations of male viewers. According to the study, both women and men in Pakistani society do not openly engage in dancing. Consequently, men are unable to observe women dancing. However, the study found that men experience sexual arousal when they see other men wearing provocative lingerie.

Nwolu et al. (2022) conducted a study exploring women's views on male comedians who cross-dress on Instagram. The study aimed to examine the impact of negative modern attitudes and gender disparities on societal attitudes towards this practice. The objective of this research was to investigate the perception of female viewers towards male Instagram comedians who perform in cross-dress, analyze how their comedy sketches portray the female gender, identify the drivers behind male comedians' choice to cross-dress, and evaluate how female audiences respond to the depiction of women by male cross-dressing comedians on Instagram. The survey quantitative research method was utilized in the study, which was based on McLuhan's theory of technological determinism. The questionnaire was utilised to gather primary data, while available literature was the secondary source. The Taro Yamane technique was used to choose a sample size of 400 respondents from a population of 1,900,000. According to the research, male comedians who cross-dress are not appreciated by women. This is because their performances tend to portray women as dependent, unfaithful, gossipy, and other negative stereotypes, which is seen as demeaning. Male comedians often dress in women's clothing because the female gender offers a wide range of characteristics that can be used for humorous material, and women generally don't object to being represented in this way. The research suggests that there should be an encouragement of more women to pursue careers in comedy.

Additionally, male comedians who dress in women's clothing should highlight the strengths of Nigerian women.

In 2019, Hao and Zi undertook a study on the portrayal of cross-dressers in popular culture through the lens of Androgyny and Camp theory. Their research delved into the depictions of cross-dressers in movies, television shows, and literature, examining how they relate to the two facets of cross-dressing culture: the exuberant celebration of androgyny and the precarious border between genders. The authors discussed their findings and analyses in the paper. According to the analysis, androgyny represents a distinctive aesthetic temperament among cross-dressers. It challenges the traditional gender norms by blurring the boundaries between male and female physiologically and socially, and thereby reduces the rigid social distinctions between the two genders. This phenomenon promotes greater acceptance and tolerance of cross-dressing within society.

In their research, Bellos and Sanusi (2022) explored how celebrity cross-dressers in Nigeria are conferred status and shape public discourse through agenda-setting in the media. The media serves several functions, including providing information about local events, educating the public, and offering entertainment to the audience. The main objective of this research was to examine the historical context of cross-dressing in Nigeria, explore the connection between cross-dressers and the media, and investigate the ways in which cross-dressers have benefited from the media's representation of their identity. This paper delves into the theoretical principles and underlying foundations of the media attributes previously mentioned, utilizing secondary data sources in its investigation. The study found that the media played a significant role in raising the profile of cross-dressers from a regular individual to a celebrity, indicating that this contribution should not be underestimated. The media has traditionally played a crucial role in informing the public and elevating the status of certain issues. This is particularly true in the case of cross-dressing in Nigeria, where limited research exists. As such, the media's recommendations for further research in this area have helped to increase awareness and understanding of this topic.

Concept of Media Portrayal

Media portrayal refers to reporting news and events by various forms of media, including newspapers, television, radio, and online platforms. It is the process by which journalists and news organisations collect, verify, and disseminate information to the public.

Media portrayal can significantly impact public opinion, policy decisions, and even the outcome of elections. It can also shape how people perceive events and issues and influence their attitudes and beliefs.

According to a study by the Pew Research Center, the news media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion on important issues. The study found that "the media has a powerful influence on public opinion, both in terms of the issues that people think are important and the way those issues are framed and discussed."

Furthermore, media portrayal can also influence policy decisions. A study by the University of California, Berkeley, found that media portrayal of climate change significantly impacted the passage of climate-related legislation.

In conclusion, media portrayal is an essential aspect of modern society that plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and policy decisions. Journalists and news organisations must report accurately and fairly to ensure the public receives reliable information.

Concept of Cross-dressers

Cross-dressers are individuals who dress in clothing traditionally associated with the opposite sex. This behaviour may be part of their gender expression, a form of self-expression, or for other personal reasons.

The concept of cross-dressers has been studied in various fields, including psychology and sociology. According to a study by Singh and colleagues, cross-dressing behaviour is associated with a range of factors, including gender identity, sexual orientation, and cultural norms.

Cross-dressing behaviour does not inherently indicate a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. For example, some cross-dressers identify as heterosexual, while others identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.

Furthermore, the stigma surrounding cross-dressing behaviour can lead to negative psychological effects, including depression, anxiety, and social isolation. A study by Potter and colleagues found that social support can be beneficial for cross-dressers, as it can help to reduce the negative effects of stigma and discrimination.

It is important to note that cross-dressing behaviour is not the same as being transgender. Transgender individuals identify as a gender different from the sex assigned at birth, while cross-dressers do not necessarily identify as a different gender.

In conclusion, cross-dressing behaviour is a form of gender expression that various factors can influence. It is important for individuals who engage in cross-dressing behaviour to receive social support and understanding to reduce the negative effects of stigma and discrimination.

Concept of Cross-dressers in Nigeria

The concept of cross-dressers, individuals who dress in clothing traditionally associated with the opposite sex, is generally stigmatised in Nigeria due to the conservative nature of the society. Cross-dressing is often viewed as immoral, indecent, and un-African, and individuals who engage in such behaviour are often subjected to discrimination and violence.

A study by Adeyinka and colleagues found that cross-dressers in Nigeria face significant social and cultural barriers, including stigma, discrimination, and violence. The study highlights the need for increased awareness and education to reduce the negative attitudes towards cross-dressers in Nigeria.

Despite the stigma, cross-dressing behaviour can be seen in some aspects of Nigerian cultures, such as the masquerade traditions in some parts of the country. These traditions involve men dressing up in elaborate costumes and masks, some traditionally associated with female deities.

However, cross-dressing outside these cultural traditions is generally frowned upon and can lead to legal consequences. Same-sex sexual activity is illegal in Nigeria under the Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act, which criminalises any public displays of affection between same-sex couples, including cross-dressing.

In conclusion, the concept of cross-dressers in Nigeria is generally stigmatised due to the conservative nature of the society. While cross-dressing behaviour can be seen in some aspects of Nigerian culture, individuals who engage in such behaviour outside these cultural traditions face significant social and legal barriers.

Concept of Media Portrayal on Cross Dressers

According to Llanosv& Nina (2011) the media holds significant importance as they serve as influential sources within society. They cover the latest happenings, offer frameworks for understanding and analysis, encourage citizens to take action on various issues, replicate prevailing cultural and societal norms, as well as entertain the audience. The Nigerian media landscape has heightened public awareness regarding the factors driving the increased interest in gender discourse among the general population, which includes issues related to gender disparities, inequalities, and injustices in the country's inter-sex relations.

Media portrayal on cross-dressers refers to how the media portrays and discusses individuals who traditionally wear clothing with a different gender. This portrayal can be positive and negative and significantly impact the individuals involved.

One study by Lombardi, Wilchins, Priesing, and Malouf (2001) examined media portrayal of transgender individuals in the United States and found that the portrayal of these individuals was largely negative, with many media outlets focusing on sensationalistic and offensive stories. This negative portrayal can contribute to the stigma and discrimination faced by transgender individuals and can make it more difficult for them to live openly and authentically.

Another study by Kosenko, Rintamaki, Raney and Maness (2013) examined media portrayal of the murder of a transgender woman and found that media outlets often used inappropriate language and failed to accurately represent the victim. This portrayal can further marginalise vulnerable communities and perpetuate harmful stereotypes and biases.

However, there are also examples of positive media portrayal of cross-dressers and transgender individuals. For example, the popular television show "Pose" has been praised for its positive representation of transgender individuals and for promoting greater understanding and acceptance of this community.

Overall, media portrayal of cross-dressers can significantly impact how these individuals are perceived and treated by society. It is important for media outlets to strive for accuracy and sensitivity when reporting on these topics in order to promote greater understanding and acceptance of gender diversity.

The concept of media portrayal of cross-dressers can be described as the representation of individuals who choose to wear clothing typically associated with a gender other than their own. Media portrayal can impact the public's understanding and perception of cross-dressing individuals, shaping their social acceptability and tolerance.

Studies have shown that media portrayal of cross-dressers is often sensationalised, emphasising their difference from societal norms and perpetuating negative stereotypes. For example, a study by Klinker and colleagues (2018) analysed newspaper articles about cross-dressing individuals and found that they were often depicted as deviant, sexually promiscuous, and mentally ill. This type of portrayal can contribute to stigmatisation and

discrimination against cross-dressers, making it difficult for them to live openly and comfortably.

However, media portrayal can also have positive effects on cross-dressing individuals by providing visibility and a platform for advocacy. For example, the documentary "Paris is Burning" (1990) brought attention to the ballroom subculture of drag queens, highlighting their creativity and resilience in the face of social and economic challenges. This type of portrayal can promote understanding and acceptance of cross-dressers, potentially leading to greater social inclusion.

Overall, media portrayal of cross-dressers can positively and negatively affect their social standing and well-being. It is important for journalists and media outlets to consider the impact of their portrayal and strive for a fair and accurate representation of cross-dressing individuals.

Cross-dressing refers to the act of wearing clothes or accessories that are typically associated with the opposite gender. Media portrayal of cross-dressing has varied over time, but it has generally been framed in a way that sensationalises and stigmatises this behaviour.

In a study conducted by Davidson and Martino (2015), they analysed media portrayal of cross-dressing in mainstream newspapers in the United States and found that most articles framed cross-dressing as deviant or abnormal behaviour. The authors argue that this type of portrayal reinforces negative stereotypes about cross-dressing and contributes to the marginalisation of those who engage in this behaviour.

Similarly, a study by Stryker and Whittle (2006) examined media portrayal of transgender individuals in the United States and found that the media often focused on sensational or scandalous aspects of their lives rather than their experiences of gender identity. The authors argue that this type of portrayal reinforces negative stereotypes and contributes to the stigmatisation of transgender individuals.

Overall, media portrayal of cross-dressing can have a significant impact on how this behaviour is perceived by society. When cross-dressing is framed in a stigmatising or sensationalised way, it can contribute to the marginalisation and discrimination of those who engage in this behaviour. Therefore, it is important for media outlets to provide accurate and respectful portrayal of cross-dressing and other forms of gender expression and identity.

The concept of media portrayal on cross-dressers in Nigeria refers to the way the Nigerian media reports and portrays individuals who dress in clothing that is traditionally associated with the opposite gender. Cross-dressing is often stigmatised and frowned upon in Nigerian society, and media portrayal can either reinforce or challenge these attitudes.

One of the most well-known cross-dressers in Nigeria is Idris Okuneye, who goes by the name Bobrisky. Bobrisky has been the subject of numerous news articles, social media posts, and even documentaries. Some media portrayal has been positive, with some outlets celebrating Bobrisky's confidence and individuality. For example, in a 2018 article for The Guardian, Adewojumi Aderemi wrote that "Bobrisky is more than just an internet sensation. He represents a generation of Nigerians breaking boundaries and challenging societal norms."

However, much of the media portrayal of Bobrisky and other cross-dressers in Nigeria has been negative. Some articles have portrayed cross-dressers as deviant or immoral, and there have been calls for them to be arrested or punished. For example, in 2019, the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC) issued a statement condemning cross-dressing, stating it is "contrary to Nigerian culture and tradition." The statement said, "anyone who violates our laws in the name of freedom of expression will face the full wrath of the law." Overall, media portrayal of cross-dressers in Nigeria is complex and varied, with some outlets celebrating their individuality while others condemn them as deviant or immoral. This portrayal reflects larger societal attitudes towards cross-dressing, which are often negative but are also being challenged by some individuals and groups.

Positive Influence of Media Portrayal on Cross-Dressers in Nigeria

There is limited research on the positive influence of media portrayal on cross-dressers in Nigeria. However, a study by Adesokan and Babajide (2019) explored the portrayal of cross-dressers in Nollywood movies and their impact on social acceptance. The study found that the media portrayal of cross-dressers in Nollywood movies has helped to increase their visibility and promote social acceptance of cross-dressing behaviour in Nigeria.

Furthermore, another study by Akande (2019) examined the media representation of Bobrisky, a popular Nigerian cross-dresser, and its impact on the perception of cross-dressing behaviour. The study found that the media portrayal of Bobrisky has helped to normalise cross-dressing behaviour in Nigeria and promote social acceptance of gender non-conforming behaviour.

Overall, the media portrayal of cross-dressers in Nigeria has played a significant role in increasing visibility and promoting social acceptance of gender non-conforming behaviour. This is crucial for the well-being of cross-dressers, who often face discrimination and stigmatisation in Nigeria.

Negative Influence of Media Portrayal on Cross-Dressers in Nigeria

The media portrayal of cross-dressers can have negative consequences on their lives and well-being. A study by Kosinski, Stryker, and Trannel (2001) explored the impact of media portrayal on transgender individuals in the United States. The study found that media portrayal often reinforces negative stereotypes and leads to increased stigma and discrimination against transgender individuals.

Furthermore, a study by Frisé, Jonsson, and Rubini (2017) examined the effects of media exposure on attitudes toward cross-dressing behaviour among Swedish adolescents. The study found that exposure to media portrayal of cross-dressing behaviour increased stigmatisation and negative attitudes towards cross-dressers.

Overall, the media portrayal of cross-dressers can contribute to negative stereotypes and increased discrimination and stigmatisation. This can lead to negative mental health outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and social isolation, as well as other negative consequences such as employment discrimination and violence.

Discussion and Findings

The media portrayal of cross-dressers in Nigeria has not always been positive and has sometimes had negative consequences. A study by Ogunyemi (2020) examined the media representation of Bobrisky, a popular Nigerian cross-dresser, and its impact on social stigma and discrimination. The study found that the media portrayal of Bobrisky has contributed to negative perceptions of cross-dressing behaviour in Nigeria, leading to increased social stigma and discrimination against cross-dressers.

Moreover, another study by Oladipo (2019) examined the impact of media portrayal on the well-being of cross-dressers in Nigeria. The study found that the media portrayal of cross-dressers has led to negative mental health outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and social isolation due to increased discrimination and stigma.

Overall, the media portrayal of cross-dressers in Nigeria has had positive and negative effects. While media portrayal can increase visibility and promote social acceptance, it can also contribute to negative perceptions and increase discrimination and stigma against cross-dressers.

Conclusion

The media portrayal of cross-dressers in Nigeria can have positive and negative influences. On the positive side, media portrayal can increase visibility and promote social acceptance of gender non-conforming behaviour. For example, studies by Adesokan and Babajide (2019) and Akande (2019) found that media portrayal of cross-dressers in Nollywood movies and Bobrisky have helped increase social acceptance of cross-dressing behaviour in Nigeria.

However, on the negative side, media portrayal can reinforce negative stereotypes and increase stigma and discrimination against cross-dressers. For example, studies by Ogunyemi (2020) and Oladipo (2019) found that media portrayal of Bobrisky has contributed to negative perceptions of cross-dressing behaviour and increased social stigma and discrimination against cross-dressers.

The media portrayal of cross-dressers in Nigeria can significantly impact their lives and well-being. While media portrayal can increase visibility and promote social acceptance, it can also contribute to negative stereotypes and increase discrimination and stigma against cross-dressers.

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