

Nigerian Twitter users' response to President Buhari's Misogynistic Statement.

By

Sinmiloluwa Salami (400313522)

Supervisor: Professor Dilyana Mincheva

A Major Research Paper

Submitted to the Department of Communication Studies and New Media

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Arts

in Communication and New Media

McMaster University

Introduction

The Nigerian landscape is one fraught with a lot of gender-based violence which has been met with an outcry from Nigerian feminists. Nigerian feminists, much like various African feminists before them, have emphasised the role that their individual cultures play in their liberation. Discussing Nigerian women in power, Akinbobola notes that they prefer to be interviewed outside of their homes (2019). This is because culturally, the home is where the man leads, and it is the space where the gender roles present in Nigerian societies become more pronounced. The female Nigerian politicians Akinbobola cites placed an emphasis on the separation between the public and the private sphere. This indicates that the women wanted to preserve these roles inside their homes despite their accomplishments; they believed the man is supposed to be the ‘head’ in the private sphere.

This is an indication of the role that a patriarchal culture plays in the feminist movement in Nigeria. However, the feminist youth movement in Nigeria has higher demands. Young women and men in Nigeria have been pushing back against the more severe misogyny in Nigerian society. One such example is President Mohammed Buhari’s misogynistic statement. On 14 October 2016, President Buhari, at a conference in Germany, stated, in response to his wife’s critique of his regime, “I don’t know which party my wife belongs to, but she belongs to my kitchen and my living room and the other room”. There was a great backlash against the President’s words over social media and traditional media. Women aimed to self-actualize and define themselves outside men’s homes, outside of their patriarchal subjugation. Nigerian women on Twitter rose up in protest of the statement and firmly positioned themselves as autonomous beings outside “the other room”. Considering the rise of the feminist coalition in 2020 against the sustained police brutality at the hands of the Special Anti-Robbery Unit (SARs)

in Nigeria, Nigerian women have proved that they are capable to fight against an authoritative government. Furthermore, Nigerian women now much like their predecessors and other African feminists have had a hand in their own liberation and the liberation of the country.

This pushback will be determined over the course of reviewing the responses over social media, Twitter, using the Netlytic software. I analyze only publicly available tweets for this project. As per the instructions of the McMaster Ethics Board, analysis of public tweets is not subject to any further clearance. The Netlytic software allows for geographic specificity and releases the most recent tweets in regards to specific keywords or hashtags. It also goes further and collates the tweets into an excel document with the date and the user, however, the tweets are anonymized for the purpose of this project (I am not interested in any specific names or Twitter personalities. My observations are about patterns of conversations, not about specific people on Twitter). The President's notorious anti-feminist statement coincided with another important moment in history: in 2016, the Nigerian senate did not pass the gender equality bill based on the idea that women and men are not equal. The bill has gone through many iterations and has been constantly rejected. Currently, it has been rejected yet again, for the third time, as of March 2022. One of the points a member of the house of representatives made against the bill was that women control men at home and making them equal in the eyes of the law would give women "too much power" (Iroanusi, March 9, 2022).

The Nigerian culture is reflected in its politics and law, the continued disregard for women in the country is literally written into the law. It is also reflected and upheld in the entertainment put out by the country's film industry, Nollywood. The reasons have ranged from religious to cultural to a superstitious belief, which masquerades as common sense, that women have a supernatural power to control those in power - men. However, the Nigerian youth have

largely moved away from the ideologies of the country and its elders. The response showed that the previous need for separating the public and private sphere in order to preserve patriarchal standards is being eroded. The tweets analysed here reveal a more feminist presence in Nigeria and point to a more liberal understanding of gender relations in the country. It is also important to note that since the research project hinges on publicly available data, it is fluid and liable to disappear from public record.

Literature review

Nigerian feminism has not been defined scholarly, as there is no monolith in Nigeria, it is a profoundly diverse place with a multitude of cultures and various religious sects (Nkealah, 2016). However, they have been theorised and observed to be partial to “nego-feminism”, a more liberal sort of feminism, womanism and African womanism (Nnaemeka, 2004; Akinbobola, 2019; Epoch-Olise, Monye, 2019; Nkealah, 2016). Africana womanism is also a strand that has informed some Nigerian feminist activists on the basis of the similarities it shares with all these different movements (Hudson-Weems, 2019). Nigerian women have not announced an affiliation with the movement, however, much like the strands to come out of Africa, Hudson-Weems believes Africana womanism is rooted in collaboration with Africana men (2019). Hudson-Weems did, however, believe that the movement is for women of African descent, African women and black women in the diaspora (2019). Africana womanism, much like nego-feminism and womanism, aims to find women’s empowerment that exists in collaboration with African men (Hudson-Weems, 2019; Nnameka, 2004; Epochi-olise, Monye, 2019). It sought to work with men in order to uplift and empower women (Hudson-weems, 2019; Epochi-Olise, Monye, 2021). Further, Epochi-Olise and Monye reveal that womanism was directly influenced by the concept of Pan-Africanism (2021).

Nego-feminism was one of the strands that were borne in the course of African women attempting to distance themselves from western feminism (Nnaemeka, 2004). This strand favoured the idea of negotiating with African men and not positioning them as the enemy (Nnaemeka, 2004). It rejected western feminism for cultural reasons, indicating that, “inside their homes, culturally pre-determined ideologies around gender roles become more pronounced” (Akinbobola, 2019). Most strands of movements that emerge from Africa expand on womanism and “resist” any version of Western feminism that required men to be the “enemy” (Nkealah, 2016, p. 63). This need to be inclusive of African men comes from the effect colonialism has had on African men and women (Hudson-Weems, 2019; Nkealah, 2016). Post-colonial and pre-colonial times saw the oppression of African women and men which required them to band together to resist the erosion of their culture and livelihood (Hudson-Weems, 2019). The emphasis on community required African women to represent themselves in a way that did not exclude members of their community which included men (Nkealah, 2016; Nnaemeka, 2004). Nkealah, while citing Ogundipe-Leslie, articulates that feminism has to be multifaceted, accounting for “race, class, caste and gender; nation, culture and ethnicity; age, status, role and sexual orientation” (2016, p. 65). Although she states this to prove that African feminisms are exclusionary of queer identities, more specifically, lesbians, it does reflect the more salient point of why African feminisms are a necessity for African women and more specifically Nigerian feminists (Nkealah, 2016).

However, Nkealah raises the important question of who African feminists write for considering that a large number of African women especially in rural areas do not speak English (2016). This raises a point of concern not only in regard to rural African women but to African men, specifically Nigerian men. Nkealah, while citing Sutherland-Addy and Diaw, calls the

compromise that is required by African feminisms “painful” (2016, p. 71). It alludes to the oppression African men are capable of, contrary to the assumptions of Hudson-Weems and some other African feminist theorists that African men can not oppress African women due to the devastating effects of colonialism (2019, Nkealah, 2016). This view is problematic as African women are and have been oppressed by colonialism and African men in turn. This is reflected in Nigerian women’s resistance to oppression, and to being assaulted in the market (Linus Unah, 4 Feb, 2019; Isola, 2012). Nigerian women have spoken truth to power since before colonialism and after, proving that they can be oppressed by governing bodies and men whom they share community with (Isola, 2012).

Despite this, Nigerian feminists have not expressed a desire to be defined, they build on previous works of feminism and mostly have been reactionary, fighting against hegemonic cultural standards. Nigerian women have spoken truth back to power in multiple ways, they have been an integral part of the fight against oppressive forces in the Nigerian government. (Okafor, et al., 2022). Martin, while citing Garvey, references a Nigerian feminist activist, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti who, through her work, aimed to “liberate the minds of Mother Africa” (2016, p. 55). Kuti and Garvey are relevant because Garvey sought to join forces with Kuti in order to create this Pan-African trans-nationalist movement whose directive was to liberate African women and offer them opportunities for personal autonomy and empowerment (Martin, 2016). Literature highlighting the struggles of African women brings to light the erasure of African women when discussing the history of turmoil on their soil (Akinbobola, 2019; Thiam, 1986). For example, activists such as Kuti are routinely erased from the struggle for Nigerian liberation from colonialism (Martin, 2016). Scholars, such as Sharpley-Whiting and Thiam, point out that women of the diaspora have been neglected in an effort to create one feminism (2005; 1986).

Nigerian women have also conducted targeted feminist activism online. Among the most popular hashtags on Twitter that directly address women's issues are #Bringbackourgirls and #BeingfemaleinNigeria (Carter Olson, 2016; Akinbobola, 2020). In line with global trends, social media provide spaces where the youth of Nigeria can voice concerns around social and gender justice, and organise into grassroots movements (Uwalaka, 2021). Uwalaka and Watkins documented how big a role social media played in the #occupyNigeria movement in 2012 in protest of the removal of the fuel subsidy (2018). Uwalaka has done extensive studies on the increased use of social media to advocate for marginalised groups and spread misinformation (2018). In addition, Uwalaka articulates how youth, specifically students, use social media to speak truth back to power which he argues is a key part of democratic practices (2021). Nigerian feminists believe in this practice and routinely organise online and protest unjust treatment.

Nigerian feminism much like diversity feminisms arose with the purpose to cover the multiplicity of women and the spaces they occupy, ones of race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality (Dietz, 2003). Literature detailing the need for diverse feminisms critiques the racism of the foremothers of feminism and the initial movements' inability to articulate and adequately tackle the lived experiences of women that stand outside of the hegemonic standard (Harris, 2013; Crenshaw, 1989). Thomas identifies the need for intersectionality by emphasising that it "highlights oppressive epistemic structures created by dominant hegemonic groups" (2020, p. 511). Thomas, while citing May, discusses how intersectionality helps to challenge hegemonic power structures and "furthers anti subordination efforts..." (2020, p. 511). In Thomas's article, she displays quite clearly the importance of inclusion and considerations of intersecting identities as they unify the efforts (2020). In other words, intersectionality, as a multilayered feminist

approach, erases the need for women to delineate parts of their identity in a fight against patriarchal and colonial oppression. African feminisms have also not been monolithic.

Furthermore, Nigeria is an exciting case study for the multiplicity of African feminisms. The various strands of Nigerian feminisms are not systematized yet; they exist as media discourses, activism and public responses to misogyny. Scholarship is yet to systematize and define Nigerian feminisms thoroughly. However, Nnaemeka, a Nigerian scholar proposes African women adopt nego-feminism (2004). Her proposal for nego-feminism is one that she hopes will cause women studies scholars to consider their positionality when theorising on African feminisms (2004). She takes issue with the ethnography conducted in African spaces with African women because they are often not considered to be “in collaboration with” but rather research is “conducted on” them (2004). This relegates them to objects/case studies instead of recognizing them as beings that contain knowledge pertaining to their contexts. Nnaemeka highlights that African women can compare and contrast different feminist theories from the continent (2004). She advocates for “building on the indigenous” in the continent. (p. 376, 2004). Scholars, such as Epochi-Olise and Monye, echo the sentiments of Nnaemeka and call for a fight for women’s rights that occurs alongside African men and women (2021). Although, Garuba critiques Nnaemeka’s nego-feminism as he says that the negotiation she proposes “is mainly done with and around the patriarchal values and practices that subalternize and exploit African women” (p. 107, 2021). Historically, it was important for feminists to separate women working in the public sphere from women working in the private sphere (Akinbobola, 2019).

This idea of patriarchal values and roles in Nigeria is further emphasised by the film industry, Nollywood. The producers of the films in Nollywood outline the roles of women and

the consequences of operating outside the accepted hegemony. Aromona, in their study of the stereotypes of women in Nollywood films, found that women were portrayed to be domesticated, homemakers who have no objection to bearing the sole responsibility of child rearing (2016). Nollywood outlines these roles by constructing stories around these roles, judging women on their abilities to maintain these roles and barely ever focusing on their ambition in relation to their careers. Aromona establishes the cultural patriarchal values that are placed on women in Nollywood which act as a guide to the patriarchal society (2016). These values reaffirm that women should be domesticated and only hold value within the household, other traits such as ambition are portrayed as masculine and not aligning with the strict rules of femininity (2016). However, Nigerian women are subverting this by establishing themselves as capable of participating in the household and in professional and political spaces.

Following this, Nigerian feminists have been thought to embrace a form of liberal feminism due to Nigerian women's fight for equality of the sexes in both the public and private sphere (Akinbobola, 2019). In the Nigerian context, feminist pedagogy has been one fraught with classism and inaccessibility. There exists a great distance between the rich and the poor, which creates a vast gap between women who can afford education and those who cannot (Nkealah, 2016). Additionally, Nigeria is a country that is deeply religious and tribalistic which affects the way women's rights are interacted with (Nkealah, 2016). Religion in conjunction with various cultural practices affects the position of women in Nigeria and affects the way the Nigerian masses respond to calls for advocacy on behalf of women.

The research into African feminism and Nigerian feminism as a subgroup reveals a gap in up-to-date research on Nigerian feminism, especially in its social media dimension with a specific focus on Twitter. Nigerian youth doing feminist work are currently recognized mostly in

traditional media, while researchers in academia seem more concerned with feminists that have gained critical acclaim such as Chimamanda Adichie. Although Adichie's feminism is well recognized by western scholars and media, Nigerian women have critiqued her feminism as being exclusionary of the working-class women and trans women (Camminga, 2020). Adichie's feminism seems to be for the western literary and scholarly elite. The research I am interested in for this paper is the responses of local Nigerians and locating their feminist or lack of feminist response. I am interested in responses that are mundane, responses from people that do not necessarily inhabit elite spaces. These responses do not seek the approval of a distant west, they comment on what they want out of the Nigerian government, what they envision gender equality to be. Researchers have not conducted fieldwork on the feminist youth that have made a name for themselves online and influenced Nigerian popular culture. There has been such a prominent mobilization on the medium of Twitter that the President banned it after a tweet of his was deleted (Princewill, Busari, June 5, 2021). Research on youth mobilizing on the platform is little to non-existent, and similarly research on feminist youth mobilisation is currently lacking. My modest contribution with the MRP aims, therefore, to fill some of the missing gaps in the current research on Nigerian feminism. The question that my research raises is: **what is the response to President Buhari's inflammatory statement in Nigeria on Twitter and what does that response mean for women's empowerment in Nigeria?**

My work aims to place Nigerian feminism in context in order to determine if the response is indicative of mass displeasure with the treatment of women in Nigeria. Most importantly it would aim to answer these questions; **The response to President Buhari's inflammatory statement in Nigeria, online and what does that mean for Nigerian Feminism? How does the President's statement indicate the history of male politicians excluding women from**

politics? What do these responses mean for women in Nigeria? How has it been influenced by African feminisms? The drive to research this field and answer this question comes from the fact that Nigeria is a country with many languages and diverse cultures. The country is a patriarchal one and its position in Africa means there are nuances to how gender theory would be examined. There has been extensive work done on African feminisms but Nigerian feminism has not been widely researched, there has been theory but it is rarely linked to real engagement on the soil of Nigeria. There exists a need for feminisms in Africa to be contextualised in order to be helpful, theory has its uses, however, theory is not enough for any substantial societal transformation that affects the lives of African women (Nnaemeka, 2004).

As mentioned, the MRP conclusions are informed by qualitative research, specifically, a comparative analysis of social media and traditional media. This is in line with existing literature on African feminism, which mostly follows a qualitative approach. Through qualitative analysis, moments in African history are held up as examples of African feminism (Thiam 1986). This methodology has a lot of strengths, offering useful perspectives focused on individual stories and bringing forward nuances that large-scale quantitative analysis often omits. The qualitative methodology has limitations in terms of time and resources.

Methodology

There were considerations for other research methods such as interviews with the members of the feminist coalition and youth feminist activists. Ultimately, I chose to do content analysis because of its interpretative features. Netlytic simplifies grouping tweets using hashtags such as, #feministcoalition and keywords such as “Buhari, women, Kitchen”. Netlytic allows for geolocating the data for an easier sample identifier, it filters out things such as replies to the tweets or retweets. The software allows for easier narrowing down of relevant tweets. It also

simplifies the content-coding process as when the specific tweets are identified, the themes become more visible. The data from news publications is accessible via online news databases.

Content analysis of these news publications and tweets provides rich data that allows for a more definitive understanding of the position of Nigerian feminism. Oetzel et al point out that content analysis is ideal for any cross-cultural research as it involves analysis of already archived data (2016). It is a research method that is useful to identify media patterns; this feature lends itself greatly to more certain data analysis (Oetzel et al, 2016). Content analysis has some downfalls such as being time-consuming and the interpretation aspect which sometimes can make it unreliable (Oetzel et al, 2016; Lacy et al, 2015). However, the interpretive aspects allow for multiple truths which creates space for joint meaning-making and further research (Oetzel et al, 2016). One way in which future work on the topic of Nigerian feminisms could be expanded is through inclusion of interviews. Time limitations have prevented me from implementing this methodology but, hopefully, future qualitative work will illuminate further some of the conclusions offered here. Given the time constraints of the thesis, content analysis seems the most convenient method to research this field of study. It creates easier data access, and it is a less nebulous process, as it deals with already publicly available, and in some cases, publicly archived data.

Going further, the content analysis will be qualitative in nature as qualitative content analysis allows me to categorize the data collected (Forman, Damschroder, 2007). Forman and Damschroder highlight that qualitative content analysis aims at drawing out depth and is less aimed at measurement (2007). This is well suited to this project as the sample of tweets are not large and my concern lies with the subtext of the tweets. The project will use this method to reveal the implications of the tweets and attempt to encapsulate Nigerian social media's

resistance to the President's statement. In addition, qualitative content analysis is the preferred method to analyse textual data, my project focuses on the content rather than the quantity of the tweets (Forman, Damschroder, 2007). Further, Elo and Kyngäs identify that qualitative content analysis makes “replicable and valid inferences from data to their context, with the purpose of providing knowledge, new insights, a representation of facts and a practical guide to action” (2008, p. 108).

Sampling

The kind of sampling that is used in this project is a combination of convenience sampling and purposive sampling as there is a large population on Twitter that could be used for this project. Convenience sampling is ideal for a large sample size and given the qualitative nature of this project, identifying the most relevant tweets is pertinent to the research. The use of keywords means that there is a whole host of results that come up on the Twitter program. This means it is hard to randomize or even make use of purposive sampling. Thereby, I have decided to use 50 tweets and draw out the more salient points by scaffolding the findings using Stuart Hall's reception theory, womanism/Africana womanism and feminist theory. 50 tweets were chosen from a plethora of results from the keyword search due to the time limit of the project. In addition, replies from @vanguardnews which reported on the incident will also be used in order to ensure accuracy. The accuracy in this context refers to specific replied that can be linked to the news of the president's statement.

Convenience sampling usually relies on the proximity of the participants, willingness to participate and general availability. This project does not deal with human participants by way of interviews which means that the choice to use convenience sampling is solely based on the overwhelming number of results. Etikan, et al. highlight how convenience sampling over

purposive sampling can be useful in cases where the quantity takes precedence over the depth of the data (2016). However, Purposive sampling helps in examining the depth of the data, in this specific case, it aids in the content analysis of the tweets gathered. Convenience sampling yields a significant amount of useful data from the keywords searched.

Theoretical framework

Following this, the theories useful in framing this project are reception theory, Africana womanism and feminist theory. Reception theory seemed relevant to this analysis based on the diversity present in Nigeria, there are a myriad of factors involved in analysing the background of the tweets such as religion, tribe and gender. Reception theory was developed by Stuart Hall building on the theories of other scholars such as Althusser and Gramsci (1972-79; Davis, 2004). This theory is relevant to the project as it examines active audiences and the context when decoding a mediated text. Hall initially focused on Television in Britain and he also focused on the modes of production and representation (Davis, 2004). For the purpose of this project, Hall's perception of imposed hegemony, a manufactured ideology that requires the audience's consent, is useful to focus on. Hall's fascination with the dissenters, those that are labelled deviants because they speak out against the hegemonic standard, is also useful in the content analysis of the tweets. This is because feminism in the context of Nigeria is still demonised. There is very little call for Africana womanism. Feminism has mostly been criticized as a western phenomenon. Below I use Hall's theory to reflect on the presence of feminism in Nigeria as a movement against the status quo. The status quo is what I understand the Nigerian president's words to denote, namely that women's place in Nigerian society is inside the kitchen and bedroom.

Additionally, the Womanism/Africana womanism theory is useful for analysing the content of the tweets. This is because Womanism/Africana womanism has been proposed by scholars as the movement for African women to achieve liberation from oppressive patriarchal and colonialist systems. The most important part of the theory is that it involves a bit of negotiation with African men and it recognizes the context of various African women. Hudson-Weems articulates that Africana women encompass Black women and women from African descent (2004). She emphasizes the need for Africana women to name themselves and stand apart from mainstream feminism which she claims Africana women have aligned themselves with because of its legitimacy within the Academy (2004). A theory that considers, with more nuance, African women and women of African descent is useful in the content analysis of this project. Hudson-Weems defines Africana womanism as being grounded in African culture in an effort to cater to the nuances of the Africana women. Although this seems general as there is no one African culture, however, the sentiment of Africana womanism seems to be that it can provide an adaptable foundation for solidarity of African women across their regional cultures and contexts. The theory acts as a solid foundation for African women to name themselves and define their needs. Despite this being an important reason to hinge the analysis and discussion on womanism/Africana womanism, it is undeniable that historical, mainstream, predominantly white feminism (theorized through waves and historical struggles) has legitimacy in the academy. Intersectional feminism, I believe, should also be a useful lens with which to conduct this analysis. By this I mean the calls for the equality of women to men, a theory that calls for advocacy on behalf of women and respect of the various intersecting circumstances that define these women's struggles.

Findings

Context

President Buhari's statement is misogynistic and disparaging towards women. President Buhari made his statement in response to being confronted with the critique his wife had of his policies. She has and continues to be a dedicated advocate for women and female children publicly. Although she has received criticism about her authenticity/legitimacy, it can not be denied that she has aligned her politics to fighting on behalf of disenfranchised women. She has done so by advocating for women's rights to healthcare and providing resources for disenfranchised market women who own small businesses. Given this context, it becomes clear that President Buhari aimed to reduce her achievements with the ill-thought-out joke. He indicates that he does not care about his wife's political alignment by saying, "I do not know which party my wife belongs to".

He further goes on to insinuate that his wife is an extension of him and exists in servitude to him by listing the rooms she belongs to and describing them as his. He locates the agency of his wife in the household, specifically his household and suggests to the audience that the only time she is valuable to him is when she is active in his home. This is made abundantly clear by the subtext that suggests she belongs to him. He inadvertently labels her his property in front of a global audience. He presents to the world the image of Nigerian women in Nigeria, however, the tweets will reveal the responses of some Nigerians to the statement.

The tweets fall into categories that allow full analysis of the critique. I have defined these categories as tribe, religious affiliation, and feminist/non feminist responses. The first tweets that I analysed are the responses to a news profile tweeting news about Buhari's statement. Stuart's Hall's theory of reception is helpful here, as some responses indicate that the misogynistic statement by the President is indicative of his tribe and religion. One tweet states, "Difference

between #Biafra & Islamic Nigeria. A Biafran men takes their wives as Queen, while Islamic Nigeria men takes their wives as Sex toy.” (Oct 14, 2016). According to Hall’s reception theory the audience receives media texts based on a wealth of influences, their relationship to power, structure, their own backgrounds and so forth (Davis, 2004). The audience makes meaning based on these different variants, considering this, the tweet is in favour of women not being objects for sexual pleasure.

Tribe interpretation

Despite some users advocating for women, they make women’s empowerment intrinsic to the tribe they belong to and use it to as an othering tool. The basis of the above user’s advocacy is to differentiate themselves tribally from the President. The user utilizes the tweet to other the President and paint him as a representative of the male Muslim population in Nigeria. This is further evident in the user’s follow-up tweet that states, “Igbo Biafra parable says, In every successful man there is a woman.#TyrantBuhari lacks respect for women that's why he can't be successful” (Oct 14, 2016). Although the user indicates some feminist sentiments by addressing Buhari’s lack of respect for women, they still go ahead to express some womanist/Africana womanist thoughts. They suggest that men and women should work together but still indicate that a woman is beneficial to a man. This reveals to an extent a problem with different versions of nego-feminism, womanism and Africana womanism. Hudson-Weems in the section where she describes the family centrality as a tenet of Africana womanism represents that the Africana woman is focused on her family (2004). She interchanges, in this section, community and family and discusses how the family unit can act as a community that stands in the face of external forces such as racism. The Africana woman supports her family, including her husband (Hudson-Weems, 2004). That is reflected in this tweet and in another user’s tweet,

“but d person in d kitchen atimes sees what happens in palour & raises alarm if worried. PMB (President Mohammed Buhari) trust ur wife more dan politician” (14 Oct, 2016). This user again suggests that there is merit to women, especially in the family unit, as they can offer support to the man.

Hall in his essay indicates that the producer of media encodes their message in ways that are not necessarily decoded the same way by the audience (1973). The government of President Buhari in an effort to recant the statement stated that it was a joke. However, Nigerians had already usefully decoded his message and were asking themselves what his statement means for Nigerian women. Some of the users collated here indicate that even if it was a joke, it should not have been said in the context that it was, next to Angela Merkel who was the female Chancellor of Germany, where the President was making the misogynistic joke. Based on the studies of Hall, the President meant the statement as a joke and it was met with various reactions informed by tribe, location and religion. Some users took issue with where the statement was made as they felt it was embarrassing to the nation of Nigeria as the President proved not to be as progressive as the country he was speaking in.

Poststructuralist feminist interpretation

Furthermore, users appeal to the use of a woman when advocating for them, subtly hinting at Africana womanism. They hint at a collaborative effort towards woman's empowerment, a dedication to the community which in this context is the family. The users suggest the woman is the grounding force in the home and the President would be lost without the support of his wife. In this way, they echo the thoughts of Hudson-Weems who discusses the Africana woman as being dedicated to their families and working with their communities to solve sexism and racism (2004). Hudson-Weems suggests that because Africana men face job

insecurity and racism, their self-esteem has suffered and can hardly exact power on African women (2004). However, the initial statement of the President proves otherwise as it displays the locus of his power over his wife in the household. Despite being the President, Muhammed Buhari discusses the first lady in relation to “his” household. Some Twitter users when responding to this statement do recognize that Nigerian men hold a degree of power given the patriarchal nature of Nigerian culture. One user states that, “the moment a man lost at home, no matter support he can get from a far, he will surely lose out there!!! Boss beware”. Another states, “not only the kitchen and other rooms sir... She's suppose to be your number one companion.” These users in addition to the aforementioned recognize that there is some power the Nigerian man holds. Power that they believe is in the hands of the man and is to be supported by the Nigerian woman.

In analysing these users, it becomes obvious that African womanism is advocated for in Nigeria. The emphasis Nigerian culture has on community and family means that African womanism rather than feminism seems to work better for the Nigerian people. However, some users lean more heavily towards feminism and Nigerian women align themselves with the word “feminism” more often. Some users outrightly call the statement sexist and infer some embarrassment to the President making that statement. They indicate that the president is “clueless” and the joke he made is an inappropriate and expensive one. A user labelled the statement “an insult to womanhood” uncovering the coded meaning behind the statement and labelling it as an insult to other women (14 Oct, 2016). Going further in the Nigerian feminist response, users argue that Aisha Buhari, the President’s wife is the true voice of Nigerians and that is why the President made the disparaging comments. Others argue that the first lady belongs to nobody” and “it is just a joke”. Although a lot of the comments do not reference

feminism directly, I will be analysing it to reveal feminist aspect or aspects that reflect African womanism. Users suggest the President has shown little regard for women by speaking to his wife in the manner he did; they suggest the country is moving backwards and the President is ill equipped to lead the country. One user states, “@MBuhari doesn't understand d nature of modern society” while another states, “Pathetic Situation Where My President Is 75+ Years Old & The Least Minister Is 51+, They Can't Blend With Modern Realities” (Oct 14, 2016). These users interpret the President’s statement from the perspective of his age and suggest to the readers that this is to be expected of public officials of that age group. They indicate that advocacy for women is a thing of the modern age and Nigerians will need younger representatives that reflect the position of women.

Another user corroborates this by stating, “Here's the FINISHED PRODUCT buhari all of you are marketing. He's not just an international EMBARRASSMENT. But the first president in the world to go back to 16s by describing women as SEX TOOLS and kitchen utensils. I don't blame your mothers for all your illiteracy DISPLAYS.” (Oct 26, 2018). They decode the President’s use of the “other room” as viewing women as “sex tools”; further they emphasize the objectification of women by discerning that the statement describes women as “kitchen utensils”. The feminist part of this lies in the decoding of what the statement means for women, echoing some of the scholarly ideas of the second wave feminists, they condemn defining women by the functions they are presumed to have in the household. They, just like the user cited earlier, decode the statement based on the age of the president, they exaggerate it through the reference to the 1600s. Emphasis on the time refers to the misogyny of the statement being a thing of the past. Nigerian Twitter users indicate that the new age does not include gender inequality. It does not include the objectification of women and “when a President tell hs wife dat she belongs 2 d

kitchen in a country that is led by a woman, then we must begin to pray.” (Oct 14, 2016). This user deepens the nuance of the other tweets by addressing the context of Angela Merkel, a female vice chancellor witnessing the President’s misogynistic statement. The user puts in stark contrast the location, who was present and the statement and suggests only a higher power can help Nigerians.

Interpretation based on age

Some of the users use the fact of the President’s age to underscore his statement revealing that mistreatment of women is outdated. They display an understanding of the intricacies of the private and public sphere and the implications of the assumption that women are unable to participate in both. Considering the positions of these users, their reception was wholly determined by the location where the President made the statement and who the statement was made in front of. This is to say they felt it was embarrassing because the statement was made by an old man, in a western country and in front of a female world leader. Their decoding of the message included their perception of the President’s age and the external surroundings. Although they identify the statement as an outdated and insensitive one, they interestingly do not mention feminism or make reference to what is needed for women to be empowered. Another user emphasises the President’s age, “That kinda thing shouldn’t be a joke. But then what do you expect an old man who doesn’t live in our generation to say” (Oct 14, 2016). Yet another user states, “Buhari not in tune with the current realities on ground. He is an expert in abusing women, a fan to gender inequality.” (Oct 15, 2016). This user explicitly condemns the President’s statement in favour of advocating for women and brings to the forefront once again that Buhari’s regime has continuously failed women. The House of Representatives finding multiple reasons to delay and reject gender equality bills counts as an example in addition to this

statement. These statements bring to the forefront that women are part of the present and the future and the colonialist exclusion of women from politics no longer has a place in Nigeria.

A Nigerian Twitter user goes further in constructing President Buhari as leader of the past by saying, “Buhari is anti-education, Buhari is anti-technology & innovation. Buhari believes that Nigerian youths are lazy & unproductive. Buhari believes that women & girl child belong to the kitchen & the bedroom. Buhari thinks healthcare is only for those who can buy them abroad. Wake up!”. The user prompts users to classify President Buhari as a fossil, one not fit for the new progressive age where the Nigerian youth have a voice, women are not ignored and confined to antiquated roles and healthcare is more accessible. They decode the President’s statement based on his age but encode their statement to impact readers to view Buhari in a specific negative light. This user supports women breaking through the barriers suggested by the President, they put it in the same sentence as innovation. They represent women’s rights as the future, their participation in politics, education, and the professional space as the way forward. Consequently, by being against the objectification of women, they champion that women and girls be taken seriously. This means that their value is not determined by their merit to the patriarchy or to men which goes against the earlier tweets that had Africana womanist ideas. Those tweets discussed the negotiation between the President and his wife, indicating that there is a merit to Aisha Buhari helping the President with his blindspots. There is also support from a user who echoes the exact sentiment and suggests that President Buhari misrepresents the country in a negative light.

The Reframing

The President’s senior special assistant, Garba Shehu, stated publicly that the President was only making a joke, which some users labelled shameful, and embarrassing, and others

pointed out that the joke should not have been made to an international audience. Stuart Hall brings forth the salient point that the dominant cultural order is not “uncontested” or “univocal” (1973, p. 13). The reframing of the statement as a joke still suggests that it is a joke that would be well received by the Nigerian population and this is not the case. Nigerians took to Twitter and other social media to contest this opinion and let the world know that this is not reflective of the current Nigerian society. Hall also established the power dynamics between encoders and decoders, President Buhari acts here as an encoder, although he did not own the means of production and he was unable to control the dissemination of his words and the multiple responses to them on Twitter. He still made the statement and his special assistant, Garba Shehu, tried to regain control of the encoded message and clear up the “misunderstandings” of Nigerians. Hall rightfully points out that when these misunderstandings happen, encoders seek to clear them up by gaining control of the narrative and by suggesting that the audience denoted the message wrongly (1973). Following Hall, the encoders of this statement, the President and his assistant, insinuate that the viewers, Nigerians, did not receive the message as intended and therefore are not operating within the “preferred code” (1973, p. 15). Some Twitter users concede that Buhari’s statement was, indeed, a joke, based on the fact that it was ludicrous. Another user, for example, states, “Obviously a Joke. We don't need to be told. I have been laughing since I read that. Like his wife is some foodstuffs. LOL”. The user tells the readers that the President's statement paints his wife as an object, like edible provisions and that is the basis for the joke. However, the President in a separate interview reinforces that his wife’s duty is to take care of him even “if she is working”.

Referring back to the Twitter users decoding the supposed “joke”, Hall introduces what he calls an “oppositional code” (1973). This involves the audience decoding the original message

as the encoders intended but “retotalize the message within some alternative framework of reference” (1973, p. 18). This quotation from Hall is useful in analysing the tweets of users that accept Buhari’s words as a joke but not appropriate if drawing on the framework of feminism. As we saw, some users qualify the joke as “expensive” and others explicitly say that such a statement “shouldn’t be a joke”. “Joke or no joke he should apologies for d embarrassment he had caused! Soo not cool @ his age” another user says (Oct 14, 2016). Among certain users there is a consensus that the joke is distasteful and of the past. This user goes a step further and uses the President’s age to explain why he should know better. Using the framework of feminism and in some cases Africana womanism, some Nigerian Twitter users accept the attempt to reframe the statement as a joke but deem it sexist and misogynistic. Therefore, it makes the statement not appropriate, the decoders reject the encoder's intention to frame the statement as one in a vacuum. Instead by critiquing the “joke” and unravelling the meaning behind it, they begin the important work of interrogating the President, his statement and drawing out the position of women in contrast to the “joke”.

Going further with the analysis of users’ tweets, we can see that some Tweets completely reject the encoders’ attempt at reorienting the narrative even before President Buhari emphasizes his position. One user states, “Even Ex-president Jonathan that his wife was full of grammatical error never made that kind of joke about her. God save Nig”. This user takes into account the previous first lady, Patience Jonathan who did not have a good grasp of the English language and made grammatical errors in her speeches. This is relevant context as the previous President, Goodluck Jonathan, did not disparage his wife despite these public blunders. The Twitter user usefully receives and decodes the President’s statement based on the actions of the previous president and even based on religious beliefs. They invoke the name of God which is notable, as

they do not cite a law that needs to be passed in favour of women. This call on a religious being underscores the ridiculous nature of the President's statement. This user is not the only one that calls on God to save Nigeria. This does not only evidence the religious nature of the Nigerian society but symbolises the disrepair the political landscape is in. Despite this user having some intention to advocate for women, they do not discuss practical ways in which political figures can advocate for women and girls.

Furthermore, this reveals that the preferred code in the Nigerian society according to the Nigerian President is one that is sexist in a patriarchal society. President Buhari goes in the opposite direction of African womanism, he mentions his wife only in relation to taking care of him and his household. There is little mention of his wife's own career and women's advancement. Twitter users disagree with the sexist statement, in the search results from the keyword search "Buhari, women, Kitchen". It is also important to note that currently in Nigeria, the campaign for the presidential election has started so the research yielded more recent responses to the statement made in 2016. Users in support of candidates that are not from the President's political party, APC have brought up the statement and showed that he is of the past and the country needs to move forward ideologically. One user states, "In many parts of the world, girls and women still bear the brunt of World horrors" right before repeating the President's statement. This user places the two statements side by side, contrasting the "joke" with the reality of girls and women. The user urges the readers to see the malicious connotations of the President's statement. They echo feminist sentiments that relegating women to such roles has dire consequences, ones that lead to girls and women "bearing the brunt" of the failures of various states. Despite Akinbobola indicating that Nigerian women sometimes opt to leave whatever professional power they have gained outside their traditional home, Twitter users note

that it is not all women are good for (2019). Second-wave feminists warned about being relegated only to the private sphere, Pateman for example critiques the separation of the public and private sphere as women were often deemed to only be part of one and not the other (1989). This has marked consequences that are observable in Nigeria, women because of this confinement, are excluded from participating in politics that affect their lives.

This is evident in the House of Representatives in Nigeria continuously voting against gender equality bills and laughing at women who aim to join the government. The separation the President highlights in light of political critiques his wife has made of him indicates that he does not believe the public sphere is a space his wife occupies. Pateman emphasises the dangers in the public sphere being seen and treated as a masculine space, this means that the state will usually neglect the safety of women and girls in the private sphere (1989). Consequently, the Twitter users disagree with this relegation, some show solidarity by mentioning that she belongs to the “people’s party” or the “people’s kitchen party”. One user states she is the “true voice of Nigerian’s party”. They label The First Lady as the true voice of Nigerians, speaking on the grievances that have faced the country since President Buhari came into power. The Twitter users exhibit feminism by reaffirming that the First lady and other women are part of the public political conversation. Despite the other users making a case for Africana womanism, a sort of negotiation between the Africana woman and man, they still argue that the First lady should be included in the political conversation as she could be an asset (Hudson-Weems, 2004). The issue with this, however, is that in this patriarchal society, the humanity and value of the First Lady is determined by her usefulness to her husband or by saying the right things.

Feminist interpretation

Additionally, the Twitter keyword search establishes that the President is not the way forward. Nigerian Twitter users urge people not to vote for the current candidate from APC, as the party represents Buhari who has proven that his policies do not serve women and girls. One user states, “All of you defending this rubbish forgets that Buhari after whom Tinubu said he'll follow his steps said women are 'for the kitchen and the other room'. Politics isn't about Christianity, she won't be there to decide in State affairs when issues come up and need to be defended.” (July 13, 2022). This user quotes another user who defends the presidential candidate choosing a Muslim Vice President. They urge the readers to associate the Presidential candidate with the current president and take into consideration the sexist statement and its implications for Nigerian women. Following this, another user goes on to tweet, “Muslim man talking of marginalization of women.. President buhari never called his wife first lady, He said my wife belongs to the kitchen and the other room, but you didn't see it as marginalization of women” (July 11, 2022).

Analysing this tweet through the scholarly work of Hall and feminism, the codes most salient here are that of the title of the first lady and religion. This user displays islamophobia by associating President Buhari's statement with his religion, expressing that it is laughable or at least ridiculous that a Muslim man would be concerned about the marginalization of women. The user responds to another Twitter user who happens to be a Muslim man who usefully points out that the marginalization of women is not given enough attention. The user takes President Buhari's statement as proof that Islam and feminism do not go together and claims that the Muslim Twitter user was complacent when the President made the sexist statement despite evidence showing otherwise. Regardless of the way we see this exchange, the user brings an important focus to light, namely that Nigeria has a problem with using religion as a basis for

injustice against minority groups. Religious reasoning has been used against gender equality bills and bills that criminalise queer Nigerian relationships. There are a number of users that decode the statement on the basis of religion, expecting that sexism and misogyny are part and parcel of Islam, others expect the misogyny on the basis of the President's age.

Furthermore, another salient point is how the President refers to the First lady. One Twitter user decodes the message the President sends by not referring to Aisha Buhari as the First Lady and listing out her responsibilities. Using the framework of feminism, more specifically second wave feminism, it is important to note that the way the President refers to his wife is unfeminist. Given the prior analysis of the implications of the statement and the dangers of being relegated to the private sphere, the Twitter user reinforces this point again. The user inadvertently takes a feminist position by recognizing that the First Lady and her responsibilities are undercut by her husband who confines her duties to the private sector. Another user states, "Baba @MBuhari this women doesn't only belong to the kitchen and the other room... She's an independent woman." in response to another tweet with a photo where President Buhari was meeting a woman (April 30, 2022). This user advocates for the First Lady by invoking the woman's independence. They note with the word "only" that it is possible to be part of the private and public sphere. Comparing both statements, it becomes clear that the confining of the First Lady to the private sphere is a disservice to her position given the established impact she has had on various Nigerian communities. The second user posits the independent woman in opposition to the First Lady who is supposedly confined to the private household of the President.

Following the tweet referring to the President's religion, a user brings up the tribal location of another user in an effort to discredit any feminist position that is also Muslim. This

user asserts, “Which woman? You guys don’t believe in women empowerment. Even your leader buhari told you guys women belongs to the kitchen. And you here talking about a woman winning governorship election. That can never happen in the north. Till you guys change your ways of thinking.” (May 27, 2022). This user uses women empowerment instead of feminism, this could indicate that this is the name Nigerians would rather be called when they are advocating on behalf of women and girls. They advocate for the erasure of the boundaries that prevent women from participating in things such as the Governor’s election. They condemn Muslim people that they assume do not believe in “women’s empowerment”. They argue that a woman cannot win such a seat in the Northern part of Nigeria where most of the Muslim population resides. A useful fact here is that #ArewaMeToo, a movement on Twitter that highlighted the sexual assault women faced in the Islamic/Northern community in Nigeria. This could have lent itself to the ongoing bias perpetuated by this user especially as this hashtag occurred separately from the movement, #BeingFemaleinNigeria. The latter detailed the experiences of misogyny and sexism in the country. Some stories that appeared under #BeingFemaleinNigeria contained sexual assault accounts, however, the #ArewaMeToo movement focused on a specific region and religion. The rejection of Islam being conducive to women’s empowerment is a false one. However, given the patriarchal nature of Nigeria, it is notable that a woman would have difficulty gaining the seat of Governor of any state.

Furthermore, it seems that less users resonate with the Africana womanism/womanism. Instead they display more classic feminism through their responses. A user states, “If Buhari is interested in women Empowerment there is no way Pro-Women bills will be thrown out yesterday. It's a known fact that Buhari gets whatever he wants from this NASS but he chose not to cos according to him they belong to kitchen, living room and other room.. Sad stuff.” (March

2, 2022). This recent tweet refers to the rejection of the gender equality bills that were amended and presented before the National Assembly of Nigeria. They give a semblance of what Nigerian feminists want, namely bills written into law that aid in empowering women. It can be argued that this user again decodes the statement using a feminist framework, by labeling the gender equality bills, “pro-women”. The bills that were introduced were pro-women’s rights and therefore are feminist. The user indicates that President Buhari is not for “women’s empowerment”. This could mean that the user does not believe the feminist framework is useful for Nigerian women and thus finds a more accurate descriptor much like the earlier Twitter user. Considering this, it is still not certain what the intention of the user is as that is hard to determine via a tweet. I think that it is more useful to decode the statement on the basis of feminism because it does not align with the womanist/Africana womanist sentiment.

The feminist position of the Twitter users solidifies through the statement of this user who says, “...We want women in Nigeria to look-up Angela Merkel of Germany, and Buhari stated, Women Belong To kitchen and other Rooms” (May 27, 2022). This speaker uses collective language and uses the Chancellor of the country where the President made the statement as an example of a role model. This is notable for many reasons, first of which is that Angela Merkel as the former Chancellor of Germany is firmly involved in the public sphere and politics, and we can assume that she has an empowered private life too, being a human with a home. However, one might note here that Angela Merkel chose not to have children, which even by western standards of empowerment, puts her a bit outside of traditional models of femininity in the private domain (Parker, Nov 24, 2014). Merkel becomes proof that women can succeed if acknowledged as being capable of participating in the public sphere which includes the political landscape that determines their rights. This is a feminist statement as it advocates for the erasure

of these boundaries much like the second wave feminists do. This erasure allows for equal participation in the political and professional sphere which allows for more independence, this is crucial as it limits the amount of abuse a woman or girl can face on the basis of her gender. This ties back into the earlier tweet that points out a woman's independence in opposition to the President's statement. Independence, especially independence in politics affords choice, enforces rights and maintains autonomy. The second reason this is notable is that Merkel was present at the time this statement was made. Although the former chancellor did not comment on the statement, she does identify as a woman. Merkel is proof that women can move between spaces and can competently participate. This is to say the President dismissing his wife on the basis that she is his wife and a woman is defied by the presence of Merkel.

Anti-Feminist

However, it is useful to consider the merit of Africana womanism for a patriarchal society such as Nigeria. While drawing out the more feminist points of the tweets of Nigerian users, there was also a great deal of anti feminist sentiments in the sample retrieved. It stands to reason that there would be some users that are anti feminist but may be more receptive to Africana womanism. This is shown by the users that name advocacy for women, "women empowerment" rather than feminism. Although, the phrase, "Nigerian feminism" has been used in Nigeria and there are self named feminists and "feminist coalition", this has not been referenced at the time this statement was made. Furthermore, when Twitter users refer to the gender equality bills, they do not advocate for feminism. Exemplified in this user's statement, "How do Nigeria's expect the National Assembly to vote for woman's bill when the majority of the members are from a setting (certain) religion where they don't believe women should be given an opportunity even when the president Buhari publicly declared that women belong to the

kitchen?” (March 2, 2022). They refer to the fact that majority of the National assembly leaders are Muslim, they ascertain that this is the reason the gender equality bills have been delayed. They do not describe the bills under any movement but call it a “woman’s bill”. They use the president’s statement to encode their bias and signal to other readers with their bias to see President Buhari as an example. They display feminist sentiments by indicating that the country needs the “woman’s bill” and condemn who they perceive are against it. The user, however, does not account for the fact that there can be Muslim feminists and Muslim people that advocate for women and girls.

The Nigerian feminist response to this statement outline open displeasure, however, very little tweets propose actionable steps that empower Nigerian women and girls. Some users make reference to the gender equality bills that have been continuously delayed during Buhari’s administration and others point out the consequences that the statement has on Nigerian women. Despite this, there were a number of anti feminist tweets that alluded to agreeing with the statement and others used it as a way to silence women online. Some Nigerian Twitter users, when they find a woman saying things they disagree with online, say this is why the President makes the statement he did. The more interesting part of these sentiments is when they separate the women who belong to the “kitchen, living room and other room” from the women who are supposedly “smart”. They unknowingly code the household labour as one for women that are “not smart”, women that supposedly say inane things online. The Twitter users indicate the value that they attach to household labour which is not much, they inadvertently use it as a dunk on women they believe deserve less “rights”.

The perception of household labour has been theorised by a number of scholars. Few-Demo and Allen, for example, attempt to gain a holistic view of this specific labour by looking at

intersectionality and how this labour is perceived by different communities across different economic standings (2020). They highlight how previous scholars have observed research groups and determined that housework is viewed as “invisible labour”, “disempowering” those who perform it (2020). They also note that this labour has been gendered with the widespread belief that women are more likely to stay at home and “be better” at housework than others (2020). Few-Demo and Allen bring to the forefront that these assumptions strip power from women and girls while upholding parts of the patriarchy that benefit men. It affects the earning capacity of people who perform the bulk of this labour while bolstering the earning capacity of those that do not. In this way, the women and girls are less likely to achieve independence. One of the Twitter users displayed this antiquated view by saying, “I’m dissapointed with the way you think. You are the type of women Buhari wants to keep in the kitchen and the bedroom. There are smart women out there” (July 5, 2022). The user uses interesting language here to indicate their displeasure with the female Twitter user, they note that the women that would be confined to these roles would be “kept”. They express that women that do not think in the acceptable way should be literally kept in the kitchen and the bedroom, echoing some of the users who decode the implications of the President’s statement as women being “sex tools” and “Kitchen utensils”.

Furthermore, the user inadvertently reveals the implications of women being perceived to only be useful in the household as sex objects and “invisible, worthless” labour, these imply that the woman is not “smart enough” to participate in events that happen outside the private context. The user draws a clear line between women they believe deserve this fate and women who are “smart”. However, the subtext here is that men are the de-facto deciders on the women who are smart and the ones who are subservient to them in the kitchen and the bedroom. This is further emphasised by this user saying, “abegiii rest..with civilized wetin? You're arguing left left...no

wonder @MBuhari said women belong to the kitchen and the other room...he was talking about women like u” (June 19, 2022). This user deepens the anti-feminist position by using derogatory Nigerian pidgin language and telling the female user to relax (rest) and indicating what the female user saying is of no value which they cite as the reason she belongs in kitchen and bedroom. It is important to note that there are Twitter Users who agree with the President given the earlier context established that Nigeria has a deeply patriarchal society. Some users even agree with the President’s statement by pointing out that the First Lady is “overly ambitious” and they reinforce the belief that the household rooms are where she holds the domain.

Also, this is a position that cannot be overlooked as it reflects the larger patriarchal society and emphasises the diversity present within Nigeria. This means that it would be difficult to name a movement that is for all Nigerian women, that fits into a Nigerian feminist narrative. However, in recent times, the Nigerian feminist position has become a little bit more solidified, the fight against police brutality in 2020 brought the movement to the forefront. In the sample collected, the feminist responses outweighed the misogynistic/sexist ones. In addition, multiple news outlets covered the overwhelming outrage of Nigerians towards this statement. It was clear at the time and currently that Nigerians were unsatisfied with the way the President spoke about his wife. They could not help decoding it to reveal what that statement meant for women in an already severely patriarchal society.

Conclusion

Finally, the tweets reveal to an extent a feminist presence in Nigeria. They reveal that Nigerian people want the gender equality bill to be passed. They would like a law that establishes the rights that women should have; rights that allow them to participate in areas they are otherwise excluded from. They conclude that the opposite of what the president said is a

woman and girl with independence, which can only happen if the gender equality bills submitted to congress get passed. In addition, Nigerian Twitter users that comment on the President's statement in reference to the upcoming election use it as a reason to vote for someone who presents as radically different on feminist issues from the current President. Users urge readers to note that a vote for the current President's party means loss in the domain of feminism and female rights. The scholarly work of Stuart Hall was useful in uncovering the context with which people decoded the notorious statement of President Buhari. Some Twitter users come up with oppositional codes, interpreting the statement as it was intended but from an alternative framework. Some of them accept the attempt the encoders make to establish the statement as a joke but reject the basis of the joke. The tweets reveal that Nigerian users were able to unravel the politics of the supposed joke and to distinguish who bears the consequences of such jokes.

The Nigerian feminist response indicates that women and feminists in Nigeria want their exclusion from the political landscape to stop. They clearly want to get involved in politics because political decisions, alongside everyday private life, affect women and girls, in ways that lead to objectification. Women highlight the danger of objectification even if sometimes some of them might agree with the misogynistic statement. Nigerian women clearly reject objectification by wanting to make decisions that affect their lives. Statements like the one that President Buhari made work in the opposite direction: they deny contributions that women and girls make to society and in the private sphere by invalidating women's labour, political and professional aspirations. Buhari and the antifeminists who support him assume that women are subservient to men, in bed and in the kitchen. In turn, this means that men make the decision on who is a worthy "smart" woman, who can participate in the external everyday life and they decide who are the women who deserve to be "kept" in household rooms and used as objects. The


eradication of this patriarchal mindset, as the Twitter users ascertain, will empower women. The Nigerian Twitter users in their outrage also outline that they would like strict boundaries on women's private and public lives eradicated so that they can run for offices such as Governor of a state. They would like to see women in political seats afforded the same amount of power as their male counterparts.


Furthermore, the Nigerian Twitter response revealed that although there are some people that believe in Africana womanism, there is more of a traditional feminist response when users were advocating for the First Lady and other women. Several responses revealed nuanced understanding of the public and private sphere and the imposed division by patriarchy. This contained elements from the scholarly work of second wave feminists. However, Nigerian feminism is not a phrase used by the Twitter users covered in this paper, instead, the phrase "women's empowerment" was seen. This is the closest attempt that was seen to define a movement that would be concerned with advocating for women to go beyond the private context. The use of the phrase emphasises the need for Nigerian feminists to self-name and interrogate what the needs are of Nigerian women and girls. Although there are elements of Africana womanism and feminism, the Twitter users do not use any one language to identify specifically with these movements.




Finally, Nigerian feminists, from these tweets, do not even define themselves as a monolith which alludes to the diversity within the country. Nigerian feminism has not been defined yet, however it is on its way and the wants and needs are being solidified by Nigerian women. The frequent mention of the gender equality bills in Nigeria encompass some of the demands of Nigerian feminism. The movement has mostly been reactionary to certain events, there are offshoot organisations that have not gained a lot of popularity. For example, the tweets

here outline some of the demands and the feminist coalition formed as a reaction to the police brutality occurring in Nigeria. Much like previous African feminists, the feminist coalition wanted to play a part in the fight against oppressive power in their country. The diversity within the country is also reflected by the Islamophobia displayed by some of the Twitter users on the assumption that Muslim people are incapable of advocating for women's empowerment. This goes on with the users that assume the same but on the basis of tribe. Further areas of research should refrain from attempting to define Nigerian feminism underneath one umbrella and pay attention to the local women who will articulate their lived experiences.



Appendix







YEAR	AFRICANA WOMANISM/WOMANISM	FEMINIST	UNFEMINIST
2016	<p>not only the kitchen and other rooms sir... She's suppose to be your number one companion..... 11:12 am · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter for Android</p> <p>the moment a man lost at home, no matter support he can get from a far, he will surely lose out there!!! Boss beware 11:13 am · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter for Android</p> <p>but d person in d kitchen atimes sees what happens in palour & raises alarm if worried.PMB trust ur wife more dan politician 11:20 am · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter for Android</p>	<p>← Tweet</p> <p>Buhari is anti education, Buhari is anti technology & innovation. Buhari believes that Nigerian youths are lazy & unproductive. Buhari believes that women & girl child belong to the kitchen & the bedroom. Buhari thinks healthcare is only for those who can buy them abroad. Wake up!</p> <p>ASUU Is On Strike, N50B Approved 4 Ranching. You're an Undergraduate & Buhari Is Ur 2019 Choice. Please, Join D Nearest Ranch As A Cow!</p> <p>1:47 pm · 03 Jan 19 · Twitter for Android</p> <p>Tweet your reply </p>	<p>Simple truth 2:15 pm · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter for Android</p> <p>Yes from the view point of a husband 11:53 am · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter for iPad</p> <p>correct Baba 11:51 am · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter for Android</p> <p>correct baba 11:51 am · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter for Android</p> <p>She belongs to the kitchen party 2:57 pm · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter for BlackBerry</p> <p>we are with you mr president, we know she is over ambitious. 11:02 am · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter for Android</p> <p>@channelstv Hmmnn, ok. So what 11:03 am · 14 Oct 16 · TweetDeck</p> <p>then she should mind her business in the kitchen and the bedroom and stop parading herself as the first lady 2:58 pm · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter for Android</p> <p>It's all fun and games until he tells you that you can't work, you can't go out without his permission, you can't do hair and nails without his permission... In fact, what's the difference between this and Buhari saying women belong to the kitchen and the other room? 5:29 am · 14 Apr 21 · Twitter for Android</p>
2016		<p>Now I strongly believe that this man is clueless. 11:03 am · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter for Android</p> <p>but which kind public disgrace is dis. Wat wld one not see in dis buhari regime. Nawa 11:13 am · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter for Android</p> <p>buhari is showing regardless to women by disrespecting his wife 11:34 am · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter for Android</p>	

		<p>@Blkimberly PMB lost on this 1. He should tender a public apology to his wife. And treat d issues she has raised.</p> <p>12:44 pm · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter for BlackBerry</p>	
<p>2016</p>		<p>. Buhari not in tune with the current realities on ground. He is an expert in abusing women,a fan to gender inequality.</p> <p>3:07 am · 15 Oct 16 · Twitter for Android</p> <p>Its shocking, to say the least!</p> <p>11:18 am · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter Web Client</p> <p>that's your President! Sexist and phobist.</p> <p>2:59 pm · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter for Android</p> <p>oh yea! Another proof that we are cruising backwardly.</p> <p>11:54 am · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter for Windows</p>	
<p>2016</p>		<p>Sad that a man will mouth this rubbish about his wife and other women. It means that @aishabuhari is so right about Buhari</p> <p>1:52 pm · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter Web Client</p> <p>@MBuhari doesn't understand d nature of modern society.</p> <p>12:13 pm · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter for BlackBerry®</p>	
<p>2016</p>		<p>Igbo Biafra parable says,In every successful man there is a woman.#TyrantBuhari lacks respect for women that's why he can't be successful twitter.com/vanguardngrnew...</p> <p>Vanguard Newspapers @vangu... · 14 Oct 16</p> <p>My wife belongs to my kitchen – Buhari responds to Aisha's interview</p> <p>#AishaBuhari</p> <p>#AishaBuhariBBCinterview</p> <p>vanguardngr.com/2016/10/wife-b...</p>  <p>11:58 am · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter for iPad</p>	

<p>2016</p>		<p>Difference between #Biafra & Islamic Nigeria.A Biafran men takes their wives as Queen,while Islamic Nigeria men takes their wives as Sex toy twitter.com/vanguardngrnew...</p> <p>Vanguard Newspapers @vangu... · 14 Oct 16 My wife belongs to my kitchen – Buhari responds to Aisha's Interview #AishaBuhari #AishaBuhariBBCInterview vanguardngr.com/2016/10/wife-b...</p>  <p>11:49 am · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter for iPad</p>	
<p>2016</p>		<p>However u look at this it is bad publicity even if he was trying to joke it was a terrible attempt at being funny! twitter.com/vanguardngrnew...</p> <p>Vanguard Newspapers @vangu... · 14 Oct 16 My wife belongs to my kitchen – Buhari responds to Aisha's interview #AishaBuhari #AishaBuhariBBCInterview vanguardngr.com/2016/10/wife-b...</p>  <p>11:05 am · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter for Android</p>	
<p>2016</p>		<p>What an insult to womanhood! twitter.com/vanguardngrnew...</p> <p>Vanguard Newspapers @vangu... · 14 Oct 16 My wife belongs to my kitchen – Buhari responds to Aisha's interview #AishaBuhari #AishaBuhariBBCInterview vanguardngr.com/2016/10/wife-b...</p>  <p>11:06 am · 14 Oct 16 from München, Deutschland · Twitter for iPhone</p>	

<p>2016</p>		<p>he makes mistakes everytime yet they say its jokes. Oga basketmouth.. Happy joking 😂😂😂 3:49 pm · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter for Android</p> <p>Even Ex-president Jonathan that his wife was full of grammatical error never made that kind of joke about her. God save Nig 4:36 pm · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter for BlackBerry®</p> <p>is he indirectly calling our president a joker? 4:02 pm · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter for BlackBerry</p> <p>That is a very expensive one 3:48 pm · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter for Android</p> <p>Really!!, Is that the look of a man joking, someone at his level should think critically before talking. 1:02 pm · 15 Oct 16 · Twitter for Android</p>	
<p>2016</p>		<p>Pathetic @vanguardngrnews Situation Where My President Is 75+ Years Old & The Least Minister Is 51+, They Can't Blend With Modern Realities. 4:00 pm · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter for iPhone</p> <p>Obviously a Joke. We don't need to be told. I have been laughing since I read that. Like his wife is some foodstuffs. LOL 5:15 pm · 14 Oct 16 from Ikeja, Nigeria · Twitter for Android</p> <p>Mr Garba should stop joking about what is not abeg 4:33 pm · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter for Android</p> <p>I think that's an expensive joke..shezz right..buhari shld just face it 3:49 pm · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter for Android</p>	
		<p>Aisha belong to " People Kikchen party". PKP Translate Tweet 3:51 pm · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter for BlackBerry®</p> <p>[REDACTED] PMB lost on this 1. He should tender a public apology to his wife. And treat d issues she has raised. 12:44 pm · 14 Oct 16 · Twitter for BlackBerry</p> <p>[REDACTED] 14 Oct 16</p> <p>lighter note in Germany with the world watching?</p>	

<p>2018</p>		<p>Buhari is over 80 years, Lie Mohammed-over 80, Audu Ogbe-over 80 and so on. PDP is youth friendly. Women were given 35% participation in govt. Under Buhari, women belong to the kitchen, bed room and other rooms, while youths are completely rejected.</p> <p>6:28 pm · 09 Apr 18 · Mobile Web (M2)</p>	
<p>2019</p>		<p>Here's the FINISHED PRODUCT buhari all of you are marketing. He's not just an international EMBARRASSMENT. But the first president in the world to go back to 16s by describing women as SEX TOOLS and kitchen utensils. I don't blame your mothers for all your illiteracy DISPLAYS.</p>  <p>0:41 249 views 6:06 am · 26 Oct 18 · Twitter for Android</p> <p>Tweet your reply</p>	
<p>2021</p>		<p>In many parts of the world, girls and women still bear the brunt of World horrors. "My wife Aisha "belongs to my kitchen and my living room." ~ President @MBuhari</p>  <p>8,802 views · From SIGNAL News Global 12:25 am · 23 Nov 21 · Twitter for Android</p> <p>1 Like</p> <p>Tweet your reply</p>	<p>Thought Buhari ended this baseless argument for us already Women belong in the kitchen make nobody vex U can be anything u want in life as a woman, but once u reach house, u see that kitchen, na u get am!</p> <p>4:56 am · 16 Jan 22 · Twitter for iPhone</p>

<p>2022</p>			
<p>2022</p>			
<p>2022</p>			

2022		<p>How do Nigeria's expect the National Assembly to vote for woman's bill when the majority of the members are from a setting religion where they don't believe women should be given an opportunity even when the president Buhari publicly declared that women belong to the kitchen ?</p> <p>1:43 am · 02 Mar 22 · Twitter for iPhone</p>	
-------------	--	--	--

Reference List

Ahmadu- Suka, M. (2021, June 17). Nigeria: African Child Must Be Heard, Says Aisha Buhari.

allAfrica.com, NA.

https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A665400778/AONE?u=ocul_mcmaster&sid=ebsco&xid=3890078b

Aisha Buhari Urges Women to Demand More Opportunities. (2017, May 11). *allAfrica.com*.

https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A491473292/AONE?u=ocul_mcmaster&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=ed2a514d

Akinbobola, Y. (2019). Neoliberal feminism in Africa. *Soundings*, 71(71), 50-

61. https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A626745763/AONE?u=ocul_mcmaster&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=a6cb364f

Akinbobola, Y. (2020). Defining African Feminism (s) While# BeingFemaleinNigeria. *African Diaspora*, 12(1-2), 64-88.

Alexander, A. (2005). The Africa Social Forum Feminist Dialogue: Power, Feminisms and Mobilisation. *Feminist Africa*, (4).

Aromona, O. (2016). *Portrayal of African women in Nollywood films over a five-year period: A content analysis of traits applying the stereotype content model*.

Byrne, D. (2020). Decolonial African feminism for white allies. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 21(7), 33.

Cameron, D. (2019). *Feminism: A brief introduction to the ideas, debates, and politics of the movement*. University of Chicago Press

- Carbado, D., Crenshaw, K., Mays, V., & Tomlinson, B. (2013). Intersectionality: Mapping the movements of a theory. *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race*, 10(2), 303-312. doi:10.1017/S1742058X1300034.
- Carter Olson, C. (2016). # BringBackOurGirls: digital communities supporting real-world change and influencing mainstream media agendas. *Feminist media studies*, 16(5), 772-787.
- Chegwe, E. (2014). A gender critique of liberal feminism and its impact on Nigerian law. *International journal of discrimination and the law*, 14(1), 66-78.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*.
- Dami Odufuwa Is Kicking Patriarchy In The Butt With Wine And Whine NG. (2019, September 28). *Forcreativegirls*. <https://forcreativegirls.com/dami-odufuwa-kicking-patriarchy-wine-and-whine-ng/>
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2013). *Critical race theory: The cutting edge*. Temple University Press.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2017). *Critical race theory (third edition) : An introduction*. New York University Press.
- Desiree Lewis. (2001). *Introduction: African Feminisms. Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity*, 50, 4–10.
- Dietz, M. G. (2003). Current Controversies in Feminist Theory. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 6(1), 399–431. <https://doi-org.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/10.1146/annurev.polisci.6.121901.085635>
- Elo, S., & Kyngäs, H. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 62(1), 107-115.

- Epochi-Olise. E.R, Monye, P.M, (2021). Women and ‘the other room’: Emancipating society. *Contemporary Journal of African Studies*, 8(1), 46-62.
- Few-Demo, A. L., & Allen, K. R. (2020). Gender, feminist, and intersectional perspectives on families: A decade in review. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 82(1), 326-345.
- Forman, J., & Damschroder, L. (2007). Qualitative content analysis. In *Empirical methods for bioethics: A primer*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Garuba, O.I. (2021). African Feminism in the Nigerian Context: A House of Affirmations and Denials. *Critical Literary Studies*, 3(1), 105–123. <https://doi.org/10.34785/J014.2021.935>
- Harris, A (2013). Race and essentialism in feminist legal theory. In R. Delgado & J. Stefancic (Eds.), *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge* (pp. 347-359). https://web-s-ebSCOhost-com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzU4MjI4MV9fQU41?sid=a5a34abf-7bce-4940-9d07-f4cb53b4b504@redis&vid=0&format=EB&lpid=lp_345&rid=0
- Harrison, K., & Boyd, T. (2018). Feminism. In *Understanding political ideas and movements*. Manchester, England: Manchester University Press. Retrieved Oct 28, 2021, from <https://www.manchesteropenhive.com/view/9781526137951/9781526137951.00>
- Hewitt, N. (2010). *No Permanent Waves: Recasting Histories of U.S. Feminism*. Ithaca, NY: Rutgers University Press. <https://doi-org.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/10.36019/9780813549170>
- <http://libaccess.mcmaster.ca/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/erasures-practice-diaspora-feminism/docview/195787809/se-2?accountid=12347>
- Hudson-Weems, C. (2019). *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves* (5th ed.). Routledge. <https://doi-org.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/10.4324/9780429287374>.
- Isola, O. O. (2012). Non-violent protests and civil societies in Nigeria, 1993-1999. *Ibadan Journal of peace and development*, 1(2276-7267), 69-88.

- Johnson-Odim, C. (2009). 'For their freedoms': The anti-imperialist and international feminist activity of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti of Nigeria. In *Women's Studies International Forum* (Vol. 32, No. 1, pp. 51-59). Pergamon.
- Lacy, S., Watson, B. R., Riffe, D., & Lovejoy, J. (2015). Issues and best practices in content analysis. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 92(4), 791-811.
- Liska, S. (2015). Talking Back to White Feminism: An Intersectional Review. *Liberated Arts: A Journal for Undergraduate Research*.
- Maclean, R. (2021, March 13). In Nigeria, Women's Rights Activists Turn an Insult Into a Rallying Cry. *New York Times*, A11(L).
https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A654768832/AONE?u=ocul_mcmaster&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=61d983e4
- Mama, A. (2020). The Power of pan-African feminist Thought. *Feministische Studien*, 38(1), 137–154. <https://doi-org.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/10.1515/fs-2020-0009>.
- Martin, M. (2016). "More Power to Your Great Self": Nigerian Women's Activism and the Pan-African Transnationalist Construction of Black Feminism. *Phylon (1960-)*, 53(2), 54–78.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/phyllon1960.53.2.54>
- Mianda, G. (2014). Reading Awa Thiam's La parole aux Néggresses through the Lens of Feminisms and English Language Hegemony. *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture & Social Justice/Études Critiques Sur Le Genre, La Culture, et La Justice*, 36(2), 8–19.
- Mikell, G. (Ed.). (1997). *African feminism : The politics of survival in sub-saharan africa*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Nigeria's President Buhari Owes an Apology Sexist Remarks Are No Joke. (2016, October 14).

States News Service.

Nigeria's president warned by First Lady Aisha Buhari. (2016, October, 14). *BBC.*

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-37642282>.

Nkealah, N. (2016). (West) African feminisms and their challenges. *Journal of literary Studies*, 32(2), 61-74.

Nnaemeka, O. (2004). Nego-Feminism: Theorizing, Practicing, and Pruning Africa's Way.

Signs, 29(2), 357–385. <https://doi-org.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/10.1086/378553>

Okafor, C., Ayandele, D. O., & Oyedele, D. O. (2022, January 10). *FEMCO and the tightrope of feminist politics in Nigeria*. The Republic. Retrieved August 27, 2022, from <https://republic.com.ng/nigeria/feminist-protests-in-nigeria/>

Oloyede, C. (2021, July 1). Nigeria: Aisha Buhari Empowers 42 Kaduna Women. *allAfrica.com*.

https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A667040707/AONE?u=ocul_mcmaster&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=814e51e7

Packer, G. (2014, November 24). *The astonishing rise of angela merkel*. The New Yorker.

Retrieved August 12, 2022, from

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/12/01/quiet-german>

Pateman, C. (1989). *The disorder of women: Democracy, feminism, and political theory*.

Stanford University Press.

Pogoso, A. I. (2018). Patriarchy And “Closed Spaces”: Keeping Nigerian women in the “other room”. *Ibadan Journal of Sociology*, 7(1), 5-25. Retrieved from

<https://ibadanjournalofsociology.org/IJS/article/view/76>.

Rollock, N., & Gillborn, D. (2011). Critical race theory (CRT). *British Educational Research Association*.

Sharpley-Whiting, T. (2005). Erasures and the practice of diaspora feminism. *Small Axe*, (17), 129-133. Retrieved from

Thiam, A. (1986). *Black sisters speak out: Feminism and oppression in Black Africa*. (D. S, Blair. Trans.). Pluto Press. (Original work published 1986).

Thomas, K. B. (2020). Intersectionality and Epistemic Erasure: A Caution to Decolonial Feminism. *Hypatia*, 35(3), 509–523. <https://doi-org.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/10.1017/hyp.2020.22>

Unah, L. (2019, February 4). 'normalised but not normal': Nigerian women call out gropers and Catcallers. *The Guardian*. Retrieved August 27, 2022, from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/feb/04/normalised-but-not-normal-nigerian-women-call-out-gropers-and-catcallers-market-march-movement-yaba-market-lagos>

Uwalaka, T. (2021). The Impact of Social Media in Political Participation Among Students in Nigeria. *Humanities and Social Sciences*, 9(5), 145-154.

Uwalaka, T., & Watkins, J. (2018). Social media as the fifth estate in Nigeria: An analysis of the 2012 Occupy Nigeria protest. *African Journalism Studies*, 39(4), 22-41.

Walters, M. (2005). *Feminism: A very short introduction*. Oxford University Press.