SOCIAL MEDIA, DIGITAL LABOR AND IMPACT ON QUEER ACTIVISM IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

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Social media undoubtedly increased the visibility of the Nigerian queer community following events from #EndSARS. #EndSARS, a decentralized social movement held in October of 2020, was geared towards ending the inhumane actions of the Nigerian Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a unit of the Nigerian Police Force. While Nigerians across the country and in the diaspora are highly known to have participated in the protest, the queer community was also a significant part of it. Essential to the community at this time, given how they have been maligned in history and almost forced to be non-existent in the public scene, was their use of social media platforms to drive and document their visibility. This simultaneously added to the global conversation on the value of social media for marginalized communities. A few years after #EndSARS, however, this study moves on to investigates the impact of social media on the current dispensation of LGBTQ+ activism in Nigeria. It combines results from priorly conducted interviews and anonymous online surveys to address how social media is shaping the discourse around queer rights and activism, and with a much more profound goal to outlay the issues and labor within.

Dedication

To all Nigerian queer activists,

who participated in this research.

To myself,

for the resolve to complete this project and contribute to the timely global conversation on Queer

Social Media Activisms.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION: CONTEXTUALIZING THE RE-EMERGENCE OF NIGERIAN QUEER

SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVISM

In October 2020, Nigerians moved in droves across all cities in the country and the

diaspora to protest the inhumane actions of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad, a unit of the

Nigerian Police Force famously known as SARS. The movement hashtagged #EndSARS, is

noted to be one of Nigeria's biggest demonstrations in recent times. While #EndSARS is easily

accredited to the actions of young Nigerians, it owes much of its relevance to the involvement of

the Nigerian queer[1] community. The Nigerian queer community optimized this moment in

history to emerge and speak up against police brutality as it affects them—if not more. As I

detail below, Nigerian queers have been a major target of the Nigerian Police Force before and

after the enactment of the same-sex marriage prohibition act (SSMPA) in 2014. Although this

law does not criminalize homosexuals per se, it does outlaw same-sex relationships and public

displays of affection.

Records and local reports show that the Nigerian police have arrested individuals for

merely exhibiting non-traditional expressions. In 2014, for instance, BBC[2] did a report revealing

how the police hunted down gay men in several Northern parts of Nigeria. While some of these

men were made to face intense torture before trial and hooked up to a sting operation (usually

through the format of evading queer chatrooms to get the details of other queer persons), others

were left at the mercy of extremists who took to hanging them. Likewise, in 2018, about 57 men

were purportedly arrested from a birthday event under claims of a disguised gay initiation and

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[1] All through this project, I use queer and LGBTQ+ interchangeably as either term seems acceptable or used by
the community in Nigeria.
[2] https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-26065392

underwent trial in court for about two years. Human Dignity Trust, a UK-based charity organization that challenges the human rights violation of LGBTQ+ persons around the world, has also been committed to the task of following and highlighting the numerous cases of arrest of LGBTQ persons by the police force, most of which they detail between 2013 to 2023[3]. Also, recently, the Force Public Relations Officer, Prince Olumuyiwa Adejobi, decided to pursue action against some members of the LGBTQ+ community who had taken to social media to join a comic trend to nullify misconceptions about their identities. Using the SSMPA law as a defence in his tweet, Adejobi assured Nigerians that individuals identified in the clip would be arrested based on what the law stipulates. This and many more acts by the Nigerian police unequivocally forced the Nigerian LGBTQ+ community to emerge during #EndSARS, seizing upon the movement to not just call in on instances of police brutality but also to draw public awareness to their existence and struggles.

The community's heavy reliance on and utilization of social media is also worth mentioning during this time. Drawing inspiration from the #BlackLivesMatter protest in the United States, the Nigeria queer community adopted a similar hashtag, #QueerLivesMatter/ #NigerianQueerLivesMatter, on social media to gain traction and influence other members of their community to join in the protest both online and offline. Popularly known Nigerian YouTuber and lesbian Amara, for example, used her YouTube Channel to document her harassment and that of her partner by non-queer Nigerians during the protest at the nation's capital, Abuja. Her videos, shared across her other social media platforms, went viral, drawing public attention to their existence and helped inspire other queers within the state to join the protest.

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[3] https://www.humandignitytrust.org/country-profile/nigeria/

Likewise, Matthew Blaise (Nwozaku), who was in Lagos, used his social media platforms to emphasize the queer community's involvement in the protest. Blaise, alongside other fellow activists—Ani Kayode Somtochukwu and Victor Emmanuel— are credibly noted to have driven an earlier campaign on Twitter under the hashtag #EndHomophobiainNigeria (Petite, 2020) in March of 2020. The Twitter campaign was in reaction to the murder of a gay man and thus stirred the first wake of outbursts and shared experiences by other Nigerian queers on social media. While that event trended for days on social media and had no physical foot soldiers, #EndSARS was a changing moment for that. At this time, Blaise, like many others, was on the protest ground and posted a video of himself chanting "QueerLivesMatter". This video went viral and eventually became a hashtag used by other protesting Nigerian queers. In his interview with *Out* magazine, Blaise stated that he was compelled to post the video as a way of pointing out the different levels of oppression queer people are subjected to and how Nigerians partake in it. He stated:

> "Heterosexuality is the default, but LGBTQ+ people are harassed, assaulted, and killed based on their sexual orientation and gender identity. Nigerians know this, but they ignore and gaslight queer people because of the homophobia deeply entrenched in their minds. They need to be reminded of this oppression and how it affects us." (*Out* Magazine)

Blaise's actions triggered other Nigerian queers who ultimately decided not only to tweet about their #EndSARS experiences but also to utilize Twitter and other social media platforms to agitate for their rights visibly. Thus, a new era of queer social media activism was ushered in at this point.

Post-EndSARS, the Nigerian queer community is still seen utilizing social media and passionately treading the path of activism. And as Blaise would assert in an aftermath interview with *Devex Magazine[4]*, social media is incredibly vital in the work they need to do, not just in terms of attaining queer rights but also helping young people navigate their queer journey. Likewise, social media was essential for queer organizations pre-existing and emerging at the time of the protest. Queer organizations like TIERS and Safe Hquse, for example, used social media to provide support and spread information about resources, critical care, and issues to queer protesters. Safe Hquse was rather keen on providing medical attention and homes to queer persons who were rendered homeless by their families (Nwabunia, 2021).

The benefits of social media for queer activism are apparent. However, many individuals have questioned its potential to effect change. The Nigerian queer community specifically has had to underline their complex yet very much essential relationship with social media (Kachi, 2023). To use Faiza Hirji's words, social media may just carry the same "entanglements, contradictions, injustices, and even harm of the so-called real world" (2021, p. 81). Similarly, Wakeford (2000) argues that violence, online censorship, flaming, trolling, etc, nullifies the internet as a queer utopic space. While digital spaces may have advanced Nigeria queer networks and increased visibility, support, and advocacy in recent times, more cases of harassment and discrimination on this podium leave a lot to be questioned. My study intends to explore these issues. I hope to understand the role digital media[5] —social media platforms specifically— play

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[4]February 2022, Natalie Donback // 08. "Q&A: Digital Rights a Life-or-Death Issue for Nigeria's LGBTQ Activists."Devex,8Feb.2022,https://www.devex.com/news/sponsored/q-a-digital-rights-a-life-or-death-issue-for-nigeria-s-lgbtq-activists-102596

[5] Digital media is a broad term that encompasses every form of electronic media, social media inclusive. I make a case to state categorically that my focus in this study is on social media as both terms are often used interchangeably.

in either advancing or hindering queer activism in Nigeria and what this means for the future of Nigerian LGBTQ+ rights. Thus, the following research questions have been framed below.

Research Questions

1. How is social media shaping the discourse around Nigerian queer rights and activism today?

2. What are the potential benefits and emerging concerns?

3. What physical or emotional labor exists for Nigerian queer activists advocating on these spaces?

4. And to what extent can social media be envisaged as a liberatory tool/space for queer activism in Nigeria?

To investigate these questions, I created a brief—a total number of ten questions in an online survey about social media and activism, inviting Nigerian queer citizens, both in Nigeria and the diaspora, to participate. I collected data from 41 participants during December 2024 and January 2025. The remainder of this thesis provides further contextualization of queer Nigerian activism, the development of my investigation into online activism, and the analysis of my findings.

Chapterization

This introduction has outlined the increasing spate of queer social media activism in Nigeria, but also some of the benefits and risks of online activism in the Nigerian context. Chapter one, however, provides important context by reviewing past LGBTQ+ activism and social movement trends in Nigeria before the emergence of queer social media activism This is essential as scholars on queer activism and social movements, in general, are often not privy to

this historical knowledge and how it compares or better positions the current tide of queer social media activism in Nigeria post-EndSARS.

Chapter two outlines my methodology and theoretical frameworks used to develop and analyze my research. Specifically, I explain how queer theory, standpoint epistemology, and the concepts of "cyberqueer" and "labor" shape the inquiry. This chapter also situates my position as an author in this study.

Chapter three delves into my original research on recent online Nigerian queer social media activism. I outline my research procedures, results, and analysis of my findings. Specifically, this chapter summarizes and engages the pros and cons of using social media platforms for queer activism. It also unpacks queer activists' labor online as well and how it impacts or further gives meaning to the everyday struggles of queer social media activism in Nigeria.

Lastly, chapter four concludes this project by summarizing and reflecting on the findings. It also highlights the limitations and makes future recommendations for new studies.

CHAPTER I: LITERATURE REVIEW

As seen in other parts of the world, the LGBTQ community, activists, and organizations in African countries are currently combating the increasing spate of homophobia and threatening anti-gay laws. Given the advances of social media, they have been able to use these platforms to call out anti-LGBTQ groups and governmental bodies actively working to criminalize their existence, and deconstructing false narratives spread by the traditional media about them. My introductory chapter, for instance, has been able to show how the Nigerian LGBTQ+ community used social media during the #EndSARS protest. Without it, less would possibly be known about their plight and their huge involvement during the protest, both locally and globally.

The history of LGBTQ activism in Nigeria, however, precedes the digital staging of #EndSARS or #NigerianQueerLivesMatter. Although more research is needed, there is a good amount of existing literature on LGBT lives and activism in other African countries like Zimbabwe, Kenya, Namibia, and, most significantly, South Africa in the *Global Encyclopedia of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual, Transgender and Queer History* by Chiang et al. (2019), and considerably so in Nigeria. Unoma Azuah, for one, in this voluminous work, examines the implication of the SSMPA law on the LGBTQ community in Nigeria and their current realities. This chapter, however, hopes to chronicle histories predating this present time and build on the existing literature to explain the current wave of queer social media activism in Nigeria. By doing this, I hope that this study can help make connections and illuminate expansively queer activism in Nigeria following #EndSARS in 2020. Moreso, such examinations will help spotlight the histories of those who have been at the forefront of the struggle, evaluating the gains and lessons learned in connection to the work that is currently being carried out by LGBTQ activists in Nigeria and in the diaspora. However, I begin this review by first providing context for

Africa's nuanced history with homosexuality and how that trickles down into Nigeria's current anti-gay laws and eventual social media optimization by the queer community. This chapter will also look at the gaps in queer scholarship in the reviews of social media activisms in Nigeria.

Historical Formulation of Nigerian Anti-gay Law

To understand the current wave of queer social media activism in Nigeria is to historicize factors shaping the country's ideological and legal motivations against homosexuality. The long-standing narrative of homosexuality as "un-African", first launched by Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe in the early 1990s, found its way among several other African nations and leaders (Human Rights Watch, 2013; Cock, 2003). Despite immense scholarship proving the conspicuous nature of same-sex relations, transvestism practices (Epprecht, 2008, 2010; Olaoluwa, 2018; Osinubi, 2018; Murray et al., 2021), and even ground rites, traditions, and figures "articulating the everyday staging of transgressions" (Matebeni et al., 2018, p. 9), these sentiments still exist. Tamale (2013), for example, draw compelling examples from the ancient cave paintings of the San people in Guruve, Zimbabwe, and the Langi people of Northern Uganda. These ancient cave paintings are a testament that effeminate males were treated as women and were allowed to marry men. In Nigeria, where this study is mainly focused on, artworks from Igboukwu to Benin and Ife have been known to celebrate the existence of same-sex relations, not tagged as "homosexuality" at this time, but rather as a resounding recognition of the duality of African/Nigerian sexualities (Okonkwo, 2023). In the northern part of Nigeria, where homosexuality seems to be most intolerant, Gaudio (2009) spotlights the existence of *yan daudu*, men who marry or have sex with other men. Gaudio (2009) also articulates that *yan daudu* were seen as effeminate and constantly critiqued for defying normative cultural values.

Likewise, Essien & Aderinto (2009) have extensively been able to study evidence of same-sex relations in three major ethnic groups in Nigeria—Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa—to support external scholarship claims of a homosexual African. Still, both authors are mindful of bringing to our attention that even though there is evidence of same-sex relations in African pre-colonial societies, it will be inaccurate to conclude that they are prevalent in all African ethnicities; more empirical research, they posit, will have to be conducted to arrive at a completely heterosexual Africa labeling. One thing is, however, clear from this argument, either partial or full evidence of same-sex relations in Africa—or in Nigeria as the case may be—homosexuality is very much African, as is heterosexuality. The former has consequently led to the rich exploration of queer identities and themes in Nigerian literature and even films that found their way out of censorship through alternate outlets. But again, as Onanuga (2023) and other scholars have posited, this has not led to the acceptance or tolerance of LGBTQ+ persons in the country.

Historical processes of colonization are, however, argued to have altered African sexual practices and relations, leading up to the now-existing anti-gay policies and sentiments in many African countries (Epprecht, 2010). Human Rights (2013), for one, records the implementation of the British Sodomy law across all colonies who were formerly under it empire and became the landmark upon which these countries, even after independence, continue to build and refine their policies against gay-like or lesbian relations. Specifically in Nigeria, the sodomy was defined as any carnal intercourse against the order of nature and was made punishable by a jail term (Human Rights, 2013). In Alichie's chronicling of this issue, the British sodomy law into Nigeria became the first epoch of the emergence of anti-gay laws and sentiments into the country. It pronouncement, she documents, was also forcefully enacted using the mass media, police, courts and other institution of governance at the time. While arrests, fines, detentions, and prosecutions were notably recorded during this period, there was no reports of private individuals surveilling or intiating anti-gay violence or sentiments. Individuals were, for the

most part, apathethic towards to gay-like behaviors (Epprecht, 2013a, 2013b).

The second epoch, on the other hand, emerged during the country's transition from military to civilian rule in 1999, also regraded as the post-colonial era (Alichie, 2022). Transitioning to civilian rule called for the establishment of Sharia law in Northern Nigeria, a law made distinct but not superior to the federal law covering every other region in Nigeria. The Sharia law, in detail, provides all legal guidelines for living, and it is essentially anchored on the tenets and traditions of the Qur'an (Tunnicliffe and Schirrmacher, 2014, as cited in Alichie, 2022). Also with the Sharia law, especially as seen in states like Kano and Zamfara, was the incorporation of the British law against sodomy which was placed its under the shari'a-esque heading of 'sodomy (liwat)' (Human Right Watch, 2013). They provided punishments of about 100 lashes for unmarried offenders, and death by stoning for married ones. The Zamfara Penal Code also criminalises 'lesbianism (sihaq)', punishing it with up to 50 lashes and six months' imprisonment (Human Right Watch, 2013). Thus, in essence, the Sharia law gave no room to same-sex desires and behaviors; individuals and leaders in this region, by effect, developed zero tolerance for violators. Arrests, fines, detentions, excessive discrimination, and death threats to mob attacks became public knowledge at this time, and offenders were subjected to a jail term of a year, fine or a combination of both. The Sharia law, introduced in 1999 by the then governor of Zamfara State (one of the Northern states), Ahmed Sani Yerima, was implemented across all 19 northern states within the confines of the Sharia jurisdiction (Alichie, 2022).

Given the success and stronghold that the antigay law had under the Sharia law in Northern Nigeria, Aliche documents that senators from this region, who constituted the majority of lawmakers in the Nigerian Senate, subsequently decided to introduce the Anti-Gay Bill across Nigeria in 2003. Such was the progress this bill made in and out of the House sitting till 2013 and given the support of the then president of the country, Goodluck Jonathan, it passed for a law and culminated into what became known as the Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act (SSMPA) in 2014. The Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act re-echoed some of the things

colonial antigay legislation and Sharia law but also went on to widen the scope to criminalize not just LGBTQ+ persons publicly engaging in homosexual affairs, but also to private individuals, groups, churches, clubs, societies and civil unions who approved or endorsed their relations (Alichie, 2017). In addition, the Federal High Court of every state in Nigeria was given the jurisdiction to entertain such affairs and accord jail terms of 10 to 14 years to offenders. It did not matter if residents were indigenes, foreigners, or actual residents in any of these states; the law was binding to everyone (Corina, 2008).

With this in place, Alichie (2022) documents that members of the public were triggered to take matters into their own hands. They became watchdogs acting on behalf of the state as judges, juries, and executioners. In hindsight, these scare tactics embraced by the public is credited to Section 5 of the SSMPA law, which states that members of the public were incited to report suspected cases of same-sex relationships or marriage, or risk being punished (Adebanjo, 2015). Given this background, it leaves enough to understand why many LGBTQ+ persons in Nigeria have reportedly been facing more gross and extrajudicial violations of their human rights. Further attestation to the SSMPA law was that it intensified homophobic attacks on social media, where LGBTQ+ persons transitioned to refuge and continuous effort at sustaining visibility (Alichie, 2022).

As Sibanda and Ncube (2023) articulate, social media has also become a space for African queers to forge sub-communities or subcultures, allowing them to perform and articulate their differences away from homophobic and judgmental views of their communities. As such, when the internet and social media platforms emerged in the Nigerian civil society space in 2005 (Kew and Kwaja, 2018), the queer community did not exempt themselves from leveraging the platforms. Facebook, Twitter, and Linkedin seemed like the most prevalent social media

platforms at the time (Dunu and Uzochukwu, 2015). Consequently, the queer community utilized these spaces as well and became attuned to other platforms that subsequently emerged. They saw social media as an opportunity to reimagine their identities and forge visible communities against what Diabate (2018, p.19) describes in her seminal work on African digital queer as "constraints of enclosure and erasure". And more than ever, the Nigerian queer community now looks up to these spaces to mobilize and raise a new portrait of queer consciousness that has been threatened at different points in history. However, everything is not perfect in the social media world for the Nigerian queer community. I have therefore decided to assess the issues and make a concrete argument on the progress and barriers encountered by the Nigerian LGBTQ+ community at digital efforts to reimagine their rights.

Mapping out the Historical Contours of LGBTQ Activism in Nigeria Before #EndSARS

The enactment of the same-sex Marriage Prohibition Act (SSMPA) in 2014 pushed the activities and advocacy work done by LGBTQ activists and groups into the shadows. As earlier articulated in the prior chapter, the insurmountable threat that the LGBTQ community faces in Nigeria today can be traced to Britain's Imperial rule and their establishment of penal codes against same-sex relationships and behaviours. In this sense, the SSMPA is an expansion of colonial heterosexism and homophobia. Mounting international pressure to legalize same-sex marriage amidst other factors, on the other hand, eventually led to the implementation of the SMMPA into Nigeria's legal system in 2014[6]. Considering this, LGBTQ activities and persons became almost invisible, leaving many Nigerians in the dark about the proactive work of the

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[6] See:https://www.forbes.com/sites/mfonobongnsehe/2011/12/09/obama-fights-nigerian-anti-gay-bill-threatens-to-cut-off-aid/

community before this law. To this point, scholarship by Baker et al. (2023) becomes fundamental to the discourse here.

To date, Baker et al. (2023) presents the most recent work on LGBT[7] history and activism in Nigeria. As the authors argue, scholars who discuss the LGBT movement in Nigeria have only been able to do so within the context of the present, the consequence of which, they add, present LGBTQ activism in Nigeria as having no history. However, they can contest this by providing concrete evidence showcasing the early establishment of LGBT activism in the country. They start by outlining early iterations of LGBT organizing during Nigeria's military era in the 1970s to the present while articulating individuals, activists, alliances, and transnational and digital networks that have helped shape the movement.

From the 1970s, LGBTQ organizing, they state, was crafted firstly within the mainframe of religious institutions as opposed to groups and NGOs who later started organizing for political rights. Against the position that religion is mainly responsible for the exacerbation of homophobia on the continent today, the authors render a much more nuanced history showing how churches during the period acted in unison against homophobia. They specifically reference how churches like Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), established in 1970, and House of Rainbow, established in 2002, came together to offer solace and advocacy to gender and sexual minorities in Nigeria. It is, however, difficult to completely agree with the authors on this, given that MCC and House of Rainbow were established as alternatives to the mainstream churches in Nigeria because of their homophobia. Likewise, these churches and their indigenous founders had Western ties or invariably argued to be influenced by the West, making it hard to gauge how

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[7] In this chapter, I use LGBT as opposed to LGBTQ+ as a way of reflecting the exact terminology used by authors in this work.

much of a coalition existed between them and other indigenous-founded or homegrown churches in the country on homosexuality.

Regardless, some religious organizations, especially the MCC, under the leadership of Rev. Sylvanus Maduka, set the foundation for LGBT activism in Nigeria. Through Maduka's effort at expanding the church, building on transnational relationships, and providing healthcare services to all congregants and residents regardless of their sexuality, his activities set the pace for a movement that grew exponentially with the onset of democratic rule in Nigeria in 1999. The authors, however, add that leaders from LGBT organizations who emerged in the 2000s look back at this period with scepticism and continuously probe MCC's genuine commitment to the LGBT movement. Maduka, they felt, was a homophobic person judging by how they perceived his history and the cards he had to play in soliciting for Western funds and in expanding the MCC branch in Nigeria. They also attribute the church's absence in the lobbying efforts against the SSMPA when it began in the mid-2000s to when it was finally implemented in 2014.

On the other hand, the Nigerian Gentlemen Alliance was different in scope. A shoot-off from the religious set-up of MCC, the authors articulate that the Nigeria Gentlemen Alliance was strictly a social club established for gay men in 1989. It differed from MCC in the way it sought to maintain autonomy away from Western relations. The group also registered as an association in 1989, hosting many events that attracted about 1, 500 gay men to its head branch in Lagos. While the parties were the main attraction of the organization, the authors document that only a few people attended the formal meetings. Nigeria Alliance is also significant in history given its attempt to collaborate with Western-based non-governmental organizations like AFRICARE to help deliver lectures on HIV/AIDS and safe sex to the Nigerian gay community, an activity which the author notes inspired generations of LGBT organizations to emerge to seek out similar

collaborations. On the flip side of history with this group is how it points out the challenges inherent in transnational organizing—the challenge of unequal power relations between newly formed LGBT organizations in Africa and those based in Europe. For instance, the authors articulate a struggle encountered by the Nigerian Alliance Group to have their letters published by their partnering members in the international scene. After multiple pleas and requests citing the need for global press coverage, their letters were eventually published. Less will be known of the Nigerian Gentlemen Alliance group from 1991, given the conservative and religious pushback beginning to steam up in the country.

At the turn of democratic rule in 1999, Alliance Rights, another LGBT-orientated organization, entered the public scene. The authors document that under this period, LGBT organizations like Alliance Rights thrived and increasingly became visible by registering as nonprofits advocating for the rights of LGBT persons while also providing healthcare services to members. Their emergence also came at the peak of a time when attention was rapidly being given to the outbreak of HIV in the country. One of several such that would eventually emerge is Alliance Rights. Alliance Rights was founded at the turn of civilian rule in 1999 under President Olusegun Obasanjo. Despite this flourishing season for queer visibility, the democratic dispensation under Obasanjo became a most fertile period for homophobia, not just by the Nigerian populace but also by the President himself, who did not hesitate to declare his repulsion for homosexuality (Olaoluwa, 2018). But notwithstanding, Alliance Rights thrived under the leadership of its founder, Oludare Odumuyi, who was actively committed to providing measures to protect its members from stigmatization and homophobic violence. Like others before him, Oludare sought funding through transnational connections, increasing the organization's profile.

The authors note that the international exposure of Alliance Rights led to the formation of several LGBTQ+-centered organizations and projects by some of its members. A major mention is Queer Alliance Nigeria. Queer Alliance was founded and worked distinctly as an all-inclusive organization to include all sexual minorities and not just gay men, as prior LGBT organizations had done. Another factor that distinguished it was its use of social media and the internet. By organizing online, Queer Alliance Nigeria, the authors postulate, was able to situate itself within what they saw Darren Kew and Chris Kwaja describe as the "fourth generation of civil society groups and social movements in Nigeria characterized by internet-based networks" (p.133). The period following the passage of the SSMPA became highly repressive and dangerous. Since then, many organizations, including Queer Alliance, disappeared from the public scene. However, despite the scope of things today, the authors note several organizations and persons who have chosen to stay visible and continue to advance the work of queer advocacy in the country. For example, The Initiative for Equal Rights (TIERS) and Queer Union For Economic and Social Transformation (QUEST) —both organizations I reached out to during this study— continue public work despite the increased criminalization of gay and gender-diverse people in Nigeria.

(Queering) Social Media Activism in Nigeria

Over time, existing literature has demonstrated the utilization of social media platforms by various social movement groups worldwide. From the 'Occupy Movement' (Juris, 2012) in Europe to the Arab Spring (Eltanawy & Wies, 2011) protest in Northern Africa and the #MeToo (Hillstrom, 2018) and #BlackLivesMatter (Mundt et al., 2018) protest in the United States, social media, essentially through its hashtag features, has been a cornerstone in helping to amplify movements and their issues, alongside influencing similar movements transnationally. In

Nigeria, the earliest trace of social media for activism is linked to the "Light Up Nigeria" campaign in 2009, where the Nigerian rapper eLDee took to Twitter to relay his displeasure over erratic power outages in the country (Odewale, Zukerman, and LeJeune, 2014 as cited in Oyinloye and Omotayo, 2023 p. 316). Through Twitter, eLDee was also able to enlist the help of other celebrities in Nigeria to participate and amplify the conversation online. In addition, when erstwhile President Goodluck Jonathan took to social media to solicit support for his political bid in 2010, earning him the title of "the Facebook President" (Igbinidu, 2011 as cited in Okocha & Dapoet, 2022)), many Nigerians became more aware of the affordances of social media and started appropriating it for their own personal engagement and socio-political advocacy needs.

By the dawn of the presidential election in 2011, Nigerians were at the grip of social media demanding free, fair, and credible elections through the #EnoughIsEnough hashtag on Twitter (Oyinloye and Omotayo, 2023). Likewise, in 2012, when President Goodluck Jonathan announced the removal of fuel subsidies from petroleum products, which resulted in a spike in price, Nigerians protested and mobilized through the #OccupyNigeria hashtag (Onwuegbuchi, 2012; Hari, 2014; Egbunike, 2015). #OccupyNigeria is significant in Nigeria's history as it is the first form of hashtag or social media activism to translate into a massive offline movement in the country. As some critics have notably argued, social media activism can often lead to "slacktivism" (Morozov, 2009, p.7) or "clicktivism" (Halupka, 2018) and thus result in superficial forms of engagement. But most importantly, they argue that such forms of activism mostly stay online and do not translate into any meaningful offline movement (Morozov, 2009). This might be accurate when highlighting certain forms of social media activisms in Nigeria, like #BeingFemaleInNigeria and #SayNoToRuga. #BeingFemaleInNigeria mainly was driven on Twitter by its organizers in June of 2015 as a pacesetting project to challenge everyday sexism,

cultural beliefs, and governmental policies that affect Nigerian women in all spheres of their daily lives (Olofintuade, 2017). Subsequent forms of organizing and colloquial forms of engagement relating to the project, the author notes, later moved on to a more extensive community on Facebook. #SayNoToRuga (Nwite, 2019), on the other hand, was also an activism by Nigerians on Twitter calling out the government on its intent to legalize animal grazing across the states.

#OccupyNigeria is, however, distinguished in this sense as it was a movement against broader issues like corruption and government accountability, not just against hikes in fuel prices. Protesters used social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and Blackberry Messenger to push through their demands while also conducting mass demonstrations, rallies, strikes and sit-ins (Hari, 2014). Although Egbunike (2015) study do indicate that the traditional form of media (newspapers) outdid social media in terms of repositioning the demands of the populace and framing their motivations, #OccupyNigeria, notwithstanding, remains a worthy reference of social media activism in Nigeria serving as a catalyst for other movements to emerge like #OurMumuDonDo, #EndBokoHaram, #BringBackOurGirls, #EndRapeInNigeria, #RevolutionNow, and #EndSARS. Despite this impact, little scholarship has closely examined the presence of Nigerian queers in the history of activist movements or accounts fully for the present wave of queer social media activism in Nigeria.

The very recent, but little, scholarship that is emerging is exciting and helpful for understanding the recent wave of queer social media activism in the Nigerian context. For example, Nwabunnia (2021) stages early on the involvement of the queer community during #EndSARS. This was a well-purpose-driven work attesting to the varied voices (and not just from cisheterosexual men and women as many of the reviews of other activist movements will

show) championing the movement. Moreso in this work is Nwabunnia's effort to account for the several ways queer activists and organizers built solidarities not just within themselves but with other activist groups to sustain their visibility both online and offline, especially in reaction to the tensions that emerged during the protest. One thing Nwabunmia would make clear here is how solidarity, a key component of transnational movements like #EndSARS, can be messy and unpredictable. With specific reference to how feminists-led organizations like Feminist Coalition initially set out to show their solidarity with the queer community on Twitter, such a move eventually fell under following heated disapproval from non-queer protesters who felt it was a ploy to compromise the movement and what it stood for. The tensions, as expected, also emerged given the effect of the SSMPA law on the Nigerian populace, and what can be argued to be African leaders' attempt always to try to weigh down any internal incursion that tries to call people to action in their bid to keep up with nationalistic quest[8]. A show of support for queer protesters by a huge feminist group like Feminist Coalition could be perceived as giving the government reasonable grounds to invalidate the movement. In all, Nwabumia's work can show how queer individuals stayed involved during the #EndSARS protest and how they leveraged various systems and platforms like social media to navigate seamless fractures.

Faniyi (2023) is also able to corroborate Nwabunmia's research by collectively looking inwardly at the struggles of Nigerian women and queer persons during the #EndSARS protest, especially in the role Feminist Coalition had to play with their aborted show of solidarity and how that exacerbated the vile exposure queer individuals were already subjected to both online and offline. Specifically, Faniyi's in-depth interviews with respondents and data-driven method on Twitter help substantiate claims of an active network of queer social media activism that

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[8] An early reference of this point was made in one of my graduate seminar papers in Spring of 2023.

resurfaced at this time and acts of resistance and radical care that went beyond social media. Onanuga (2021, 2022), on the other hand, has been exploring various sites of queer social media activism in Nigeria; however, through a linguistic framework. For instance, Onanuga (2021) takes a route to analyzing collected tweets, hashtags, handles, and bios of publicly outed Nigerian gays on Twitter to gauge how effective these linguistic data drive queer advocacies and challenge heteronormativity in Nigeria. Taking cue to explore social media—Twitter in particular— as the most profound site for queer resistance in Nigeria, his data and analysis are also suggestive of how queer Nigerians try to use this space also to inform or educate non-queers Nigerians and call out the inherent role of the government and politicians in the condescending othering of queer persons. Also drawing from Instagram, Onanuga (2022) looks potentially at this space as an enhancer of queer visibility and evolving landscape of queer digital visual activism in Nigeria. His analysis postulates that the positive images and texts rendered by Nigerian queers on Instagram are geared towards ideologies that speak to agency, self-acceptance, and will to combat rigid heteronormative structures.

In all, while these few pieces of literature have given credence to queer social media activism in Nigeria, none is yet to synthesize or expand issues around it. This study hopes to do this while also looking at the pros and cons of using social media platforms for activism. It also hopes to give an insight into aspects of their digital labor and weigh issues and progress heads on.

CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Queer Theory and Feminist Standpoint Epistemology

This study draws from a collection of theories: Queer theory, feminist standpoint theory or epistemology, cyber-queer theory, and feminist materialist understandings of labor. Queer theory is a fundamental approach to this study essentially for the way it challenges heteronormativity or binary labels that constitutes everyday framing of gender, sex, and sexuality (Ashford, 2009). Heteronormativity, as described by Judith Butler (1990, 1993), is a regulatory system that imposes the natural order of existing either as a female or male while punishing other identities that exist outside of this binary frame. Thus, queer theory, in this light, becomes a significant analytical lens in contesting normative identities, especially within online spaces where queer individuals are now expanding their frontiers and forging resistance. In many African countries where queer bodies are "dismembered, expunged, excluded, forcefully stripped of their identity," queer theory is relevant to navigate how African queers relaunch themselves into society through alternative mediums (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p. 266).

I also draw earnestly from feminist standpoint theory as a backbone theory often integrated into studies on race, class, and sexuality in postcolonial research. Standpoint theory emerged as a feminist methodological intervention to examine how individuals' (usually from dominated/exploited/oppressed groups) experiences, often shaped by socioeconomic and political positions, influence their understanding of the world (Harding, 2009). While standpoint theory does primarily centre or start from the daily lives of these dominated groups, Harding posits that its focus is far more built on exploring what these groups need and what they need to know about their plight and that of the groups superseding them. And as valuable as the conventional ethnographies of getting stories or perspectives of subgroups can be to standpoint

theory, its adequacy, she adds, "is to be judged by the success of the practices they legitimate rather than the truth or verisimilitude of representations of nature and social relations" (2009, p. 325). The ultimate achievement of standpoint theory, therefore, is in its ability to make an impact or enhance liberatory effort on the said community it chooses to explore.

Standpoint theory is also concerned with exploring the assumption generated by the dominant group about the "ways of life" and how this influences knowledge production (Harding, 2008). Harding (2008) posits that this is apparent in how frameworks, conceptual schemes, and epistemes are framed. In this regard, Harding argues that standpoint is entirely different from "viewpoint" or "perspective"—however analogous—because it transcends these terms to connote more complicated aspects of embedded scientific hegemonic ideologies of dominant groups and the political struggle involved in denouncing their integration into knowledge production. It is assumed that marginalized persons' social situation enables or limits what they know about themselves or the world. Thus, Harding postulates that this has pre-empted the dominant group to take charge in leading or shaping the lives of marginal people in a way not usually made visible to them. Standpoint theory thus comes in handy to critically examine conceptual frameworks or knowledge that privileges the interest of dominant groups. More to what Harding postulates is that standpoint theory calls for objectivity by setting apart the relationship between knowledge production and politics at the centre of it. More uniquely, it grounds the experiences of the marginalized as distinctive experiences that help shape their understanding of the material world and social relations in a way not usually accessible to outsiders or intellectuals who embark on producing this knowledge.

In this light, I incorporate this theoretical framework into this project. Completely aware that my identity as a Nigerian does not in any way reflect the experiences of Nigerian queers, I

am careful not to insert myself into this study and allow my qualitative data drive my analysis. Through standpoint theory, I can also acknowledge the plurality and the various ways my participants' lived experiences (gender, sexuality, class, race, location) may intersect and how that may shape the outcome of this project. For instance, the perspective of my respondents in this study is completely hinged on their location in different parts of the world (Nigeria for the most part) and possible access to the internet. As Shola Adenekan (2021) will make known in his seminal work analyzing class and sexual politics in African literature, the trope of the "middle-class African queer' often replicated in African digital literary writings from Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa, for instance, has overtly been generalistic as not all African queers are "affluent, educated, possess European language skills, or even have the resources to transcend geographical boundaries" (2021, p. 97) —or in this case, digital spatialities. Thus, my respondents' perspective on their relationship with social media and online activism might not entirely be a representation of all Nigerian queer activists as some may have been excluded from this research by means of language or internet accessibility. Nonetheless, for the few that have been able to participate, their insights largely shape my study and any further knowledge production on queer social media activism in Nigeria that might accrue from this.

Cyberqueer theory

Cyber queer theory, on the other hand, brings into perspective the relationship between queer identities, queer theory, and the virtual world. It investigates how queer identities are read into the politics of representation and activism confronting homophobia online (Wakeford, 1997). While it speaks aptly to the numerous opportunities for interactions and networks for queer groups, cyberqueer theory is also equipped to examine the relationship between queer identities, the design of online spaces, and emerging media technologies that forcibly make queer

users vulnerable online (Wakeford, 2000). Wakeford (2002) offers four intrinsic insights in the navigation of this theory, which better foreground the analysis of this intended study. First, she frames the nature of identity and the affordance of alternate self-presentation online.

Given that the internet allows for the framing of new and multiple identities for LGBTQ+ individuals, Wakeford argues that much about cyber queer studies in the past focused less on how these alternative constructions of self online might implicate everyday realities. The fluidity of identity construction online, Nayar (2010) adds, might indeed be beneficial or create an exciting feel for LGBTQ+ individuals, but it does not necessarily change their marginal realities. LGBTQ individuals in Nigeria, for instance, might be able to abscond from harassment and public humiliation when presenting a false identity or existing anonymously online. Still, such acts always have repercussions in the offline world when they are outed. Thus, any adaption of cyberqueer theory in research must consider the relationship between the identities formed online and the implications for LGBTQ+ people's everyday lives.

Noting that virtual spaces allow for the formulation of queer spaces, Wakeford's second emphasis here for researchers is also to consider the spatial context in which interactions happen online, and not just the interactions alone. The situated realities of LGBTQ+ communities all around the world often have a way of informing their interactions online; thus, one cannot separate one from the other. Wakeford further adds that these conversations online should be regarded as channels of communication rather than sites or locations from which conversations stem. The third insight she shares is also the need to recognize the existence of weak and strong ties within the cyberqueer world, as not every queer online user who interacts online forms a bond with every member of their community. Within this instance as well, Wakeford critiques ideas that the communities formed online would inversely replace offline communities like gay

bars and clubs without a thorough investigation of both communities. True to what Wakeford posits here, existing anti-gay laws in Nigeria prevent the public association of gay and lesbian people, forcing them to reconstitute communities online. However, an HBO documentary produced in 2019, *Legends of the Underground,* has showcased how offline engagements— however underground—complement their online interactions and thus cannot be ruled out. And lastly, Wakeford also argues that cyber queer theory should engage the arena of erotic desire and sexual practice by queer users online rather than neglecting it. As the online environment is increasingly becoming a new site for queer sexual experiences, cyber queer-related research must be able to account for this as well.

Feminist Materialist Understandings of Labor

In terms of methodology, I also draw on the concept of "labor" in queer social media activism from a feminist materialist perspective. Geller & Denny (2013) and Caswell, Grutsch, McKinney, & Jackson (2016) define labor as a form of work representing an individual job description or scholarly participation in a designated production (as cited in Webster, 2021, p. 99). Labor is also conceptualized within the capital exchange of personal and professional livelihood (Webster, 2021). However, within queer social media activism, it might be easy to conceive labor as the amount of strenuous and mostly unpaid work that goes into battling rigid heteronormative structures both online and offline. Such forms of labor become more when queer activists—or those who combine it with some sort of self-branding online— attain microcelebrity status and are more than ever expected to signal "accessibility, availability, presence, connectedness, and authenticity" (Raun, 2018, p.100) to their audience.

Several forms of this labor are notably visible: this could be a tweet or regular posting of content on YouTube and TikTok about the struggles and lived experiences of queer people. This

could also be other aspects of mobilizing, organizing, fundraising, and providing legal and material support, as many of the key figures highlighted in the history of Nigerian activism will portray. On the other hand, there are invisible aspects too as well that makes this section worthy of connection to the broader discussion of social media queer activism in Nigeria, helping to point out what is involved and what is at stake. This invisible aspect is relatively tied to what Hochschild (1983) frames as "emotional labor" often translating to "work that involves care, mentoring, or nurturing of others; work of building and sustaining relationships; work to resolve conflicts; (and) managing display of emotion" (Caswell, Grutsch, McKinney, & Jackson, 2016, p. 27). As some of the accounts from this study would show, Nigerian queer activists experience emotional labor when they try to deal with the different facets of abuse and attacks online. It also occurs when they pour in exhausting efforts to enlighten other people about their rights and lived experiences or when they choose to offer support to young people trying to navigate their sexuality despite their struggles and mental health. This and many other salient aspects of invisible and visible labor that add to the strain of social media queer activism in Nigeria will be expanded in this study.

Method

This project combines results from a pilot study conducted between October- November of 2024 and an additional survey conducted between December 20th, 2023, to January 15th, 2024. In the pilot study, I sought out 15 outed Nigerian queers (of which only 8 made it to the final interview stage) to get their perception of their use of social media for activism. Five questions guided my inquiry with them. They include: (i) What specific social media platform do they actively use (ii) What do they consider as the pros and cons of using social media for activism (iii) what emerging concerns or dangers exist online for the community (iv) What ways

do they feel digital technologies are aiding some of these issues and (iv) what solution-driven insights might they suggest in improving the safety of their community online.

My research reveals that the Nigerian queer community alternates between different social media platforms for activism. Participants talked about using Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, and X(Twitter) amidst other digital platforms like the web, visuals, and podcasts to engage members of their community and the public. They, however, identified more with X, given events from the EndSARS protest in 2020. However, participants note that while X has proven beneficial in helping them navigate ideas further, experiment, reconstitute communities, gain allyship, mobilize and dispense resources, it was beginning to transcend into an unsafe space. Hence, there has been a gradual shift to TikTok, whose features they believe are designed in such a way that it helps protect and empower the work they do.

They, however, still believe that other social media platforms, notably X and YouTube, can be improved to become safer and fairer for queer users by being more socially responsible to their communities online. Specifically, they posit that a two-factor verification for all social media accounts on X, for instance, could help boycott or limit predatory actions from outsiders leveraging on the anonymity feature of the platform to unleash mayhem on queer users. Given that social media users' data are also at the disposal of social media companies, they recommend that the data of outsiders working actively to unleash mayhem on queer people online can be sought for and ethically conferred to non-governmental organizations and law officiating bodies to serve disciplinary actions to these persons. Likewise, they posit that putting measures in place to trace culprits' accounts, however anonymous, might also serve to hold individuals accountable for their actions.

To expand on these findings for my thesis research, I created a confidential survey to reach a wider pool of Nigerian queer activists, including those that are not out in public. While the interviews with more public activists helped identify key benefits and areas of concern, I wanted to understand how everyday Nigerian queers engage social media for day-to-day survival, resistance, connection, and joy. Because I wanted to capture perspectives of people without public personas, while also protecting them from the very real risk of persecution, the ANON/CONF approach seemed most appropriate. In the survey conducted for this Thesis, outlined in more detail in Chapter 3, I used some of the questions I had explored in my pilot study with a few new trajectories. Specifically, I engaged participants on their thoughts relating to the benefits and disadvantages of using social media platforms for queer activism; assessed their level of optimism on the potential of these techno platforms to advance queer rights; queried them on their insights into aspects of their daily labor online as well as their strategies for building resistance; and other emerging issues worth referencing within the LGBTQ+ climate in Nigeria.

Researcher's Positionality

Nigeria has witnessed several historical, social movements and activist events. Due to the nature of my work and internships as a news reporter — before graduate school— with radio and online news platforms like Unilag FM(Lagos), Petals FM(Ibadan), Jay FM(Jos), and SaharaReporters, I have had the privilege to physically follow through conversations, observe some of these trends, and give first-hand reports to some of the most iconic marches, demonstrations and protests. But I owe much of my understanding of the importance of social networks and digital activism to my close-knit work with Omoyele Sowore, former presidential

candidate and pioneer of the much-alluded protest against inequality and bad governance in Nigeria, #RevolutionNow.

#RevolutionNow was first spearheaded on the 5th of August 2019 by a coalition of several union groups such as the Federation of Informal Workers Organization of Nigeria (FIWON), The Take-It-Back Movement, Socialist Workers League, Movement for African Emancipation, Committee for the Defense of Human Rights among several others under which Sowore called for the protest. At the time, Sowore was apprehended by the Department of State Security (DSS) and could not participate. However, by September of the following year, Sowore would make another #RevolutionNow call, and it was at this moment I was opportune to work with him and gain some insights into the movement. Wielding a triangular position as a reporter, website manager, and co-social media handler, I closely followed conversations with him and other organizers in stimulating discussions about the movement online via hashtags and live chats. I also participated in collating events on the protest ground and in the diasporic scene as they unfolded while working to amplify them via the movement's website and social media platforms. As a prequel to #EndSARS, my activities with #RevolutionNow was an eye-opener to the possibilities of social media tools and digital networks for activism. This exposure, knowledge, and my identity as a Nigerian influence and positions me well for this current study.

Important to note, however, is that I do not position myself as an expert on LGBTQ+ discourse or activism in Nigeria but rather as someone who is drawn to centering the experiences of marginalized persons and groups. Likewise, I am also approaching this study as someone who witnessed the clash between queer and non-queer protesters during the #EndSARS protest and is moved, as an emerging scholar, to join the larger pool of academic voices in denouncing ongoing homophobia and disregard of queer rights on the continent. Integral to my approach is also my

fascination with existing scholarship on African gender and sexualities and the histories of those who have been organizing against homophobia before and after the advent of social media.

As Barker et al. (2023) will note, the histories of those who have been organizing against homophobia in West Africa have been mainly ignored in the historiography of African sexualities, with the vast majority of the literature focusing on Southern Africa (although this latter part has changed over the years with diverse queer scholarship emerging from Uganda, Kenya, and Senegal, to Cameroon, Ghana, and Nigeria on the West African coast); hence, the need to historized the present work and the people involved in it. Lastly, by doing this work, I hope to contribute to the sparse scholarship on contemporary Nigerian social media queer activism, serving as a reference point for those who wish to continue, add, or engage with the work.

CHAPTER III: DATA & ANALYSIS

Survey and Data Collection

As noted in my prior chapter, my first call of data collection was based on a series of semi-structured interviews with a few numbers of outed Nigerian queers using social media for activism. However, specifically for this thesis, I collected data via an online survey using Qualtrics. As noted in the prior chapter, the survey also takes an anonymous form to protect participants' identities. Taking note of the slight hardship encountered while recruiting for my pilot study, the anonymous survey was my way of getting more queer Nigerians (both within and outside of the country) to participate with little to no worries as to where their data might go. It was also my best option to get willing and passionate Nigerian queer digital activists to participate without a need for compensation or incentives. As was the case with my pilot study, my small pool of final participants is partially reflective of the economic hardship that sexual minorities often face in a country where they are frequently targeted and criminalized (Tamale, 2011); thus, it was not unusual that I had encountered prospective participants who wanted to be compensated in exchange for sharing their thoughts.

The survey developed for this thesis also adopts a mixed-method approach (quantitative and qualitative). Aside from pre-screening questions, I had six quantitative questions measuring participants' utilization of various social media platforms and perception in promoting queer freedom. Additional questions weighed in on the benefits and disadvantages of using social media. The qualitative side, on the other hand, had three questions that allowed for a more in-depth contribution to the topic of social media queer activism in Nigeria. It took an open-ended format, enabling participants to contribute to the survey in their own words. However,

consideration was given to the number of open-ended questions so as not to overwhelm

participants. See Table 1 for a list of all questions used in the survey.

Table 1: List of all questions used in the survey

1	What country do you live in?

2	Which of the following platforms do you use for activism? (Tick all that applies)
	
	a. Facebook
	
	   b. Instagram
	
	   c. YouTube
	
	   d. TikTok
	
	   e. Snapchat
	
	   f. Twitter
	
	   g. WhatsApp
	
	   h. Other

3	Which of these social media platforms do you use the most? (Tick just one) a. Facebook b. Instagram c. YouTube d. TikTok e. Snapchat f. WhatsApp e. Twitter

4	At what rate do you use the identified platform above? a. Daily b. 2-3 times a week c. 3-5 times a week d. Once a week e. Once a month
5	What do you think are some of the advantages to using the identified platform above for activism? (Tick all that applies) a. Community and support b. Mobilization and organizing c. Fundraising d. Awareness and Sensitization e. Other
6	What do you think the disadvantages are? (Tick all that applies) a. Online harassment and hate speeches b. Inadequate content moderation c. Content Censorship d. Polarizing algorithms e. Other
7	What kinds of labor are involved in digital activism? In other words, what does "digital activism" mean to you?

8	What are some strategies you use to remain resilient? In order words, how do you continue despite the physical and emotional labor involved with digital activism?
9	On a scale of 1-10, how optimistic are you about the use of social media in promoting the cause of emancipation for the Nigeria LGBTQ+ community?
10	What other issues about social media and LGBTQ+ activism in Nigeria would you like to share?

Altogether, the survey for this project polled 41 participants, with only 22 proving eligible. Participants were mostly from Nigeria, with others in the UK, US, Canada, and England or either splitting their time between the UK and Nigeria. I recruited participants mainly by sharing the survey on my Twitter account while soliciting the help of two Nigerian-based non-profit organizations focused on LGBTQ+ rights and care—The Initiative for Equal Rights (TIERS) and Queer Union For Economic and Social Transformation (QUEST). All participants in the survey passed the consent age mark of 18 and used their most preferred social media platform for activism on an almost daily basis (See Figure 2).

As for analysis, data collected from the study were filtered, schematized, and analyzed thematically. Thematic analysis is a handy and flexible framework for mapping and grouping similar ideas in qualitative research. According to Broun and Clark's (2006), thematic analysis can produce many interpretations of data, thereby leading to a more constructive interpretation than other approaches. And through its application in this study, final findings showing the high importance of social media platforms for queer activism in Nigeria and the issues within were derived.

Platform Utilization

As prior chapters have shown, social media has been a most profound site for digital activism within the Nigerian landscape. Queer and non-queer Nigerians alike have been able to utilize the varied forms of social media platforms and other digital outlets to engage and advocate on contentious issues within the country. Research documenting Nigerian queer history by Baker. et al. (2023), for instance, traces the earliest utilization of the internet and social media podiums first by the Queer Alliance group in 2008. Queer Alliance mostly adopted digital media to advance its goals of community building and support while also using it to expand its reach across the West African coast (Baker et al., 2023). Given the passage of the Same-sex Marriage Prohibition Act in 2014, LGBTQ+ organizations generally and members of the Nigerian queer community— with an internet advantage and literacy use— have resorted to this cyberspace to continue to forge resistance and advocate for their needs. This study establishes proof of this, first in its pilot study, as relayed in the first chapter, and second in the survey conducted for this project.

The survey, as indicated in Figure 1 below, confirms the use of social media for activism by Nigerian queers. 84.62% of participants in my survey confirmed that they use social media platforms for LGBTQ+ activism and community-building. In addition, most that do use these platforms are heavy users, with 70.59% interacting daily on social media (see Fig. 2). The remaining users were also frequent social media participants, with 11.76% using social media 3-5 times per week and 11.76% going online 2-3 times per week. Only 5.88% were monthly users of social media.

Fig 1. Survey showing the percentage of Nigerian queers who use social media platforms for activism and community-building
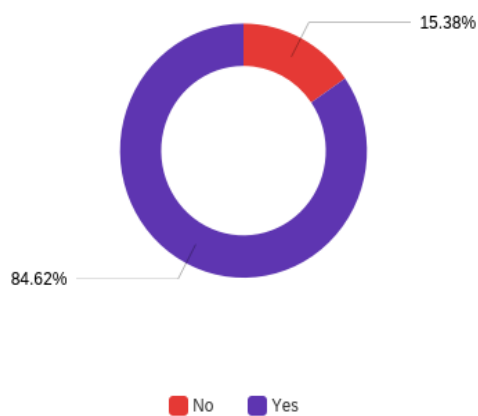
Fig 2. Survey indicating the rate at which participants use their preferred social media platform for activism
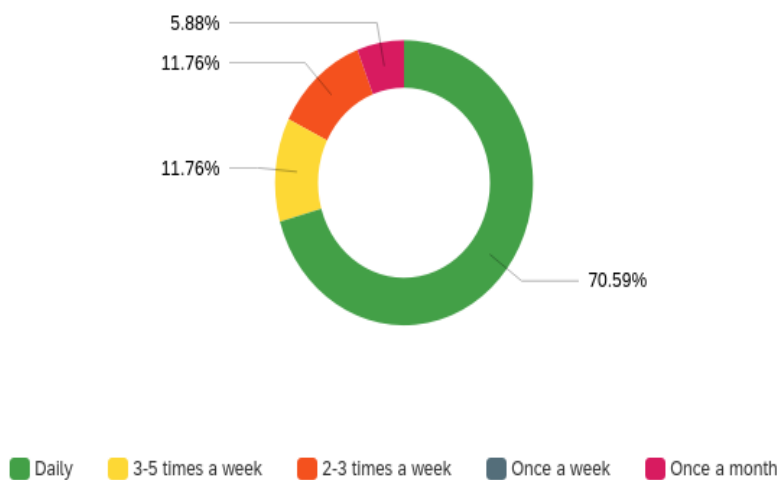
In terms of social media platforms, participants attest to using a wide variety, including Twitter (40%), Facebook (7.50%), Instagram (17.50%), WhatsApp (20.0%), YouTube (5.0%), Snapchat (2.50%), and TikTok (5.0%) (see Figure 3). The selection was limited to these seven platforms as these are some of Nigeria's most predominant sites for public engagement and youth-centered activism. However, this is not to mean that the Nigerian queer community does not interact or engage with other social media platforms emerging at different points in time for activism and advocacy. Clubhouse, for instance, was quickly integrated into the queer digital space when it emerged in 2020 (TIME Magazine). Matthew Blaise and a few others took to this audio-characterized platform to "organize several queer-focused chat rooms, discussing LGBTQ+ rights, the role of allies, safe-watching and gatekeeping," especially given their experiences during #EndSARS (TIME magazine). It was a more personal space than Twitter, as members articulated that they could go into these rooms to hear people talk and share their pains.

However, clubhouse eventually became minimally used by the community as the platform had no way of regulating and addressing issues of misinformation, homophobia, as well as malicious users who invaded queer chat rooms (TIME Magazine).

Fig 3. Survey illustrating the various social media platforms used by Nigerian queer activists
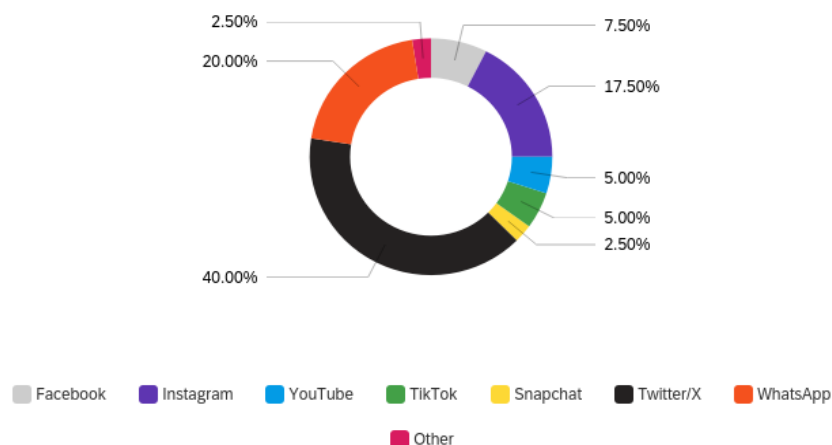
*Fig 4. Survey specifically illustrating the **most** utilized social media platform for activism*
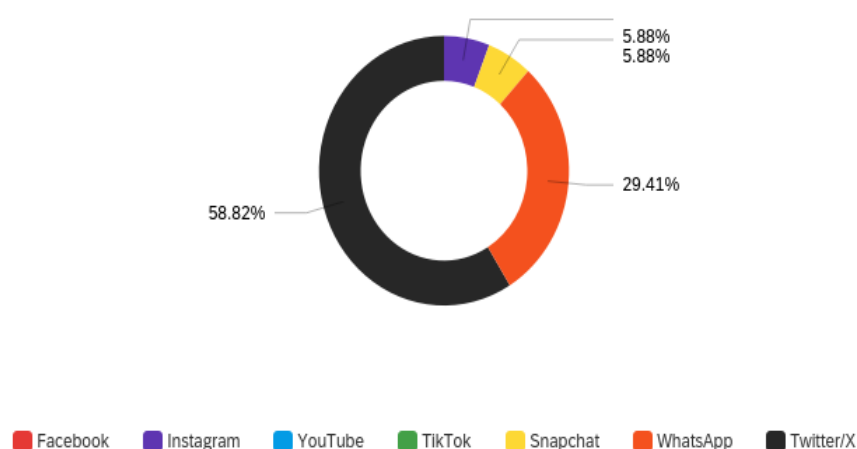
Although participants used a wide variety of social media platforms, Twitter/X was utilized most frequently (58.82%), followed by WhatsApp (29.41%) (see Figure 4). Nigeria's queer community and activists are finding Twitter/X to be a most relevant site and have continued to engage it on a high-level post-#EndSARS. My finding differs from Alichie (2022),

who found that Facebook was the most utilized platform for LGBTQ+ social media users in

Nigeria. Undisputedly, Nigerians still constitute a larger population of active social network

users on Facebook (Alichie, 2022). Still, my findings indicate that platform utilization can shift

frequently and that users may target specific platforms for different reasons at different times. In

this case, Twitter was likely most resorted to by queer activists due to the very political nature of

the platform, even before and after #EndSARS (Ihebuzor & Egbunike, 2018). More peculiar,

especially given Matthew Blaise's account to *Minority Africa[9],* is the swiftness of the platform

and its value in organizing and amplifying the works of local activists. Study from Oyinloye and

Omotayo (2023) will also indicate that Twitter is a likely go-to platform for activism in Nigeria,

judging by how easy it is to look for trends, build hashtags, and follow conversations on it,

unlike other platforms.

Positive Impact: Community Building and Support, Organizing, Fundraising, Awareness, and Sensitization

In line with the survey, participants' perceptions align with the outlined benefits of using

social media for queer activism. From building communities online to fundraising to mobilizing

and creating awareness and sensitization on queer issues to the public and members of the

community, the list remains inexhaustible. As the data from Fig. 5 indicates, 31.25% of

participants aligned more with social media's benefit at helping to raise awareness and sensitize

than other benefits. This is interesting to note, given the cultural context and sensibilities on

homosexuality as established in the prior chapter of this study. With hopes to change the tides of

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[9] See:https://minorityafrica.org/pride-to-prejudice-the-nigerian-queer-communitys-complex-relationship-with-social-media/

homophobia in Nigeria, queer activists best believe social media platforms have been there as tools to educate the public, for instance, on the very grounded history of same-sex practices before the onset of colonization. Repeatedly, comments and reactions trailing queer content on Twitter and YouTube, for instance, have always been that of denial by some Nigerians who insist on preserving thoughts on the Western importation of queer embodiment to the African continent. On a larger scale, activists also believe that social media works its way to help raise awareness on emerging issues affecting queer individuals to both local and global audiences such as the anti-crossdressing bill that is currently being scrutinized in the Nigerian senate. Also, the use of social media to raise awareness on the current wave of *Kito*. *Kito* is a popularly growing slang in Nigeria and neighboring African countries. *Kito*, alternatively translating to blackmail, captures how individuals who pretend to be queer on social media, and mainly dating apps like Grindr and Tinder, work to entrap LGBTQ+ persons. While a 2023 BBC African Eye documentary has broadly shed light on this issue and how it is committed, social media, particularly Twitter, has been utilized to raise awareness. Even in a recent thread on Twitter, journalists and queer activists have used the platform to amplify and track stories of victims and those who got lynched in the process.

While raising awareness and sensitizing the public has been the most beneficial advantage of social media on queer activism in Nigeria, participants also reckon with its impact in building online communities, fostering ties and support. 29.17% of participants' thoughts align significantly with this given the reality of SSMPA law in Nigeria. The enactment of the same-sex prohibition act in 2014 meant that many queer individuals were forced to live in the shadows, and some others in self-denial of their identity. Similarly, LGBTQ+ organizations working actively long before this period was also rendered invisible by registering as health-oriented non-

profit organizations (Baker et al., 2023); hence, social media was monumental in building a space where they could exist and stay committed to the task of building a community and supporting members away from the sore eyes of the public. On the other hand, participants from the pilot study believe that the affordability of an online community on social media does not just help create spaces for them to exist but also helps foster a sense of belonging, which translates to a happy and safe spot for them. Finding like-minded people on social media, they believe, increases their chances of being happy rather than constantly being depressed as warranted, given the laws and society they found themselves in. By safety as well, it means that when a member gets attacked or dunked online, others within the larger frame of the queer community can step in as an intermediary to defend and remedy the situation.

Having a community online means that they could also connect and draw support from the diasporic queer community. As the survey also draws from participants in and outside Nigeria (US, Canada, England/ United Kingdom), social media helps the diasporic community, in return, to connect and partake in the work at home. As a participant would state in the survey, social media is integral to the diaspora community, given their position to support those at home. Historically, in the scheme of things, pioneer leaders and LGBTQ+ activists who have sought asylum abroad have only been able to stay active, given the affordances of the internet and social media platforms. Micheal Ighodaro, one of the pioneers of queer activism, for instance, left Nigeria to seek asylum in the United States in 2012. Having undergone a very traumatic experience as a gay man in Nigeria, he thought it best to look out for himself. But ten years later, Ighodaro sought the need to return to Nigeria based on what he would see as a new generation of LGBTQ+ individuals and activists challenging the heteronormative status quo through their works on social media. Notably, he got inspired by James Brown, a young Nigerian gay man,

who stood up to the police when he was arrested alongside 47 others at an allegedly gay party initiation and became a social media sensation from there.

Ighodaro forms a connection with James Brown and many others he would come to meet when he visits Nigeria. Similarly, when he returns to New York, he continues to build on this connection, following closely with activities online and providing support through his involvement with LGBTQ+ organizations back home and his work with OutRight Action International, a leading global LGBTQ organization in the United States. The same can also be said of Bisi Alimi, a leading figure in the history of Nigerian queer activism. Also known as the first Nigerian to open up about his sexuality on national television, Alimi relates his depressing experience when he first moved to the UK as a refugee in 2007 in a Slazburg global LGBT Forum. His depression, he states, was mainly a result of the guilt he felt by leaving others behind and his inability to see himself still tending to the demands of activism from abroad. In working through this perturbing state of mind, Alimi finds a home in his new environment eventually and works, via digital and social media means, to contribute to the affairs of the Nigerian queer community from the UK. He does this explicitly through his Western-based foundation, The Bisi Alimi Foundation, which caters to research, collaborations, training, and development of social media campaigns challenging the perceptions of LGBTQ+ persons in Nigeria and more.

Social media has also proven beneficial in mobilizing, organizing and enjoining people to a cause or action. The #EndSARS movement, for one, is proof of this. And as also outlined in previous chapters, queer activists also worked their way to use social media to mobilize members of their community to join the protest. Although 22.92% of participants in the survey aligned with this, individuals from the pilot study seem to be more in tune with social media benefits for mobilizing, especially after #EndSARS. They attest that they use social media more now to

mobilize human-based or monetary resources for members, particularly for trans individuals who get violated in public spaces. When they are not on social media mobilizing on the grounds of justice or service-based action, they organize events and foster various means of reaching out to their community.

Fig 5. Survey illustrating benefits of social media for queer activism
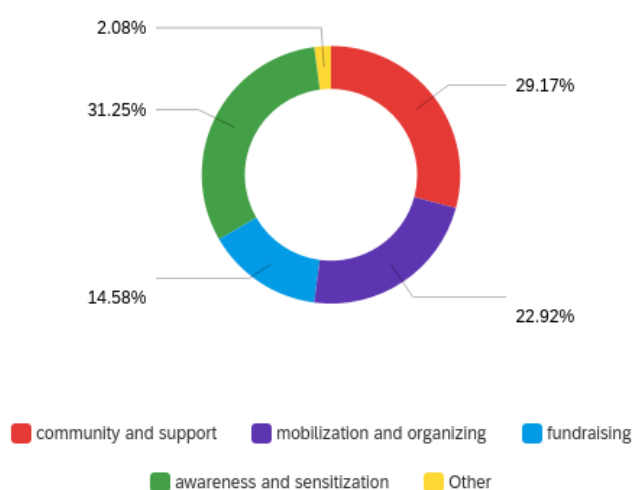
Negative Impact: Online Harassment and hate speech, Content Censorship, Polarizing Algorithms, Inadequate Content Moderation

The negative impact of social media on queer activism, as captured in the survey, transcends the spaces of online harassment and hate speech to encapsulate other issues like inadequate content moderation, content censorship, and polarizing algorithms, among others. The data in Fig 6 shows that many participants align with the problem of online harassment and hate speech more than others. Online harassment and hate speech are a given, as social media is a space that equally accommodates anti-LGBTQ+ groups and users. Onanuga (2023), for

example, is his analysis of anti-homonationalism vents on Twitterverse, maps out a Northern-derived anti-LGBTQ group (#ArewaAgainstLGBTQ) who actively strive to "reclaim the visibility and agency" that digital media spaces afford the Nigerian queer community. Through his collated data, there is an insight into how groups like this wield language and hashtag campaigns to denounce any advances of queer ideologies or support in the country on social media.

Anti-LGBTQ+ groups aside, individuals in their anti-belief on homosexuality, also subject LGBTQ activists and users to trolls and cyberbullying, the result of which affects their mental well-being. Many queer activists, both in the pilot study and survey as well, report embarking on an occasional social media hiatus to heal from these attacks. While there may be so much benefit to the visibility that platforms like Twitter and Facebook give members, some have also been forced to exist under anonymous accounts to preserve their sanity and reduce the possibility of being identified in the public space where the attacks are further transported. On Twitter, anonymity is established through the creation of 'bunker' or 'pseudo' accounts. However, as participants will share in the survey, queer individuals can still get outed and trolled within these spaces when they are seen supporting specific causes online or just by adding the "he/him" label in their Twitter bio. Either way, social media might not just be the utopic space they envisaged as it has equally become a breeding space for hate, trolls, blackmail, and cyberbullying. As earlier referenced, the enactment of the same-sex Marriage Prohibition Act in 2014 only went further to shift and heighten the state of homophobia online.

If one of the potential benefits of using social media has been its ability to champion the collective effort of queer activists online, it has also had a way of undermining their labor through factors of algorithms and polarizing content. Algorithms, in principle, work to "reduce

the complexity brought about by information and interaction overload on social media" (Coretti and Picca, 2018, p. 73). It uses 'sorting, filtering, and ranking functions" (Neumayer and Rossi, 2016, p. 4). However, arguments have been made in the design of algorithms to either marginalize or make profit-oriented content recommendations to users ('Global Digital Cultures' Web). As a result, users inclined to follow through with such recommendations may have their feeds overly saturated with those contents, preventing their attention from other subject matters of interest on social media. 11.76% of respondents in the survey indicate that the issue of polarizing algorithms has equally been a major problem of social media on queer activism in Nigeria, even though it pales in comparison with that of online harassment and hate speeches. As participants will reveal from the pilot study, polarizing algorithms work to intercept their viewing and engagement of related content that speaks to their community, particularly controversial ones. For instance, in 2017, they shared that when Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, famous Nigerian novelist and feminist, gave the trans-exclusionary response to a question in an interview with Channel 4, their social media page, particularly for queer activists and users who use YouTube, was heavily polarized with other contents preventing their viewing and engagement of the subject. Thus, while social media generally might have a way of empowering queer activists, it doubles back on this with these setbacks highlighted.

Inadequate content moderation, on the other hand, however important, might take the least position on the radar of social media's impact on queer activism in Nigeria. As reflected in the survey, issues of inadequate content moderation are at a 5.88% standing for the Nigerian queer community. But it is still an issue given that queer activists utilize social media as a way of telling their stories while hoping it could serve as a digital archive for researchers or other online users interested in digging out queer stories that could positively help influence the tide of

LGBTQ rights in the country. This is, however, made complicated if they must view contents that only seem to amplify homophobic utterances unsparingly. Thus, a proper measure of moderating harmful content on social media will entail that several hate speeches and accounts are flagged down. It would also mean that unconsented, violated videos of queer persons, as participants would share in the pilot study, do not make the rounds on social media.

Aside from hate speeches, Twitter's inadequacies with content moderation have been noted with its capacity to enable the regurgitation of pornographic and unconsented violation videos of queer persons. Specifically with trans individuals, activists attribute Twitter's way of aiding, rather than impeding, the circulation of videos where they have been violated and outed to the public space. Trans persons in Nigeria have occasionally suffered being outed and humiliated. And unlike in prior years, Nigerians are increasingly becoming aware of trans identities within the queer community. Either by channels of modelling, beauty culture, or fashion shows, trans individuals make visible their attempt at challenging heteronormativity using social media. However, such an opportunity provided by cyberspace also has a downside to it.

Fig 6. Survey illustrating the negative impact of social media on queer activism
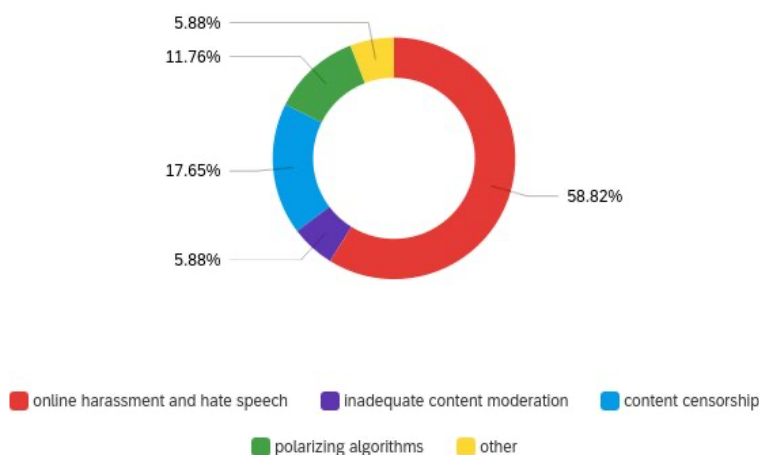
Grounding the Labor of Queer Activists Online

As queer social media activism in Nigeria takes the form of organizing and mobilizing to building online communities as well as pushing through the boundaries that make activism difficult online, this section hopes to highlight and connect salient aspects of labor often associated with it.

a.   **Connecting with others as a form of labor**

From the pilot study and survey conducted for this study, most participants started with activism or queer advocacy on social media with the primary hope of connecting with other members of their community. This initiative, therefore, came with the task of constantly showing up online, creating content for engagement, and the mental alertness to receive new connections they form online. Particularly for participants who heavily utilize YouTube, they were able to reach and develop a sizable fan-based community online with little thought as to what additional amount of work this might result for them later. While it was empowering to be recognized and even more fulfilling to validate other people's experiences through their work, participants, particularly from the pilot study, soon realized how much mental and emotional labor it was to be in that position for others.

They became the go-to person, or as framed by one of the participants, an "unpaid therapist" for individuals who personally choose to reach out to talk about their experience or exercise their need for help. Participants also highlighted the traumatic burden that comes with going through their emails, listening to voice notes, or personal messages detailing other people's homophobic experiences, be it in cases where they have been brutally beaten or thrown out of their homes. This, they note, could be harder to deal with as opposed to the trolls they face as queer activists online.

b. **Providing mutual aid and support as a form of labor**

While LGBTQ+-oriented non-governmental organizations in and outside of Nigeria may provide mutual aid and support to members, participants from the survey also highlight how they individually embark on this task. As mentioned in the preceding section, participants found themselves working beyond the capacity of just sharing and amplifying queer experiences on social media to include other invisible yet demanding aspects of support they provide to members offline. This aspect of work done offline, also corresponded by participants in the survey, involves deploying their network and personal resources to attend to issues of personal importance or consequence to concerned parties. They do not get paid to do it, nor do they expect to get any compensation for this work.

c. **Educating self and others as a form of labor**

Very integral to the work of queer social media activism is the tremendous amount of time and resources participants dedicate to educating themselves and others. Participants from the pilot study, for one, share personal research work building on queer digital rights and safety as well as plans to earn advanced degrees so that they can be more equipped for the work they do as activists. By educating themselves, they can also educate others who look up to them. In educating others, they go out of their way to conduct workshops, seminars, and online study groups as participants form the survey will share, just so members are well acquitted on queer issues, their rights as citizens as well as relevant digital skills needed to combat homophobia online. Also worthy of mention, especially from participants in the pilot study, is that they educate non-queer audiences online and offline, but only when they are met with some level of openness and awareness, as prior experiences have only weakened their resolve to even try.

d. Curtailing misinformation as a form of labor

Given how steep homophobia is and the misconceptions that seem to flare up constantly, queer activists do a gruesome job working to inform and persuade public audiences through various digital means. While they utilize social media platforms to do this, they also have to deal with the damaging effects of how fast misinformation spreads on these platforms. As Currier and Moreau (2016) postulates, the rapid rate at which disinformation spreads on social media, for instance, causes enormous worries for LGBTQ+ activists and organization who have little control on other people's interpretation of these messages. Moreso with Western tabloids, who they mention, at the very hearing of the implementation of the anti-gays laws in Nigeria and Uganda took to a general framing of the entire African nations and her citizens as homophobic. So, while LGBTQ+ activists work to curtail the spread of information locally, they also may have to deal with false impressions circulated by Western audiences too as well.

e. Resistance and self-care as a form of labor

Despite the challenges that come with queer activism and the gruesome aspect of visible and invisible labor involved, participants attest to resistance and self-care strategies that keep them going in both methods of research. Either by taking time off social media whenever it is replete with polarizing topics and views that promote homophobia or by being on the lookout for an active network of queer activists to draw support and motivation from, these strategies are a form of labor that participants engage in. While this practice might seem well put together, participants from the survey point out how difficult it can be to suppress their emotions and anxieties despite these self-regulatory practices they embrace on social media. Others may manage their anxieties in another loop through therapy sessions and routine exercises.

Gauging the Potential of Social Media for Queer Emancipation in Nigeria

Discussion rallied so far around queer social media activism in Nigeria might appear to weigh more on the negative than the positive side. However, given how many participants attest to using these platforms daily (as indicated in the chart in Fig 2), it might be challenging to gauge where the community stands on this. However, for the concluding part of this project, I draw from further findings from my data to clarify this ambiguity. I do this by explicitly asking participants to weigh their opinion on a scale of 1-10 (with 1 showing the least amount of optimism and 10 showing the highest amount) on the potential of social media (as a tool/site) to aid the facilitation of queer rights and freedom in Nigeria.

Fig 7. Chart weighing in on social media potential as liberatory tools for LGBTQ+ rights
The scale is on a preference of 1-10, with 10 being activists' most significant indication of optimism.
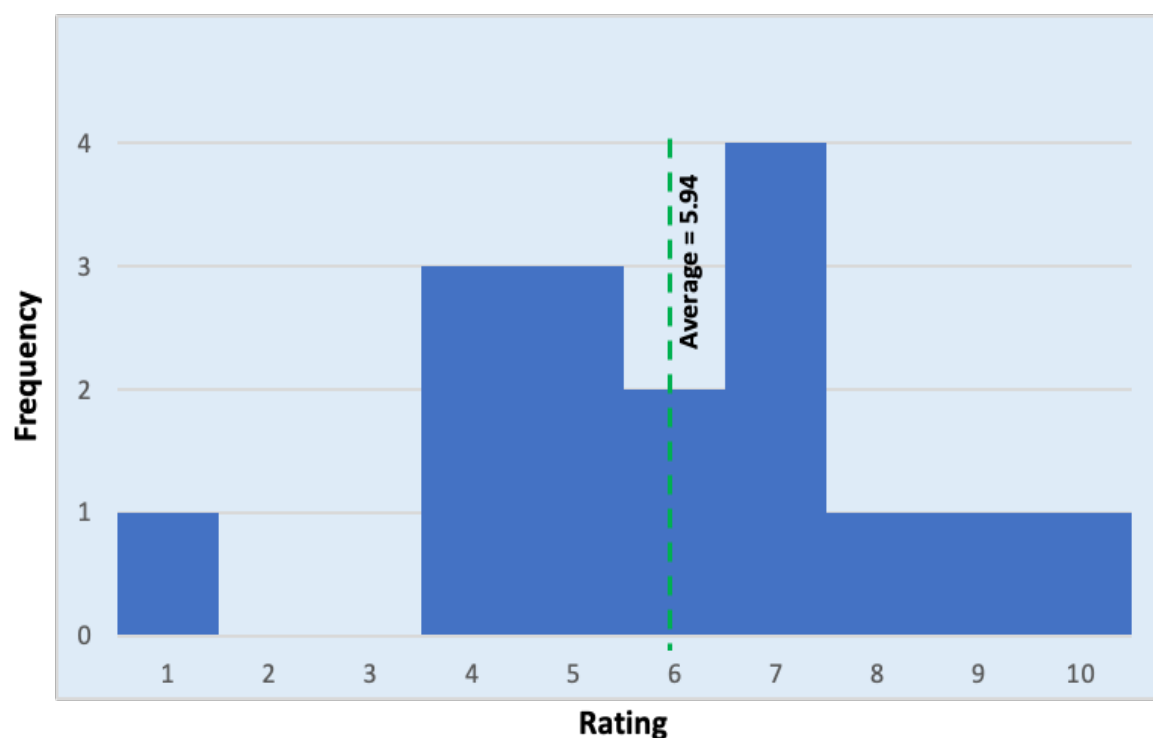
From the chart, 16 participants attempted this question, indicating an over-average point of 5.94. The average was calculated using a weighted mean system instead of a simple average method to provide accuracy. In arriving at the average point, each rating was multiplied by the number of frequencies (i.e. no of respondents) that gave each corresponding weight (ranking). The sum of all the individual multiplications was then divided by the total frequency, in this case, the total number of respondents (16). Participants who attempted this part of the question are from Nigeria for the most part, with others in the UK and Canada. Notwithstanding their location, there is an agreeable (average) level of need and optimism about social media. They recognize its value in helping turn things around for their community. As a participant will point out in the survey, "Social media is a conversation starter for the LGBTQ+ community in Nigeria as it enables the average member of the community to air their views (albeit with occasional backlash) and lends a voice to those who otherwise wouldn't have one". More importantly, as a space that enables queer conversations, such accommodation, they add, helps trigger empathy among non-queer users active on social media. This thought has also been corroborated by participants in the pilot study who attest to randomly meeting followers and strangers who offer their sympathy and support. Consequently, having this in place, they believe, can help increase the allyship and tolerance they hope to get from society.

On the other hand, while participants recognize the power that social media platforms wield, they are mindful of pointing out more essential aspects of groundwork activism, such as working together offline, and putting out campaigns and action points that could help legitimate queer rights and expression in the country. As a participant suggested from the pilot study, "social media is only a place, not a land"; hence, a need to initiate grounded work that can actively complement what is being done online.

Beyond Technology Determinism: Highlighting the Problematics of Queer Individuality over Communality

Whether or not there is a privileging of technological platforms like social media to help revolutionize or change the tides of queer activism in Nigeria, there are other underlying issues within the queer community that impede or spill into the workflow of activism on these techno spaces, and that participants posit must be investigated as well. The first of which a participant from the survey frames as the issue of "self-aggrandizement" or "whataboutism" in LGBTQ activism in Nigeria today. This, they posit, has made it fundamentally difficult for LGBTQ+ activism to penetrate mainstream society without resistance. There might be so many examples from which the participant draws from. Still, one that speaks quite poignantly to this issue is the exemplary character of Bobrisky, Nigerian most popular transwoman and social media personality. With a large following on all her social media accounts, Bobrisky's exemplification of gender modification, sartorial choices on social media, and entrepreneurship has been one that has called for different positions within and outside of the queer community. Although Bobrisky has never publicly declared herself as queer, her personality, excessive influence, and connections as Unoma Azuah will put it, "revolutionizes the Nigerian concept of queerness and chips away at the concrete slab of gender normativity in Nigeria " (2021, p. 3).

On the contrary, some members of the queer community, as attested by participants in the pilot study, articulate that Bobrisky's activities take the queer community ten steps back. The politics and ideas that she exudes on social media, they believe, give the wrong idea to the public and consequently heighten the level of hate and cyberbullying they experience on social media. Particularly with events from August of 2023 when Bobrisky made a critical remark condemning

the actions of 67 gay suspects men who were gathered for a gay wedding as against the law, some members of the community saw it as an output of her non-allegiance to the community.

This and many more scenarios ultimately make one wonder as well if this was the core reason why some members of the queer community failed to intervene or show up for Bobrisky when she got arrested over mutilation of the country's currency (the naira) in April of 2024. Elsewhere, one might discuss how Bobrisky's eventual arrest speaks to the subtle ways in which the court, and not just the police and the media, is still being used to enforce strict intolerance of non-conforming behaviors, as history has been able to show. Bobrisky is not the first and only person to have mutilated the naira at party events. Customarily, Nigerians are known to flaunt the naira notes in celebration of a loved one at parties. But perhaps as an underlying message to get to her and others, Bobrisky became a prawn in the scheme of things and was subjected to a jail term of ten months with no option of a fine. Worthy to note that Bobrisky's connections and capital influence have made her untouchable to law officiating officers in Nigeria in the past. As other queers have been able to admit in the HBO documentary, *Legends of the Underground,* being in a position of capital and social wealth helps drive queer power and resistance in a country like Nigeria. Moreso, it offers the right amount of protection from getting beaten by local street gangs or being arrested. Alas, such proved not to be the case when Bobrisky got arrested. Her money and level of influence did not buy her immunity against LGBTQ+ criminating personnel. Moreso, she was left to bear her cross alone with only a few queer persons admonishing for her release.

In another facet, a lack of communality is also implied in the unspoken riff between queer activists doubling as creatives and queer activists leading LGBTQ+ oriented NGOs in Nigeria. Already, as a participant will share from the pilot study, queer creatives are already perceived as

jokes. Despite putting out content that reflects their everyday struggles and pains, they argue that the larger population of Nigerians has never taken them seriously. And a good example of this, they cite, is how prolific comedians and singers in the country take every chance they get to ridicule queer/trans culture in their crafts. But even more aggravating, as they would add, is the fact that LGBTQ+-centered NGOs do not consider them as activists. Still, rather they see them as a mere form of entertainment, a consequence for which they state unity, collaborations, and empowerment initiatives have failed to abound among them. There are assertions, for instance, about the various ways in which a social media platform like YouTube empowers and disempowers queer creatives in Nigeria. YouTube, by its nature, is designed to empower users. Its interactive platform features, design, and user policies have been argued to allow people– regardless of age, gender, sexuality, class, and social standing— to be creators and build a fan-based community (Savage, 2015). YouTube communities are also suggested to have solved one of the fundamental problems of online interactions: the lack of face-to-face interaction in cyberspace. As a remedy, YouTube "puts millions of faces online" (Savage, 2015, p.12). As a participant will also add from the pilot study, YouTube's addition of a filtering feature allows them to filter out harmful or hateful comments they do not want to see. Plus, it has no inbox features as an alternative means for followers to do this. These collectively have been empowering, they state, unlike Twitter, where such comments can thrive.

Participants recount, on the other hand, that YouTube works to disempower queer creatives by the inherent challenges they face in accessing brand collaborations, unlike their non-queer peers on the platform. Given the fame and support many of them have garnered by utilizing YouTube and other social media platforms, they believe they should be able to stay empowered within that system. However, YouTube's attempt at hindering, rather than fostering

profitable gains for queer Nigeria creatives, they outline, has been disempowering. This situation is best illustrated in outside claims that cites how YouTube sets up its algorithms to shut out vital ad revenues to videos it deems un-advertiser-friendly based on certain parameters that users do not know. These parameters could be pegged on LGBTQ+-related vocabulary, among others. However, as participants will put it, older generations of LGBTQ+ activists running non-governmental organizations can get ahead of YouTube by creating initiatives that empower community members. Some of this, they cite, could include grant-soliciting workshops, storytelling classes, and facilitation of healthy collaborations that are within reach. However, issues like self-gratification and personal interests, they add, seem to abound more. In specific terms, they note that older generations of LGBTQ+ individuals pivoting to these organizations are more interested in positioning themselves in history or seeking out sexual relationships with the younger generations as a way of experiencing their youthful queerness rather than initiating mentoring relationships and empowering projects. Perhaps this is where the frame of groundwork activism priorly suggested might come in. Community members can anticipate engaging closely with one another outside of social media and iron out issues that might strain their collective goal.

CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

Overall, this study has been able to attest to the various ways social media is shaping the discourse around queer rights and activism in Nigeria today, especially given inspiration from the #BlackLivesMatter movement in the US and other national movements close to home. From advancement in queer visibility to reformulation of communities, mass organizing, fundraising, and sensitization to online harassment, hate speech, algorithm biases and censorship, among others, its impacts lie across both positive and negative boards. It is also important to establish that these inherent benefits and concerns of social media levels equally with queer social media activists both in Nigeria and in the diaspora. This study also gives credit to Twitter/X as the most profound site for queer activism in Nigeria but also establishes that platform utilization can shift, and members might target specific platforms for different reasons at different points in time.

Also intrinsic to this study is its conscious attempt to lay out the salient aspect of visible and invisible labor that further complicates the value of social media for the community. The amount of time spent organizing, curtailing misformation, educating people, forging resistance, and even the emotional turmoil and vulnerable presentation of self that comes with creating queer content online, among a host of other draining efforts, shapes the broader knowledge of what constitutes queer social media activism in Nigeria today. But despite all of these, the consensus derived from this study is that social media remains an essential tool in the fight against homophobia and, more so, in the larger quest of attaining queer rights and freedom. Thus, members continue to stay optimistic and forge resistance within these digital-mediated spaces.

In addition, this study establishes a call to supplement online efforts with traditional modes of defiance (i.e., offline campaigns, demonstrations, community teachings, and engagement), otherwise labelled as groundwork activism in this work. The importance of groundwork activism is majorly emphasized, given the drawbacks of social media highlighted in this study. On the aside, this study, therefore, makes probable suggestions to link groundwork activism to tackle the much weightier issues of self-aggrandizement, individualism, division, and disempowerment identified within the much bigger frame of Nigerian LGBTQ+ discourse. Groundwork activism, a suggestive framework from participants in this study, would probably enhance commitment, strengthen ties (especially given what Wakeford highlights about weak ties— queer individuals who do not necessarily form bonds with others online), build resilience, and desire to push through the challenges of LGBTQ+ issues as a community. However, it is also important to point out here that such groundwork display of activism may face its own inherent challenges, such as being disrupted by intolerant non-queer Nigerians, as was the case during the #EndSARS protest.

Ultimately, this study concludes on a note of collectiveness, unity, and support among Nigerian queer activists and individuals rather than just on the core of expanding on the topicality of social media's impact on queer activism.

Limitation of Findings

The limitation of this study is primarily associated with the mode of data collection. Early in this study, I established that I recruited participants by sharing the survey solely on my Twitter account (while soliciting the help of two LGBTQ+-oriented non-governmental organizations), and not across all variable social media platforms used in Nigeria. This could have resulted in a fuller data sample size. However, my sole resort to Twitter was due to the difficulty I had faced

in recruiting participants from other social media platforms during the pilot study. Moreso, Twitter was the benchmark for queer activism during #EndSARS and still is, as findings from the survey would also show, and therefore made more sense to recruit solely from there. However, a future expansion of this study should consider distributing the surveys across all social media platforms. Additionally, I got feedback from the NGOs who supported the survey distribution. They relate those members had trouble giving their full disclosure to one or two questions. This was probably due to internet glitches or the design of the question itself on Qualtrics. However, this impacted the number of data I got on those questions.

Suggestion for Future Research

This study has been able to establish X as the most revered site of queer activism in Nigeria. However, the concluding results from the pilot study suggest a gradual shift to TikTok. Participants make a case for TikTok as a safer space for their community and their work; thus, a future direction of this study could explore the site of TikTok as a utopic or dystopic space as opposed to other platforms. Following the larger conversations on how social media companies (mainly from Twitter and Facebook) have done little to protect the LGBTQ+ community, it also leaves much room to center TikTok and ask what about it makes it different from others or if it equally carries the same frames of reproducing inequalities. It also makes a study to understand how the dynamics of neoliberal interests might work on this site and if, indeed, the queer community in Nigeria can foresee a social media space that lays less claim on regulating their privacy, data, and activities.

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