

SATIRICAL COMEDY IN THE ERA OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC: THE NIGERIAN AWARENESS EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

This paper argues that drama through its comedy and satire genres has proven its essence by educating and entertaining Nigerians in the period of covid-19. Although comedy is said to be an action that is unserious and full of humor, it was used during and after the covid-19 era to educate and spice up the boring life of the masses in the midst of the pandemic, looking at the role of comedy in creating awareness, general lives of individuals and the Nigerian society in the chaotic situation during the covid-19 era. The quantitative research approach was used to analyze the number of 'views', 'shares', 'likes' and 'comments' of the eight (8) selected online comedy skits. Anchored on Stanley Fish's Reader Response theory that gained prominence in the late 1960s. This theory focuses on the readers and audience reaction to a text or any artistic output for evaluation and interpretation based on their personal experience, previous knowledge and opinion. The corona virus pandemic in Nigeria brought about lockdown-the shutdown of different activities of individuals and organizations in the country. The government of Nigeria enforced social distancing to cushion the effect of the deadly virus. Hence, the introduction of different alternative ways for the normal such as working from home, no social gathering, regular handwashing and wearing of nose masks. These preventive measures by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and the federal Ministry of health in conjunction with World Health Organization directives could only be achieved by "staying at home". Hence, people found consolation and life in television, indoor games and social media.

Keywords: Satirical Comedy, Awareness, Covid-19 Era, Nigeria.

Introduction

Comedy is a dramatic genre that is light in tone, full of laughter and humour. It is a branch in the artistic world that deals with everyday life activities, a happy ending event and a major objective of providing entertainment to its audience

or reader. Most times, the audience or reader is forced to laugh at the foolishness of the characters, feeling jubilant and forgetting the humdrum life in the society. Comedy appeals to the intelligence unadulterated and unassuming and targets our heads (Bergson, H. ; Meredith). It aims attention on what ails the world through the society and this brings to the fore the lens (satirical comedy) through which this work examines the role of comedy in Nigeria during the era of Covid-19 pandemic. Comedy lightens the heaviness we feel in our chests on a daily basis. According to Jerry Palmer (1994) as cited in Sharon Lockyer and Lynn Myers Brunel, comic meaning is dependent on a number of interrelated factors: the settings and contexts in which a joke is told, the competence of its delivery, the identity of the teller, and the audience of the comedy-Nigerians.(Lockyer and Myers 166)

Briefly, satire is a way of making fun of people by using folly and exaggerated languages. Even though the ridiculous language of satire isn't intended to be taken seriously, well-made satire can use mockery to get at more serious truths and politicians are easily the target for satire, especially when they're acting self-righteous or hypocritical. Since satire is a dramatic form that hilariously criticize the follies and mis happenings of the society, satirical comedy becomes the base instrument for this work as a comic piece that showcases the shortcomings or religious leaders to the world with the believe that those criticized would heed to the yearnings of the society. In this instrument the writer uses functional characters to represent real personalities for the aim of exposing and condemning corruption as the bane of our society by exploring its corrective purposes. A Glossary of Literary Terms by Abrams (1981:167) as cited in GraduateWay defines satire as the "literary art of diminishing a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, indignation or scorn".(6)hence, it differs a bit from the comic in that comedy evokes laughter mainly as an end in itself, while satire "derides"; that it uses laughter as a weapon and against a butt existing outside the work itself. That butt may be an individual (in "personal satire"), or a type of person, a class, an institution or even a nation-a playfully critical distortion of the familiar.It is also acknowledged that satirical comedy gives us pleasure, for it presents the subject matter to scrutiny through humorous ways.Satire in the theatre is a "weapon not yet fully exploited among the contemporary dramatists of Nigeria, fertile though the social and political scene is for well-aimed barbs by the sharp, observant eye".(Roscoe 220)

In the same vein, the existing literature focusing on the appeal of comedy cannot be wholly applied to satirical comedy performances due to the crucial issues it portrays in a hilarious circumstance. Whilst some of these themes reflect the negative qualities of individuals others reflect the negativity of the government. The specific intricacies of comedy process such as the important role, the element of laughter and the significance of the shared understanding between comedians and their social media audience - suggests there are unique features involved in the appeal of satirical comedies and the motivational forces encouraging audiences to know the real happenings within their societies. Social media network sites are online platforms through which individuals, groups and organizations create presence and share information through texts, photos, music videos etc. (Ladan et al. 125) The most significant aspect of the social media is its spread of information with positive or negative effects on the society and on people's decisions and behaviours.

Satirical comedy, with no contempt or anger exposes and ridicules the ills of the society be it socially, politically and economically. The combination of satire and comedy (satirical comedy) results to a literary manner that blends a critical attitude with humor and wit to the end that human institutions or humanity may be improved. The true satirical comedy is conscious of the frailty of institutions of man's devising and attempts through laughter not so much to tear them down as to inspire a remodeling. This concept is not usually about individuals but the society at large, the situation of things caused by an individual or a group of persons.

The comedies aside portraying the ills of the societies addressed the stress of the Nigerian health workers during the pandemic. Some skits show compassion and empathy about what it's like to be on the front lines. Such gestures are directed not only to health workers treating covid-19 patients in the hospital but also to support staff who may be worried about furloughs and financial stress at home. They may have spouses and partners who are equally worried about them, giving them hope that they are remembered in different levels. Some team go out for drinks at the end of work sometimes, where they decompress and laugh together but the lockdown changed the narrative.

It is important to note from the foregoing that satirical comedy involves the fusion of laughter and contempt-for ills in the society. Inseparable from any definition of satirical comedy is its corrective purpose. Ian Gordon as cited in *GraduateWay* points out these corrective purposes of satirical comedy by saying that the satirist comedian "stands in opposition to the current state of affairs, endeavoring to change things either to what they were in a recalled and often

mythologized, past, or to what they might be in a preferred, and frequently Utopian future. The world of satire emphasizes ugliness and disorder. These authors' claim reminds us that the theme of satirical comedy can be presented through different techniques in order to maintain standards, reaffirm values, and to come up with reforms in the society. It is the criticisms on different levels that bring about this social change.

For the purpose of this study, comedy skits of some popular comedian in Nigeria as well as their viewers' responses from social media. Comedians like Babarex, Samspedy, Mark Angel, Mc3310 and many others were selected due to large followership on Instagram, YouTube and especially Facebook fan pages including their number of likes and comments. Secondly, the Facebook platform was chosen because most internet network providers (mtn, glo, airtel and gmobile) usually provide free Facebook access hence, many people visited this social media platform with little or no data. The above-mentioned comedians are youths within the Nigerian space and have suffered the terrors of bad leadership and its negative mental effect on people especially the lockdown in the peak of Covid-19. The Nigerian artistes applied creativity in adaptability which in the words of Hod Orkibi are related but distinct constructs. He furthers, one key difference between the two is that creativity necessitates novelty, unconventionality, and non-conformity, whereas in some cases conformity and compliance are the optimal adaptable response (Orkibi 3). Thus, adaptability may sometimes preclude creativity. Creativity can also be anti-adaptive when it brings about destructive consequences to the audience within the society. Both creativity and adaptability are often related to psychological flexibility, which involves the ability to adapt to various situational demands and reconfigure mental resources. Torrance as cited in Orkibi define creativity as the ability to think in an original and flexible way to solve problems and adapt to real-life situations (4). This research made use of the Reader Response theory which according to Cain, W.E et al introduces "seminal concept of interpretive communities", which radically revises interpretive theory by locating meaning not in the texts but in readers, not individual response but in the protocols of communities (2067). Therefore, there are many possible interpretations as regards the audience reception of the comedy skits through the comments and likes as well as views and shares. The theory focuses more on the viewer or reader in actively constructing the content rather than passively consuming them.

The comic approach made use of irony, humor, exaggeration to communicate the real situation of Covid-19 in Nigeria. Hence, enabling the helpless citizens to have the undiluted message and real knowledge of what is happening within them in a humorous manner with no much panic or emotional damage. Just like Soyinka, the satirist comedians are "passionate, almost pathological and maximum obsession for the truth". (222) It criticized the autocratic leadership filled with wickedness towards the majority as evident in the said distribution of palliatives provided by organizations and individuals in the era of covid-19, a leadership that takes decision with no consideration of the lead.

Satirical Comedies that Educate and Entertain

Although we have mentioned that the main essence of drama be it comedy, tragedy or any genre is education and entertainment but while some of the comedies for this study adhered to this rule some failed in both entertainment and education. In humorous exchanges, culture has been found to be a very important factor that determines the humorousness of jokes (Sunday and Filani 2). So, by belonging to same internet space, the users can say to have one common culture (a way of acceptance) which can be used as yardstick to measure the education and entertainment of any output through comments, likes and shares.

Summary of *African Home- Corona Virus* by Samsepy's Comedy

The skit opens with a woman working with laptop in a sitting room. She calls her son Ojo who comes in from the bedroom and while she is trying to tell him something starts sneezing and coughing profusely and on turning towards Ojo, he's already all dressed in an overall, hand gloves, nose mask and face mask covering every part of his body. She is amazed and asked why and Ojo begins the explanation of a new virus ravaging the world known as corona virus and goes further to explain to his mother that it affects the lungs and the airways especially for older people and encourages her to regularly wash her hands, avoid contact with sick people and other preventive measures. So, after a few moments, Ojo gets a call from his girlfriend crying to see him as urgent as possible so he sneaks out of the house and returns hours later to meet his mother fully dressed in an overall, nose and face masks, hand gloves and a hand sanitizer, sanitizing the house. So, she locks Ojo in the room for 21 days after giving him hot water to bath.

From the above story by Samspedy, one can relate the educative part of this skit, the comic expression notwithstanding. The nonverbal communication like facial expression, gestures and body movement used in this skit actually formed the entertaining aspect being looked at by this research while the language and the meaning imbedded go for the educative part. This claim is evident in the first scene,

Ojo: (*Wearing an overall, nose and face masks, hand gloves*) Mama, do you have corona?

Mama: (*Looking at him with a big surprise*) Corona?

Ojo: Don't tell me you have not heard of Corona virus.

Mama: What is corona virus?

Ojo: Mama, Corona virus is a dangerous type of virus that affects the lungs and the airways. Symptoms include cough, high temperature and shortness of breath.

Mama: Ojo, I hope you are not playing cystic fibrosis trick on me.

Ojo: Mama, I am not. Check the internet, some countries are on lockdown because of this virus.

Mama: (*surprisingly*) How do we prevent it?

Ojo: You have to wash your hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and to avoid close contact with sick people. (Samspedy 03:10-05:10)

The above conversation between Ojo and Mama illustrate the educative and entertaining aspects of satirical comedy which tries to bring out the ill (Covid-19) in the society in a humorous manner. The humour in thus is imbedded in the nonverbal communication of the two characters in this skit while the education is in the language and the message. At the end of this skit, we get the authorial voice saying to the viewers, please, do wash your hands regularly with running water; try to avoid contact with sick persons; avoid crowd; if you have symptoms like cough, fever, shortness of breath, please stay in your house and call your doctor. (10:10:05) In the same direction, Iya Taaoma in her skit titled *Corona Virus* tries to advise her neighbor Iya Chidinma who is off to the market to stay home or go with face mask since the virus is already in Nigeria but she refuses and Bro Solo that just returned from wherever touches Taaoma for

pleasantries and Iya Taaooma sanitizes her hands and gives him a resounding slap. And she says, "I have given you a sanitized slap. Now (*pointing at her daughter*) go inside and quarantine yourself"(Taaooma'scabin 00:22-01:26).

Summary of *Face Mask* by Yawa Skits Comedy

Aunty Philo and Kalistus identify the covid-19 era as a money-making venture so they agreed to form a taskforce group that arrest defaulters of the law especially those that are not wearing nose mask. So, they position themselves in a corner, selling nose masks to people at a very costly price. One day, they had a very good outing and even sold their own nose masks after removing it to rest and on their way going, they met other taskforce group that threatened to take them to the station if they don't bail themselves the all the money they had, so they gave all that they had made for the day after much pleading. While they are resting under a tree and lamenting about their bad day, they saw policemen dragging the group that collected all their money so they asked that their money be given back to them but the policemen insisted they come to the station for proper documentation and they started pointing at each as regards to who would go on behalf of the other so at the end, they both disappeared.

The skit presents the real situation of Nigeria where people tend to take advantage of any given opportunity to hike prices of goods and services without any change in the capital market. For instance, in Nigeria immediately the government enforced the use of face mask for any movement outside your home when the lockdown was relaxed, the price rate increased above 200%. This is seen in *Face Mask*,

Kalistus: (*throwing his face opposite direction*) Philo!

Philo: (*Stands at attention*) Sir!

Kalistus: Give him one face mask. It is just five hundred naira (500)

Oga: But face mask is one hundred naira (100), sir.

Kalistus: In cases like yours, it is even one thousand (1000) naira, don't make me change my mind.

Oga: (*Gives her one thousand naira note*) take, give me change.

Philo: One, I don't have change. Two, you should be thankful to us for helping you protect your life. We did not even arrest you and you are asking for change.(Yawaskits 0:03:32)

Summary of *Fortify Me-Corona* by Babarex Tv

Rex comes to visit his girlfriend and on getting there a call enters his phone and he picks telling the person that he is not afraid of any corona virus and all people need to do is wash hands constantly, stay out of social gathering and anytime anyone feels any sign of fever he or she should be advised to go to the hospital. Immediately he drops the call, his girlfriend started coughing and sneezing seriously, he runs towards the door and unfortunately the door is locked so he started begging her to allow him go but she refuses and asks him to follow her to the bedroom for something "very serious". After few hours, rex runs to a goddess of the sea for cleansing, fortification and protection against the virus but unfortunately for him the goddess tells him that the only fortification and cleansing for corona virus is adhering to the preventive measures by the Nigerian Disease Control Commission (NDCC) and World Health Organization (W.H.O).

Babarex is one of the Nigerian most followed comedians on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube with over five thousand followers on the abovementioned social media platforms. His skit, *Fortify Me-Corona* is both educating and entertaining. The scene where he begs his girlfriend not to infect him with corona and the part with the goddess of the sea teaches Nigerians how deadly the virus is. The education of this skit is palpable in the following conversation,

Rex: (Running and panting heavily) The pretty one...

Goddess: Rex my child.

Rex: Is there anything too hard for the river goddess to do?

Goddess: No, my child. What can I do for you?

Rex: I have come for cleansing and protection against this deadly corona virus that everybody is afraid of. I want you to fortify me so that...

Goddess: Cleansing and fortification? (*Steps back and brings out her Face mask from her staff of authority*) I cover myself with the blood of Jesus. (*Does the sign of cross*) Don't tell me you are not obeying what W.H.O said? (*Looking around*) Where is my and sanitizer o!

Rex: Who is W.H.O and what did he or she say? The pretty one, forget W.H.O. I know there is nothing that you cannot...

Goddess: My child, go and buy a nose mask, hand sanitizer, always wash your hands with a clean water and stay away from any kind of gathering. That is what W.H.O said and that is the only cleansing, fortification and protection again corona virus. (*Disappears and reappears*) World Health Organization is the W.H.O. (*Rex faints*)(BabarexTv07:21-12:10)

This comedy is very hilarious and the message very apt as it brings in the most important aspect of human existence (love and spirituality) in the African setting. For real Africans who believe in divinity under ATR, trust the potency more than any other religion especially in protection from any kind of misfortune. But this skit made such people understand that it is only in staying safe that one can be protected from this deadly virus ravaging the world. Another comedy skit that emphasized on this is Mega Plan by Brother Shaggi.

Summary of *Mega Plan* by Brother Shaggi

Brother Shaggi and Ozedikos plan to organize a revival with the title 'corona virus immune deficiency syndrome revival' where they will produce water for people to buy as cure for the coronavirus as well as perform healing miracle in front of the congregation. They both agreed on a particular percentage and on that faithful day, people gathered and after series of testimonies the pastor announced that there is a corona virus victim that will be cured today and Shaggi steps out and after praying for him the pastor started pouring water on him against their agreement of just a drop on his head so Shaggi fled up and the congregation scattered. Unfortunately, a man with the real virus who just came back from China was present and he got angry with Shaggi why he would spoil his hope of getting healed. So, he grabs Shaggi who beckons on the pastor to save him from his grip and on arrival for the rescue mission the man holds him too and started sneezing and coughing.

This comedy skit is educative and entertaining as it portrays the religiosity of many Nigerians. As Shaggi rightly pointed out, "Nigerians? The way they like religion, you will think they are the assistant Jesus, you will think the Garden of Eden started from this place". (BrotherShaggi 0:22-0:55)This

shows the level of faith many Nigerians have on their religions and would go any length to prove that their place of worship is the dwelling place of God. In the last scene, the people were actually made to understand that the cure or prevention for the virus is not in any water by any pastor but in staying safe and applying the preventive measures. In the following conversation between Shaggi and the man with corona virus,

Brother Shaggi: (Drags Pastor Ozedikos) Which kin things be all these ones na? the time wey we dey plan yesterday, shey I tell you say you go pour small water for my head and now see the cloth wey I go borrow, you don pour water for am. (*Reactions from the congregation*)

The man: (*coming out from the congregation*) Which kin rubbish be this...why you dey carry us dey like this, you dey craze? (*Sneezes heavily*)

Brother Shaggi: Shebi you wan beat me ni? (*the man sneezes again*) Oga na wetin happen na?

The Man: Shebi me just come back from china, I go do house boy... (*sneezes and cough*) as I come back I go hospital wen I dey sneeze dey cough so dey say I get coronavirus and dey tell me say I go get healing water from here.

Brother Shaggi: Ogawetin be all this na? you no say you get coronavirus you come church. Here na hospital?

The Man: them talk say this pastor na ogbonge pastor...

Brother Shaggi: (*Angrily*) Which nonsense ogbonge pastor. Shey na church be hospital? (*He beckons on*)

the poster and grabs him and sneezes on him)

Pastor Ozedikos: Ooooh! You no say him get corona virus and him don sneeze give, you come sneeze give me and now me don get am.(06:37-08:38)

The hilarious element in the above is the reaction and speed applied by members of the congregation after the misunderstanding between Shaggi and Ozedikos and the man who has coronavirus. The skit also teaches that church is not hospital in cases like this.

Summary of *Social Distancing* by Mark Angel's Comedy

Emmanuella comes out of the and on seeing Aunty Ebere closely seated with her friend Ugochi tells her to move to the other side, after a little argument she reluctantly moves and Emmanuella told he it is to maintain social distancing and avoid the spread of covid-19. Ugochi begins to explain what Covid-19 is, the symptoms and the preventive measures to Ebere who seems to be lost. After a while Ebere announces that her friend just sent her money to buy a phone but Ugochi advises her to use the money and pay for house rent since her rent will be due next week and the landlord is threatening to throw her out and now that the country is on lockdown, she would have no place to go but sit-at-home.

Mark Angel Comedy is one of the most subscribed YouTube channels due to the little star, Emmanuella who many parents and guardians feel comfortable allowing their cares to access because of the level of decency. The group's comedy titled *Social Distancing* brings to the world a clear scenario of a public yard in the era of covid-19 and how to curb the menace of coronavirus in such setting through the following conversation:

Emmanuella: Aunty Ebere, please, sit down here (pointing the opposite direction)

Ebere: Why nah? (She moves)

Emmanuella: This is social distancing. Covid-19 is looking for a way to travel from one place to another and it needs our help. If we don't help it, it won't travel from one place to another.

- Ebere:** Eiyah! Let's help him nah! Who is he? (Everybody begins to laugh)
- Ugochi:** Ebere, covid-19 is the disease caused by the novel coronavirus.
- Ebere:** Coronavirus! God forbid! I cover myself with the blood of Jesus.
- Emmanuella:** Yes. Cover yourself with blood of Jesus but maintain social distancing.
- Ugochi:** And when you want to cough, you cough into your sleeve (demonstrates). After touching any surface, wash your hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based sanitizer.
- Ebere:** Butt wait o! how do we know somebody has contacted this virus?
- Ugochi:** The person will have dry cough, soar throat, high fever and difficulty in breathing.
- Emmanuella:** Please, let us stay in our houses. Stay Safe. Bye Bye. (MarkAngelComedy 01:43-03:57)

Melodramatic Performances on Covid-19

Since dance is a cultural practice in most countries of the world, this paper decides to look at dances composed in the era of covid-19 that pointed out the ills of the virus through music.

Summary of Corona Nikki-Alade by LorrdsSky Comedy

A group of funny characters are dancing the songs of Yemi Alade and Nikki Minaj. The songs individually and collectively narrate the seriousness of the corona in most countries of the world, encouraging people to wear their nose masks and always sanitize and stay home. In this skit, the dancers are both white and black, everybody representing their race and culture by their kind of dance.

This is a very educative and hilarious performance of different race of the world and the dancers are all carrying sanitizers and wearing nose and face mask. The education is in the lyrics and the actions (dance steps) are full of

humour with various costumes that are funny by just looking at them. Lorrdsky's infusion of memes and characters, stickers and emojis of people that have actually mispronounced some of the words prominent in the corona era such as hand sanitizer that one of the dancers called *hand santa-tie*, another person called corona virus-*corona viroos* and another *colomavilus*(LorrdSky 0:03:05). One may ask how we got to the conclusion that these are the spellings or their pronunciations- it is subtitled so we extracted the directly from the video. The point here is that the message didn't miss as comments show that people understood the importance to protect themselves and the use or "sanitize" as chorus is quite educating and cannot be overemphasized.

Summary of *Coro Dey Kill* by Nastblaq Comedy

It is a melodrama performance featuring three (3) young men dressed in different costumes representing the major ethnic groups in Nigeria discussing the shutdown of economy within the country through the following song,

Coro corodey kill o (2x)
 Coro coro covid-19
 Coro corodey kill o
 Make you sanitize o
 Coro deadly, coro contagious
 Coro bad o, corobadder than ebola o
 Coro catch anybody weyoro see
 Coro chop anybody don dey sneeze o
 Coro china
 Coro Uk
 Coro France
 Coro don enter gja (Nigeria)
 Coro catch poor man weydey the street
 Coro catch politician weydey the sit o(Nastblaq 02:59)

In this skit it captures that both the poor and the rich can contact coronavirus which is very necessary because at a point in Nigeria, some people argued that corona virus kill only the politician and the wealthy in the society (big man sickness). This is because the reported deaths caused by the virus on arrival to Nigeria are actually within the category of wealthy. But this skit debunked that view by projecting that the virus has no preference as it catches anyone that is not protected. Another educating aspect of this skit is the showing of people

sneezing and coughing whenever they sing, "coro catch anybody wey don sneeze o,coro catch anybody wey don cough o"(01: 33).

Summary of *Quarantine Landlord* by MC3310 Comedy

A tenant refuses to pay his rent so the landlord comes up with a means of collecting the money. So he visits the tenant and while they are exchanging pleasantries, he begins to cough and sneeze seriously and he manages to mention that he wants to borrow one thousand five hundred naira from him so the tenant who is obviously uncomfortable with the constant cough and sneeze rushes inside and returns with two thousand naira instead and pleads with the landlord not to return that he is going to bring the complete rent to him first thing in the morning that he should not bother coming to get the rent or borrow money again. The landlord begins to sing as he leaves with joy saying that he will continue to come and collect his money until the rent is fully paid.

It is not out of place to say that this skit is educating though specifically in the song by the landlord after he collected more than he asked for. The phenological interference (Hausa) of the landlord make this even more hilarious. Including when he said, everything in this life is brain, I know he is scared of corona so I will go again next week with two bags of sneeze(MC3310). The education is prominent in his song of victory which is as follow:

Coro coro, see as you dey kill
You start from china
From china you enter Nija
Killing one killing two
Because them call you small coro
You enter covid-19
Coro na wetin, corona virus
Virus na wetin, virus na hunger
Hunger na wetin, hunger na quarantine o
Na so coro coro dey kill
Tell me wetin coro dey do wey ebola never do
As coro enter town o e begin dey spoil things o
We no fit work again and we no fit shake hands o (0:13: 16)

Having looked at some skits to buttress the point raised by this research work, it is pertinent to sum up the selected comedians and their online presence to determine the reception on the people as well as the level of patronage and acceptance from the table below,

Comedy Titles	Artist (s)	Followers	Views	Likes	Platform	Comments	Shares
African Home	SamSpedy	959k	2.5m	106k	Facebook	3.1k	17k
Fortify me- Corona	Babarex	355k	162k	91k	YouTube	7.4k	4k on FB
Face Mask	Yawa Skits	3m	2.9m	108k	Facebook	2.7k	10k
Quarantine Landlord	MC3310	181k	58k	2.9k	Instagram	300	260 on FB
Corona Virus	Lorrdsky	34.6k	555k	11k	YouTube	1k	700 on FB
Coro Dey Kill	Nastyblaq	4.3m	156k	17k	Facebook	757	2.4k
Mega Plan	Brother Shaggi	1.42m	968k	16k	YouTube	1k	4k on FB
Social Distancing	Mark Angel	20m	9.2m	19k	Facebook	421	1.4k

Table: Viewers' Responses

The above table shows the coverage that is, the number of viewers as well as the audience response from the codes and protocols of the interpretive community based on the number of followers, views, likes, comments and shares.

The Nigerian Coping Sitypation

In recent time, significance of theatre has been proven in different countries of the world Nigeria inclusive but the most felt in the Nigerian situation can be traced from March 2020 till date following the covid-19 pandemic. The performing artists within Nigeria are still in the business of making life better by educating and entertaining the citizens of Nigeria through comedy skits and other art forms. Recently in Nigeria, both the young and the old have come to appreciate comedy and its corrective purpose not only as a drama genre but as a source of mental livelihood. A companion in a country where everything seems to have failed politically, socially and economically. In the words of MC Danfo Comedian, thank God for entertainment wey dey make people still get hope, if entertainment no dey, wahala for don burst (03:05:59).The youths no

doubt can contribute meaningfully to the sustenance of peaceful coexistence within their nation if they are carried along by the leadership of the nation. The inclusiveness of the "youths in a country's economy and polity is bound to boost the socio-political and economic development for the country to attain higher heights...any nation that neglects the dreams and aspiration of her youth is bound to reap chaos and a depleted economy"(Ogbonna 50).

Between independence and now, Nigeria has witnessed political and social crises. Moreover, a country's political situation puts in check its economy, any political decision directly or indirectly affects the economy and other facets which in turn makes or mars the lives of citizens in the said country. "Nigeria has continued to experience political instability for a long time, a stretch of military rule did not solve the problems, our recourse to democratic governance and party politics has equally failed to ameliorate some of these problems"(Akinwale 102).

However, the erosion of economic and political values in Nigerian societies such as economic fraud, embezzlement of public funds and other forms of degradation caused by the political class that constitute extensively to some of the delinquent behaviours found amongst the youths. Ogbonna emphasizes that, "where the youths are not empowered, the tendency to resort to crime is rife"(51). Similarly, a greater number of the youths in Nigeria that struggle through self-sponsorship in school are not gainfully employed, there is no functioning scheme for loan or support for small scale entrepreneurship for empowerment. In the word of Charles Ofoche,

Problems and weaknesses arise from a history of flawed elections, the dominance of the ruling party, and scant evidence of political accountability have undermined the legitimacy of democratic rule. For democracy to thrive, it requires strong institutions such as the legislature, courts, police, armed forces and civil service for good governance, but unfortunately many of these institutions are weak due to poor leadership and corruptions; and have fostered problems of governance. The weak political structures in Nigeria have also had negative impact on the economy(7)

The theatre has continued to address different issues in Nigeria with the effect of change very minimal compared to the volume of problems. Corruption and nepotism have eaten deep into the conclave of Nigerian political systems and the society. In 1983, Chinua Achebe wrote a book titled, *The Trouble with Nigeria*

stating that, the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership...the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, the challenges of personal examples which are the hallmarks of true leadership(1). Playwrights like Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi and Emeka Nwabueze in their plays, *A Dance of the Forest*, *If...a Tragedy of the Ruled*, and *A Parliament of Vultures* Respectively, pointed out the biased political system in Nigeria full of falsehood. The playwrights concerned themselves with the socio-economic situation and the consequences of false electioneering promises and leadership that lack direction using literary works as mentioned above but the youths through their comedies (onstage and online) project the corrupt nature of the Nigerian politicians that resulted to ENDSARS# protest of 2020.

The above and many other reasons have prompted the Nigerian youths to source for a better way of solving emotional and mental related issues such as depression, heartbreak, boredom, disappointment. Using coronavirus Internet memes-cultural units, typically humorous in nature, circulating widely in digital environments and carrying meanings about the various facets of the epidemic, from the virus itself and its spread to protective equipment, measures, changes to everyday life, and broader economic and social impacts(Vlad Petre Glăveanu 2).

The covid-19 pandemic era is the major concern of this work due to the significant roles comedians played in educating the masses. Entertainment thrived during this period because many were tired of staying at home, worshipping at home and working from home, doing almost the same thing on a daily basis, social media domain became a place of escape for every Nigerian. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram WhatsApp and YouTube etc. became places where people patronize heavily to release mental and emotional tension and stress created by the lockdown and failed system of governance. As a scholar Janet Wolff posits, in a place where demand is high for drama production, the supply is also high. (26) Despite the changes in our lives, we still smile and laugh, although probably not quite as much as we did before covid-19. More important, though, we are together again in a relaxed and nonclinical "environment."(Chiodo et al. 3) Without physical teamwork and fortitude, we will get through the current crisis and grow stronger for it. Smiles and laughter brightened those sad and lonely moments, eases stress, and help one get through this. As Chiodo and others concluded, "Humor absolutely relieves tension because it allows us all to laugh, decompress, and bond with families in the strange moments". (5) The number of artists (both roadsides and

professionals) tripled to meet the demands of entertainment and education for the professionals who understand the real essence of drama.

However, while some comedy skits were very educative and entertaining some were just entertaining, to some audience they all had a common goal of putting smiles on the faces of individuals despite the harsh situation brought by the pandemic. And for the new comers in the business, they just want a means to survive hunger and mental idleness as the case may be. The educative and entertaining comedy skits are the main focus of this research, analyzing some comments of followers and viewers to understand the level of education (awareness of the virus and the preventive measures) and entertainment (reduction of stress and living in the moment kind of joy) more than the government agencies established for the sole purpose of educating Nigerians on such breakouts.

Conclusion

This work therefore concludes that irrespective of the enforcement of lockdown within Nigeria and other countries of the world, theatre thrived by developing new theatre forms like the drive-in-theatre, zoom followership of live performances and other online streaming platforms, ensuring that the deadly virus did not spread while entertaining and educating a larger number of audiences. The online comedy skits played a major role of education as well as entertainment in the covid-19 era across the world. The study is also of the opinion that the satire produced by the Nigerian comedians are not only for entertainment but for positive change within the society. Therefore, encourages the government to heed to the yearnings of her citizens through social media as that is about the only means people pour out their grievances and other negative happenings within them.

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