

# **Nigerian Practices of Male-to-Female Cross-Dressing: Exploring Gender Transgressions in Digital Youth Culture**

Rowland Chukwuemeka Amaefula

## **Abstract**

This research examines how selected Nigerian youths adopt cross-dressing and concomitant expressions to transgress normative gender roles on social media. In most parts of Africa, gender non-conformance is criminalised. As a result, transvestism is shunned and Nigerian scholars have largely failed to study the un/framing of gender beyond the binary structure. In the few instances in which they have studied acts of transvestism, they have assessed them in line with governmental viewpoints, as acts of derisory subjects. Focusing on male-to-female cross-dressing (MCD) and transvestism on online platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and TikTok, this study aims at filling a blatant research gap and at countering partial research perspectives.

Focusing on the social media performances of Idris Okuneye (Bobrisky), James Brown (Princess of Africa), and Daniel Anthony Nsikan (Jay Boogie), I argue that these characters cross-dress and adopt gender non-conforming identities to construct new selves and challenge the political status quo. By way of online performances, they counter legal constraints and contest their social and cultural exclusion.

Using an interdisciplinary methodology – methods of performance studies and digital humanities are combined with those of literary and cultural analysis, I examine the kinds of non-binary genders they perform. I discuss how they realise their acts, deploying, exaggerating, and dismantling theatrical elements and hegemonic gender stereotypes of Nigerian culture and other African societies. I also enquire how digital media are used to construct gender beyond binary structures. Adding qualitative research methods, I also analyse the ways different online/offline groups receive these performances. Finally, I gauge the potential effects of these gender-challenging online performances on an individual, communal, and cultural level. By so doing, I will become an expert on online performances and gender non-binaries in Africa.

**Keywords:** cross-dressing, digital transvestism, Nigerian youth culture, non-binary gender, social media, performance.