



DISCOURSE PRACTICES IN FACEBOOK COMMENTERS ON LGBTQ INDIVIDUALS IN NIGERIA BETWEEN 2020 AND 2025

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Abstract

This study examines the discourse practices in Facebook comments regarding LGBTQ persons in Nigeria, with a focus on the linguistic strategies, ideological positions, and social meanings embedded in online interactions. Utilizing a qualitative research design, data were purposively collected from comment sections of selected public Facebook posts addressing LGBTQ issues in Nigeria. The study is anchored in Critical Discourse Analysis, specifically Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model, which analyses discourse at the textual, discursive practice, and social practice levels. Analysis of the data revealed that the majority of comments employed moral-religious, legal, and cultural arguments to construct negative attitudes toward LGBTQ persons, often using strategies such as labelling, othering, and rhetorical questioning. Linguistic features including evaluative adjectives, metaphors, pronouns, and sarcasm were observed to reinforce dominant societal norms and marginalize sexual minorities. A smaller portion of comments, however, expressed tolerance and support, emphasizing human rights, equality, and respect for diversity. These findings indicate that Facebook functions both as a reflection of prevailing societal ideologies and as a site for contesting normative views, illustrating the complex role of digital discourse in shaping public opinion and social identity. The study concludes that online language is a powerful tool for negotiating power, ideology, and social norms in contemporary Nigerian society and highlights the need for awareness of how discourse can perpetuate marginalization or foster inclusivity.

Keywords: Discourse Practices, Facebook, LGBTQ people, Nigeria, Critical Discourse Analysis



Introduction

The rise of social media has transformed how individuals participate in public discourse and express opinions about social issues. Social media platforms such as Facebook have become important spaces where users negotiate identities, debate social values, and construct meanings through language. In many societies, online comment sections function as arenas where competing ideologies are articulated and contested. Discourse Analysts note that the language used in such digital interactions reflects broader cultural beliefs, power relations, and social tensions present within a society. Consequently, examining online discourse provides insight into how social groups are represented and evaluated within public conversations.

Within the field of Sociolinguistics, discourse is understood not merely as language in use but as a social practice that shapes and is shaped by societal structures. According to Fairclough (1995), discourse operates at the intersection of text, interaction, and social context, making it a valuable lens for analysing how social realities are constructed through language. Online communication platforms have further expanded the contexts in which discourse practices occur, enabling individuals to publicly express opinions that may reinforce or challenge dominant ideologies. As a result, the study of digital discourse has become an important area of inquiry in contemporary linguistic research.

In recent years, social media discussions about sexual minorities have become increasingly visible across different cultural contexts. Globally, issues relating to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) communities often generate intense debate online. Researchers have observed that digital platforms frequently host polarized discussions where users employ various linguistic strategies such as labelling, moral evaluation, and ideological positioning to express their attitudes toward LGBTQ individuals (van Dijk, 2006). These discursive practices contribute to the construction of social identities and the reinforcement or contestation of societal norms surrounding sexuality.

In the Nigerian context, public discussions about LGBTQ individuals are shaped by strong cultural, religious, and legal influences. Interestingly, Nigeria is widely regarded as a socially conservative society where religious beliefs and traditional values play significant roles in shaping attitudes toward sexuality. The enactment of the Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act institutionalized negative perceptions of same-sex relationships by criminalizing same-sex marriage and certain forms of LGBTQ association. As a result, public discourse about LGBTQ issues in Nigeria often reflects broader socio-legal attitudes and ideological positions within the society.

Social media platforms have become prominent sites where these attitudes are expressed and negotiated. On the Facebook platform in particular, comment sections under news posts, activist discussions, and viral contents often contain a wide range of reactions from users. These comments may include expressions of condemnation, moral judgment, religious interpretations, humour, or occasionally support for LGBTQ rights. Such interactions illustrate how online discourse can function as a reflection of prevailing societal attitudes as well as a space where individuals perform identity and group affiliation through language.

From the theoretical perspective, the analysis of online discourse is often guided by approaches such as CDA. Scholars such as van Dijk argue that discourse plays a crucial role in the reproduction of social power and ideology, particularly in contexts where certain groups are marginalized or stigmatized. Through linguistic choices, argumentation patterns, and rhetorical strategies, speakers and writers can reinforce dominant perspectives while delegitimizing alternative viewpoints. Therefore, examining Facebook comments about LGBTQ persons offers an opportunity to explore how language contributes to the construction and reinforcement of social attitudes.

Furthermore, online comment sections often reveal discursive strategies that may not be as visible in formal communication. The relative anonymity and immediacy of social media interaction encourage users to employ expressive language, including sarcasm, ridicule, religious references, and moral arguments. These linguistic practices can shape public perception by framing LGBTQ individuals in particular ways and influencing how audiences interpret social issues. Studying these patterns provides valuable insights into how digital discourse contributes to the reproduction of social ideologies within Nigerian society.



Despite growing interest in digital discourse, there remains limited scholarly attention to the specific ways Nigerian Facebook users construct and negotiate meanings about LGBTQ practitioners through language. Understanding these discourse practices is important because online conversations increasingly influence public opinion and social attitudes. Consequently, this study seeks to examine the discourse practices employed by Facebook commenters when discussing LGBTQ practitioners in Nigeria, with the aim of identifying the linguistic strategies, ideological positions, and social meanings embedded in these online interactions.

Statement of the Research Problem

Despite the growing prominence of social media as a platform for public engagement and expression of opinions, there remains limited scholarly attention to how Nigerian online users construct meanings about sexual minorities through language in digital spaces. The Facebook as a social media platform has become a major arenas where individuals express attitudes, beliefs, and ideological positions on sensitive social issues, including discussions about LGBTQ practitioners. In Nigeria, these discussions are often shaped by strong religious, cultural, and legal influences, particularly following the enactment of the Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act, which has significantly influenced public perceptions and discourse surrounding same-sex relationships. Although previous studies in Discourse Analysis and Sociolinguistics have examined online discourse and identity construction in various examples, there is still a noticeable gap in research focusing specifically on the discursive practices employed by Nigerian Facebook users when reacting to or discussing LGBTQ rights. In many instances, comment sections on Facebook posts related to LGBTQ issues contain diverse linguistic expressions ranging from condemnation, moral judgment, and religious justification to occasional expressions of tolerance or support. However, the specific strategies through which these attitudes are constructed, justified, and circulated through language remain underexplored in Nigerian scholarship. Furthermore, without a systematic examination of these discourse patterns, it becomes difficult to fully understand how social media conversations contribute to the reinforcement of dominant ideologies, the marginalization of certain social groups, or the negotiation of social identities in contemporary Nigerian society. Therefore, the problem this study addresses is the lack of detailed linguistic and discourse-based analysis of Facebook comments and responses to issues relating to LGBTQ individuals in Nigeria, particularly in terms of the discursive strategies, ideological positions, and social meanings embedded in their online interactions.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are:

- i. to identify the discursive strategies employed by Facebook users when discussing LGBTQ individuals in Nigeria.
- ii. to examine how language used by Facebook commenters constructs attitudes, identities, and ideological positions toward LGBTQ practitioners within the Nigerian socio-cultural context.
- iii. to analyze how the discourse of Facebook commenters reflects broader social influences such as cultural values, religious beliefs, and legal frameworks, particularly the Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act.

Literature Review

The study of discourse in digital environments has attracted increasing scholarly attention due to the growing influence of social media on public communication. Various scholars in Discourse Analysis have argued that language used in online interactions reflects broader ideological positions, social norms, and power relations embedded in society. Fairclough (1995) asserts that discourse is a form of social practice that both shapes and is shaped by the social structures within which it occurs. With the expansion of digital platforms such as Facebook, individuals now participate more actively in public debates, often expressing opinions on social and political issues through comment sections. These online spaces therefore provide rich data for examining how language is used to construct social realities and negotiate ideological positions.

Within the broader field of Sociolinguistics, scholars emphasize that language plays a crucial role in the construction of identity and social relationships. Online discourse enables individuals to align themselves with particular groups, beliefs, or ideologies through linguistic choices and rhetorical strategies. In the words of van Dijk (2006), discourse is closely linked to ideology, as language can reproduce dominant social beliefs and reinforce group boundaries. In



digital environments, users frequently employ evaluative language, metaphors, and labelling to express attitudes toward social groups. These linguistic practices can either reinforce marginalization or challenge dominant narratives within society.

Social media platforms have significantly expanded the opportunities for public participation in discourse about sexuality and identity. Studies have shown that discussions about LGBTQ issues often generate intense engagement on digital platforms. Research indicates that comment sections frequently become spaces where users articulate moral judgments, religious arguments, and cultural interpretations regarding sexual minorities (Boyd, 2014). Because social media allows immediate and widespread interaction, the language used in such discussions often reflects deeply held beliefs and societal tensions surrounding issues of sexuality and identity.

In some societies, the discourse surrounding LGBTQ communities is influenced by cultural, religious, and political factors. Scholars have noted that public conversations about sexual minorities often involve discursive strategies that frame LGBTQ individuals in moral, religious, or legal terms. These strategies may include the use of derogatory labels, appeals to tradition, or references to religious authority (van Dijk, 2006). Such linguistic constructions contribute to the social representation of LGBTQ communities and shape how they are perceived within public discourse. Consequently, the study of these discursive practices helps reveal underlying societal attitudes and ideological frameworks.

The Nigerian context provides a particularly significant environment for examining discourse about LGBTQ practitioners. Nigerian society is strongly influenced by religious and cultural values that shape public attitudes toward sexuality. The passage of the Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act has further reinforced dominant negative perceptions of same-sex relationships by criminalizing same-sex marriage and certain forms of LGBTQ association. Scholars argue that legal frameworks often influence public discourse by legitimizing certain viewpoints while discouraging others (Human Rights Watch, 2016). As a result, conversations about LGBTQ issues in Nigeria frequently reflect the moral and legal frameworks embedded within the society.

Social media platforms such as Facebook have become key spaces where these attitudes are publicly expressed and contested. Previous studies on online discourse suggest that comment sections often contain highly polarized views, with users employing various rhetorical strategies to justify their positions. These strategies may include religious citations, moral reasoning, humour, ridicule, and expressions of solidarity. Researchers have noted that the relative anonymity of online communication can encourage users to express stronger opinions than they might in face-to-face interactions (Papacharissi, 2015).

Another important dimension of online discourse is the role of language in constructing social identities and boundaries. Fairclough (2003) further opines that linguistic choices such as pronoun use, metaphor, and evaluative adjectives can subtly position groups as either legitimate members of society or deviant outsiders. In discussions about LGBTQ individuals, these linguistic strategies may reinforce social exclusion or stigmatization, particularly in contexts where dominant cultural norms oppose non-heteronormative identities.

Despite the increasing volume of research on digital discourse globally, relatively few studies have focused specifically on how Nigerian social media users employ language when discussing LGBTQ practitioners. Existing research has largely concentrated on legal, political, or sociological perspectives, leaving a gap in linguistic and discourse-based analysis of online interactions. Given the growing role of social media in shaping public opinion, examining the discourse practices of Facebook commenters provides valuable insights into how language is used to express attitudes, construct identities, and reproduce ideological positions in contemporary Nigerian society. This gap in the literature underscores the need for further research that explores the linguistic patterns and discursive strategies present in online discussions about LGBTQ persons in Nigeria.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design rooted in Critical Discourse Analysis with a view to examining the language and discursive strategies used by commenters when discussing LGBTQ individuals in Nigeria. The theoretical framework guiding the study is the three-dimensional model of discourse proposed by Fairclough in 1995, which views discourse as operating at three interconnected levels: the textual level, the level of discursive

practice, and the level of social practice. The data for the study were purposively collected from comment sections of selected public posts on Facebook that address issues related to LGBTQ people in Nigeria. These comments were compiled and carefully documented while ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of the individuals involved, since the study focuses on publicly available online discourse rather than personal identities.

The analytical procedure involved examining the linguistic features, rhetorical strategies, and ideological expressions embedded in the collected comments using Fairclough's model. This theory is particularly suitable for the present study because it provides a systematic framework for analyzing how language is used to construct social meanings and reproduce power relations within specific socio-cultural contexts. By focusing on textual elements such as vocabulary, expressions, and evaluative language, as well as the broader social and cultural influences shaping the discourse, the framework enables the researcher to uncover how Facebook commenters construct attitudes and ideological positions toward LGBTQ persons. Therefore, the adoption of Fairclough's (1995) model is appropriate for this research because it effectively links language use with the wider social realities and cultural beliefs that influence public discourse in contemporary Nigerian society.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly the three-dimensional model developed by Fairclough (1995). CDA is an interdisciplinary approach to studying language that focuses on how discourse reflects, constructs, and reproduces social power relations, ideologies, and inequalities in society. Interestingly, Fairclough (1995) conceptualizes discourse as a form of social practice and argues that language cannot be separated from the social structures and cultural contexts in which it occurs. According to this perspective, discourse both shapes and is shaped by social realities, making it a valuable framework for examining how language is used to represent social groups and negotiate ideological positions within society.

This model of CDA consists of three interrelated dimensions: text, discursive practice, and social practice. The textual dimension focuses on the linguistic features of a discourse, including vocabulary, grammar, metaphors, and rhetorical structures used in communication. The second dimension, discursive practice, examines how texts are produced, distributed, and interpreted within particular contexts. The third dimension, social practice, explores the broader societal and cultural structures that influence discourse, such as power relations, ideologies, and institutional frameworks. By integrating these three levels of analysis, the framework provides a comprehensive approach to understanding how language operates within social contexts and how discourse contributes to the reproduction of societal norms and beliefs.

This theory is particularly suitable for the present study because discussions about LGBTQ people in Nigeria are often shaped by complex interactions between language, ideology, cultural beliefs, and legal frameworks. Online discussions on platforms such as Facebook frequently reveal underlying societal attitudes, moral judgments, and ideological positions expressed through language. Since CDA focuses on uncovering hidden power relations and ideological assumptions embedded in discourse, the theory provides an appropriate analytical lens for examining how Facebook commenters construct meanings and attitudes toward LGBTQ persons. Furthermore, the theory enables the researcher to explore how online language reflects broader societal influences, including cultural values and legal structures such as the Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act.

The application of this preferred model involves analysing Facebook comments at the three levels proposed by the theory. At the textual level, the study will examine linguistic features such as word choices, expressions, metaphors, pronoun usage, and evaluative language used by commenters. At the discursive practice level, the study will investigate how the comments are produced and interpreted within the context of online discussions about LGBTQ persons. Finally, at the social practice level, the study will interpret the discourse in relation to the broader Nigerian socio-cultural environment, including prevailing religious beliefs, cultural norms, and legal frameworks that influence public attitudes toward LGBTQ individuals. Through this multi-level analysis, the study will provide deeper insights into the discourse practices of Facebook commenters and how language is used to construct and reinforce ideological positions in contemporary Nigerian society.

**Presentation of Data**

S / N	Sample Comment	Discursive Strategy	Ideological Position/ Attitude	Linguistic Features
1	"These people are going against God's law."	Moral-religious argument	Anti-LGBTQ, condemning	Religious lexicon ("God's law"), evaluative language
2	"Why are they even allowed to exist in our society?"	Questioning / othering	Anti-LGBTQ, exclusionary	Rhetorical question, pronoun use ("they" vs "our")
3	"Love is love. Everyone deserves respect."	Supportive/human rights framing	Pro-LGBTQ, inclusive	Emphasis on equality, abstract nouns ("love," "respect")
4	"This is abnormal. Nigeria should reject this."	Labelling/cultural appeal	Anti-LGBTQ, culturally conservative	Adjectives ("abnormal"), modal verbs ("should")
5	"They're just confused, leave them alone."	Minimization/distancing	Mildly tolerant, neutral	Euphemism ("confused"), imperative("leave them alone")
6	"The government must enforce the law on them."	Legal-referential argument	Anti-LGBTQ, law-oriented	Reference to legislation, modal verb ("must")
7	"Why can't people mind their own business?"	Defensive / sarcastic	Pro-LGBTQ, advocating autonomy	Rhetorical question, informal tone
8	"This is a threat to our family values."	Cultural-religious framing	Anti-LGBTQ, fear appeal	Abstract nouns ("threat"), possessive pronouns ("our family")

Data Analysis

The analysis of Facebook comments on LGBTQ individuals in Nigeria reveals a complex interplay of linguistic strategies, ideological positions, and socio-cultural influences. Using Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the data were examined at the textual, discursive practice, and social practice levels to uncover how language constructs meaning and reflects societal attitudes. At the textual level, commenters employed a range of linguistic features, including evaluative adjectives, metaphors, pronouns, rhetorical questions, and religious references. For instance, many comments contained moralizing language such as "against God's law" or "abnormal," which served to condemn LGBTQ identities and signal alignment with dominant cultural and religious norms. These textual choices indicate that language is a key tool through which societal values and ideologies are reinforced in online spaces.

At the discursive practice level, the analysis showed that commenters adopted various strategies to position themselves relative to LGBTQ practitioners. Common strategies included labelling, othering, moral-religious justification, legal argumentation, and humour or sarcasm. Labeling and othering were particularly prevalent, with commenters frequently using pronouns such as "they" to separate LGBTQ individuals from the in-group and



emphasising difference or deviation from societal norms. Moral-religious justifications often invoked references to God, the Bible, or Islamic teachings, reflecting the strong influence of religion in Nigerian society. Legal argumentation drew upon the Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act to legitimize exclusionary or punitive attitudes. Humour and sarcasm were sometimes used to ridicule LGBTQ persons, softening hostility with informality while still reinforcing ideological positions.

The ideological positions expressed in the comments were overwhelmingly negative toward LGBTQ people, reflecting dominant social and cultural norms in Nigeria. Anti-LGBTQ sentiment was articulated through moral condemnation, religious justification, and appeals to tradition or family values. Many commenters framed LGBTQ identities as threats to societal morality or national values, using language designed to evoke fear or disapproval. A smaller subset of comments, however, expressed tolerance or support, emphasizing human rights, equality, or the principle of personal autonomy. These pro-LGBTQ comments mostly employed inclusive language, emphasising shared humanity and mutual respect, which contrasted sharply with the dominant discourse of exclusion and condemnation.

Analysis of the textual features revealed patterns in the way commenters constructed social identities. Pronouns played a crucial role in delineating in-group versus out-group members, with “we” and “our” used to signal alignment with societal norms and “they” to mark LGBTQ practitioners as outsiders. Metaphors and evaluative adjectives further contributed to this boundary construction, with terms like “confused,” “abnormal,” and “threat” portraying LGBTQ individuals as deviant or dangerous. Such language functions not only to express personal opinion but also to reinforce collective attitudes and social hierarchies within the online community. This demonstrates Fairclough’s argument that discourse is not neutral but embedded in power relations and social ideologies.

At the social practice level, LGBTQ discourse reflects broader societal, cultural, and legal influences shaping attitudes toward LGBTQ individuals in Nigeria. The comments reveal the pervasive impact of religious values, particularly Christianity and Islam, on public perceptions of sexuality. They also reflect the legitimizing effect of legal frameworks such as the Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act, which provide a formal basis for anti-LGBTQ sentiment. Cultural norms around family, morality, and gender roles further influence how individuals interpret and respond to LGBTQ identities. By connecting the linguistic features and discursive strategies observed in comments to these larger social structures, the analysis demonstrates that online discourse is a microcosm of broader societal attitudes, functioning both as a reflection and reinforcement of dominant ideologies.

The analysis also highlights the dynamic nature of online discourse. While many comments perpetuate stigma and marginalization, the presence of supportive or tolerant comments indicates that social media can also serve as a space for contesting dominant ideologies. Some commenters actively challenge discriminatory narratives by invoking human rights or promoting respect for diversity, illustrating the potential for discourse to disrupt established norms. This aligns with Hook’s (2000) position that discourse is both shaped by and capable of shaping social practice, suggesting that online interactions are not merely reflective but also potentially transformative.

Finally, the findings underscore the role of language as a tool for negotiating power, ideology, and social identity in the Nigerian context. Facebook comment sections provide a platform where individuals publicly assert their values, align with particular groups, and influence collective attitudes toward marginalized populations. The combination of textual, discursive, and social analyses demonstrates that language is a potent mechanism for both reinforcing and contesting societal norms. By systematically examining these patterns, the study offers a deeper understanding of the discourse practices surrounding LGBTQ people in Nigeria, highlighting how online communication mediates the relationship between language, ideology, and society.

Discussion of Findings

The analysis of Facebook comments on LGBTQ individuals in Nigeria reveals that online discourse functions as a reflection of broader societal attitudes, cultural norms, and ideological positions. A major finding is the prevalence of anti-LGBTQ sentiment expressed through moral, religious, and legal arguments. Many commenters drew on religious language, invoking references to God, the Bible, or Islamic teachings to justify their condemnation of



LGBTQ practitioners. This aligns with previous studies (van Dijk, 2006; Papacharissi, 2015) that highlight the role of religion in shaping moral discourse and public attitudes in conservative societies. The findings suggest that religion continues to serve as a powerful legitimizing framework for the exclusion of sexual minorities in Nigerian society, reinforcing normative beliefs about sexuality.

Another significant finding is the use of labeling and othering as discursive strategies. Facebook users' comments frequently employed pronouns such as "they" to create a clear boundary between LGBTQ persons and the in-group, which was often framed as "we" or "our society." Labels such as "abnormal," "confused," or "threat" were also commonly used to stigmatize LGBTQ individuals. These patterns are consistent with Keller's (2016) assertion that language constructs social identities and delineates group boundaries. In the Nigerian context, such labeling reflects both cultural and legal influences, illustrating how social hierarchies are reinforced through online discourse. The act of othering in this space not only expresses individual attitudes but also reinforces collective societal norms that marginalize sexual minorities.

The study also highlights the influence of legal frameworks on discourse. References to the Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act were prominent in comments, demonstrating how legislation can legitimize negative perceptions and provide a formal basis for exclusion. Commenters often argued that LGBTQ individuals were violating societal laws and therefore deserved social disapproval or legal sanction. This finding echoes research indicating that law and policy are not merely regulatory but also discursive tools that shape public opinion and reinforce societal norms (Human Rights Watch, 2016). In this way, online discourse becomes intertwined with both legal and moral frameworks, amplifying the social marginalization of LGBTQ individuals.

A noteworthy observation is the presence of supportive or tolerant comments, albeit in smaller numbers. Some Facebook users advocated for respect, equality, and personal autonomy, framing their comments around human rights and shared humanity. These comments utilized inclusive language and avoided moral or religious judgment, signaling an emerging counter-discourse that challenges dominant societal norms. This finding aligns with the idea that digital platforms can serve as spaces of ideological contestation, where marginalized voices and alternative viewpoints can be expressed (Boyd, 2014). While these supportive comments remain a minority, they demonstrate the potential for online discourse to disrupt traditional power relations and social hierarchies.

The textual analysis further reveals the strategic use of linguistic features to enhance the persuasive or emotive impact of comments. Evaluative adjectives, rhetorical questions, sarcasm, and metaphor were frequently employed to reinforce positions or discredit opposing viewpoints. For example, rhetorical questions such as "Why are they allowed to exist in our society?" serve to delegitimize LGBTQ identities and invite agreement from other commenters. Similarly, humour and sarcasm were used to ridicule LGBTQ persons while softening the overt hostility of the discourse. These findings illustrate Jenkin's (2006) claim that language is not neutral; it is a tool through which power and ideology are enacted and negotiated within specific social contexts.

The findings also indicate that online discourse reflects broader socio-cultural influences, including norms around family, gender, and morality. Many comments emphasized the perceived threat of LGBTQ practices to family values and social cohesion, suggesting that concerns about societal stability are central to the negative positioning of LGBTQ individuals. This underscores the embeddedness of online discourse within cultural contexts, where societal beliefs, traditions, and values shape how people communicate and evaluate social phenomena. The integration of textual, discursive, and social analyses thus demonstrates that Facebook comment sections are not isolated spaces of opinion but sites where broader social ideologies are reproduced and contested.

Finally, the discussion reveals the complex and dynamic nature of digital discourse in Nigeria. While the dominant trend reflects anti-LGBTQ sentiment supported by religious, cultural, and legal justifications, the presence of counter-narratives and supportive comments indicates that online platforms also facilitate ideological negotiation. Language functions as a powerful instrument for constructing social realities, asserting authority, and contesting prevailing norms. By examining the discursive practices of Facebook commenters through Fairclough's (1995) CDA framework, this study illuminates how digital discourse mediates the relationship between individual



expression, social ideology, and cultural context, highlighting the crucial role of language in shaping public attitudes toward marginalized communities in contemporary Nigerian society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has shown that the discourse practices in Facebook comments regarding LGBTQ individuals in Nigeria are deeply embedded in the country's socio-cultural, religious, and legal contexts, with language functioning as a powerful tool for constructing attitudes, identities, and ideological positions. The analysis revealed that most comments were characterized by moral-religious justifications, legal references to the Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act, labelling, and othering strategies, which collectively reinforced dominant societal norms and marginalized LGBTQ individuals. While a smaller portion of comments expressed tolerance and support for LGBTQ rights, emphasizing equality, human dignity, and personal autonomy, these counter-narratives were often overshadowed by the dominant discourses of condemnation and exclusion. Through the application of Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis framework, the study has demonstrated that textual features such as pronouns, metaphors, evaluative adjectives, and rhetorical devices are not neutral but serve to reproduce or challenge social ideologies. Overall, the findings underscore the dual role of social media as both a mirror reflecting prevailing societal beliefs and a contested space where alternative viewpoints may emerge, highlighting the centrality of language in shaping public perception, negotiating social identities, and mediating power relations in contemporary Nigerian society.

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