Gender Fixity and Fluidity: Transvestites' Image in Kannywood Films

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Abstract

The controversy around the explicit definition of gender and the category with which Trans people fit perfectly in calls forth many researches paving the way for the divergent theoretical postulations, reinforcing and challenging the notions of gender fixity and/or fluidity. Different people have since render their perceptions with communication scholars mostly prevailing through media, an information hemisphere tasked with the responsibility of representing different groups, especially the minorities. Thus, media scholars study the nature of such depictions on different platforms; especially film which appears perhaps the most universally appealing and more effective to the audience. This paper therefore, seeks to examine transvestites' image in Kannywood movies with a view to identifying how such image hinders or fortifies the notion of gender fixity and/or fluidity. Queer theory and theory of representation were the foundations which formed the basis for this study. The study tested the two theories using semiotic analysis of film. The findings of the study indicate that, Kannywood Trans movies often remind audience of gender normativity and yet showcase that the boundaries defined by essentialists and anthropologists as fixed are permeable. The paper recommends that Kannywood films should not be depicting Trans proposing to marry men as this may probably aggravates the negative stereotype of regarding transvestites as homosexuals.

Key words: Transvestites, Gender Fixity and Fluidity, Films, Kannywood, Traits

Introduction

Many scholars, such as Sinikangas (2004), Woodwards (2011), and Miller (2012), have reified both the dominant paradigm proposition and the paradigm-shifting supposition regarding gender through various forms of writing. Most of these scholars are at the helm of the argument, rendering their views mostly through film—a medium that serves humanities with much attraction from the audience and a huge expectation towards public representation.

Popular films provide an array of depictions of non-normative genders, some undeniably more conservative than others. This raises questions about the possibilities, conventions, and constraints around representing gender variance through film, both in terms of structure and style (Woodward, 2011).

The non-normative genders are a part to non-binary people who constitute the people born as male but identify as women (transvestites/cross dressers). There are also the people that

have a gender identity somewhere in-between masculine and feminine, a mix of both or neither (androgyny); a person who keeps switching (gender fluid); a person who unintentionally act or behave as member of the opposite sex to which he was assigned at birth (transgender). The second category of non-binary people is sex and sexuality which apart from male/female and the heterosexual norm we have (under sex); a person having both male and female biological trait (intersex). These intersex people are referred to transsexuals after surgery. Regarding sexuality however, we have; a person who is sexually attracted to the members of the same sex (homosexual); someone who does not experience sexual attraction (asexual); and someone sexually attracted to members of either sex (bisexual).

Among these non-normative and non-binary people, the intersex people challenge the idea of sex binary. The homosexual, asexual, and bisexual people challenge the sexual norm; and the transvestites, androgyny, gender fluid and transgender people challenge the notion of gender binary. Sex is not a perfect binary, but it is relatively simple compared to gender. Gender is multifaceted, complex and a little abstract, and not everyone agrees on what exactly it means.

Media give more attention to gender than sex and sexuality and this is because gender is in a state of flux and more complex to define than both sex and sexuality, and the social traits assigned to each gender is always questioned by the post-structuralisms as they reinforce the hegemonic ideology - representing men as superior and women as subordinate.

The non-normative gender representation is at the very heart of current debates about gender and sexuality. Images of cross dressing in particular have been argued to reveal the contractedness of gender, as opposed to its biological naturalness (Miller, 2012). For quite sometimes, sexuality has been an important aspect in the research of variable forms of sex - and gender crossing. Often, gender crossing has been interpreted as a sign of "homosexuality" or "transsexuality". This raises also a question of the connection of sex and gender, which is especially important when one does not seem to be fitting in either of the assumed sexes or genders (Miller, 2012).

Going by the essentialists' (who regard gender as fixed binary and stick to the heterosexual norm) understanding and perception of gender and sexuality, one can easily classify non gender binary people as homosexuals. But when one sees it from the lens of the critical opponents, particularly feminist and queer theorists, gender and sexuality are two different things.

In Hausa society, the dominant image of non gender binary people is the image of transvestites. These transvestite people consider themselves (both on screen and in reality) as women, rejecting totally their male identity. While many scholars go along with this perception, Gaudio (1998:119) is of the opinion that "the woman-like behaviour is not serious and thus they keep their male identity." What the scholars all agree on is that commonly transvestites (Yan Daudu) are considered as men in Hausa society (Sinikangas, 2004).

Clothing not only consists of garments but also how the social world interprets and contexualises the individual and distinguishes male from female. Thus, distinctions between sexual categories are obliterated and the social order is destabilised through the act and image of the transvestite as clothing in everyday life and similarly on screen constructs (and equally deconstructs) gender and gender differentiation.

The paper therefore, examines how such Kannywood transvestites' images construct and/or deconstruct gender and gender differentiation. However, it first delved into the concepts of transvestites and how it differs from other related concepts before reviewing other studies, which explicate the meaning of transvestite concept and how transvestites are depicted in movies.

Transvestites, Transsexuals, Transgender, Cross Dressers and Drag Performers (Drag King and Drag Queen)

Many people confused gender; sex and sexuality the same way people confused hermaphrodite, androgyny and cross dressers in the early days. These terminologies, though difficult to contrast, they still differ in one way or the other despite their close relations.

A 'transvestites' is a term that has its roots in psychoanalytic theory, which conceptualizes it as a type of fetish (Woodward, 2011). A transvestite is a person who wears the clothing of the gender opposite to the one they were assigned at birth (Bono in Flamingo, 2015). 'Cross Dresser on the other hand, is a general term for any person who routinely wears clothing typical of another gender, regardless of their reasons for doing so (Morer, 2015). Cross dresser is often preferred as being less pejorative, but it is also less specific, as it does not distinguish the motivation behind the activity. In an attempt to distinguish the transvestites and cross dressers, Newton (1972) opines that the former attempt to pass as a member of the opposite sex while the later exaggerates the opposite sex's assumed gender codes to appear obviously, inadequately disguised.

'Transsexual' is a person (usually an intersex) who has undergone either surgical, hormonal, or legal means to live full time as the sex opposite that of their birth assigned sex (Jobe, 2013). The word 'transgender' (or Trans) acts as an umbrella term for all gender identities that do not coincide with the gender one was assigned at birth (Jobe, 2013). When used as a specific term however, it refers to people who unintentionally act or behave as member of the opposite sex to which they were assigned at birth.

'Drag Queen/King' is a person who dresses in the clothes of the gender opposite to the one in which they live for much of the time, often for performance reasons. Unlike transsexuals, the transvestite, the cross dresser and the drag performer take their pleasure from wearing the clothes of the alternative sex rather than changing their body to become a member of that sex (Garber in Mellamphy, 2005).

The Notion of Fixed Binary and Fluid Spectrum

Gender fixity refers to gender identity/expression that is stable and permanent and is determined by the two mutually exclusive gender binaries. Gender fluidity, which ran athwart, is when gender identity/expression shifts between masculine and feminine. It can be displayed in how people dress, express and describe themselves.

Unlike fixed identities that do not change over time, gender fluid people acknowledge their gender identity can be different depending on when you ask and how they are feeling internally (Lopez, 2021). These two divergent notions gave birth to different theoretical standpoints that reinforced and challenged through the outcomes of several studies.

Straayer (1996) asserts that gender-coded behaviour and gestures are often used to remind the film audience of the character's "original" gender and also to threaten the exposure in the diegetic world. For example, women characters often start slugging other characters when they are dressed as men. Abele (2011) corroborates that, while these gender-ambivalent text may appear to expand definitions of gender, it is disappointing that these films most often promote traditional heterosexual positions, even if the "woman" in the relationship is physically or psychically a man.

At various moments throughout the Trans films, the heteronormative identities of the characters are given greater weight and importance than their temporarily adopted transgender identities. These moments range from the characters leaving their normal lives in face of a crisis by adopting transgender identities to regularly discarding those identities in order to pursue a heteronormative romance (Miller, 2012).

Sinikangas (2004) argues that, many writers have considered *Yan Daudu* (Transvestites) as something bizarre. This is the reason why they often categorized them as homosexuals or deviants. However, Woodward's (2011) on his part concludes, "despite the problems and stereotypes inherent in many of these films, they prevent trans identities from being erased or ignored" (p. 262).

Worthy of note is, most of the studies carried out on transvestites' images in films (and media in general) tend to judge whether the films are subversive or not, damaging or not with only few that add to incorporate how the idea of gender transgression is kept visible. This study focuses on the way Trans films reinforce or undermine the notion of fixed/fluid gender (i.e. with focus on the scenes that favours heteronormativity or otherwise).

Furthermore, the vast majority of studies on Trans image as literature indicated were carried out on Hollywood films and a very few ones on Bollywood. Regarding Kannywood films however, it's only Sinikangas that carried out research on Trans people, and it is not on their screen representation but the trans in real life. Transvestites are one of those people regarded as Hausa family as we have them (popularly known as *Yan Daudu*) in our society. Going by the literature yield, there is the need to find out transvestites' image in Kannywood films as the studies available were carried out in other settings.

Theoretical Postulations

Queer theory and theory of representation were adopted as theoretical frameworks. These theories combine to shape the understanding of the ways transvestite characters are constructed with specific narrative conventions and visual codes.

The theory of representation along with queer theory allow us to examine the portrayal within film medium and their application to culture's growing perception and acceptance of gender transgression.

Queer theory is a field of post-structuralist critical theory that emerged in the early 1990s out of the fields of queer studies and women's studies (Spargo, 1999). Queer means strange, weird, oblique (Plazzani, 2012). It is often used as an umbrella term by and for individuals who use the term as an alternative to LGBT labels (Geiseking, 2008). If it was originally used in a derogatory sense, those who were looked down upon with such adjectives now proudly vindicate it (Plazzani, 2012).

Queer theory is a framework of ideas that suggests identities are not stable or deterministic, particularly concerning an individual's gender, sex, and/or sexuality (Geiseking, 2008). According to this theory "one can be either a woman in a female body and a man in a male body or a woman in a male body and a man in a female body, both by transforming the body (transsexuals) and also by accepting the ambiguity, hybridity, and male/female coexistence (intersex/transgender). One can be heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual (Plazzani, 2012:46).

Queer theory seems appropriate for this study as it focuses on mismatches between sex, gender and desire (Jagose, 1996). Proponents of queer theory argue that it prompts the acceptance and understanding of a more complex reality in which we live. Queer theory challenges the validity and consistency of the discourse regarding heteronormativity. The theory deconstructs the existing monolithic ideals of social norms and how they come into being and why (Giffney, 2004).

The opponents of the theory argue that it coincides with the same contradictory claim to rigidly define the indefinable. In short, it is unqueer to define queer (Plazzani 2012). They also challenged it as it presupposes the binaries which it opposes, referring to - in surpassing them - the boundaries of male/female, hetero/homosexual (Plazzani 2012).

In media studies, representation is the way aspects of society, such as gender, age or ethnicity, are presented to audiences (BBC, 2017). Representation is first constitutive of the events that surround us (Hall, 1997 & Webb, 2009). Representation does not create events, they do exist outside of their representation, but because events cannot signify on their own and must be made intelligible (Hall, 1979). Our understanding of events happens through the frame of representation. Events are framed in a particular way and given a particular meaning depending on how they are represented.

Representations provide scripts to guide our symbolic interactions. People who have little contact with transgender individuals often gain familiarity through film and other mass media texts that teach them how to treat and interact with transgender people. Furthermore, film and media texts provide scripts that transgender people also adopt and adapt.

Some critics, like Stuart Pierce, would argue that representations reinforce ***dominant ideologies*** in society: If gender differences are socially constructed, and society itself is based on unequal relations of power, then we can see why many writers argue that mainstream representations will be biased against subordinate groups. Other critics would argue that representations in the media can challenge and subvert dominant ideologies in society (Miller, 2012).

Representation can both be constitutive or constraining. It is constitutive when it fully represents every aspect of the object it represents. It can be constraining when it reveals only certain aspects of the object while ignoring others. Therefore, as Miller (2012) states, media texts have the power to shape an audience's knowledge and understanding about these important topics. This makes them very powerful in terms of influencing ideas and attitudes.

Methodology

The study adopted the post-structuralists semiotic analysis, which is a qualitative research technique, meant to study the sign. Semiotic analysis is often conflated with semiology but the fact is that the later forms part of the former techniques.

While Saussurean semiology concerned itself only with the intentional communication acts such as speaking and writing or other related forms such as gesture and Morse Code, Piercean semiotics included all sensory stimuli that could create another idea in the receiver's mind, such is a case when smoke is a sign of fire, or flowers are a sign of love (Daylight, 2011).

Early semiotics (those with Saussure's thought on sign) took a structuralists approach, seeing the meaning of sign as largely fixed and interpreted according to system, whereas the later post-structuralists (those with Piercean thought on sign) influenced semiotic theory and regard sign as interpreted by audience - often differently to the intentions of the author and differently between audiences (Macnamara, 2004). For this study however, a post-structuralists' approach was adopted to have a deeper understanding of transvestites' image in Kannywood movies.

The design for the study was a triadic relation between the sign, the object and the mind. A trichotomy of **icon**, **index** and **symbol** (which deals with the way signs are recognized) was adopted to have a great depth of understanding. The elements of semiotic that were given greater weight during the analysis are the rhetorical tropes, paradigmatic and syntagmatic structure, looking at them by analysing the iconic, indexical and symbolic signifiers.

The population was the entire Kannywood transvestites' films available during the time of study, which in my corpus are *Ibro Kawajo, Kicimilli, Uwar Mata, Adon Gari, Anti Kwalba* and *Kujerar Tsakar* Gida. Purposive sampling technique was used to select *'Ibro Kawajo', 'Uwar Mata' and 'Adon Gari'* from the population and attention was paid on the films produced at different times to compare the trends in the portrayal.

The "trans scenes" were considered as the units of analysis with the "trans songs", "trans dialogues", "trans vs cis dialogues" and the "cis dialogues on trans issues" taken as the content categories. Inter-coder reliability test was used to measure the data. Two observers were deployed to watch and analyse one among the selected films (*Uwar Mata*) based on the assessment criteria (content categories). The result of their analysis was measured using Cohen's Kappa formula in which correlation of 0.7 was achieved. This reliability test was also used in assessing the validity of the study. In addition, content validity was used to identify the categories closely related to the study objectives and theories.

Trans Image in Kannywood Movies

Ibro Kawajo

Ibro Kawajo, produced in 2006 is chosen for this study as it depicts a Trans character who cross dresses permanently. The film produced by Mukhtar Balarabe and directed by Comrade Umar Jalo (GID) revolves around the story of the renowned transvestite (*Kawajo*) who disguised as a woman for quite a long time in Kano state. The dramatic irony revolves around *Ibro* who right from the exposition to denouement was never clad in masculine attire.

Synopsis

The film with twenty-one scenes and fourteen relevant for this study depicts Ibro as a woman who as a guest, settled in Yautai's residence. As a misperceived woman, he lived along Yautai and his wife (Dela) while attracting different suitors among which he almost married one before his real gender was exposed.

The Cast

The characters of Kawajo (transvestite), Kulu, Yautai, Cinnaka, Dela, Jamila, Abubakar, Dabalo, Umma, Mai Gari are well represented by Rabilu Musa Ibro, Shuaibu Ismail, Baffa Yaro, Baffa Ahmad, Amina Bakku, Jamila Sani, Auwalu B. Hotoro, Auwal Idris, Maryam Amana and Malam Bawa.

Setting

The film was shot in Wudil, Kano State. It depicts some houses like that of Yautai, Cinnaka, Mai Gari and Kulu. However, it dwells mostly in Yautai's residence and was entirely shot in the day hours.

SIGNS: Signifiers and Signified

The pitch shot of a Trans character (Ta Kubutu) dancing in a mixed gender-clothing paradigm with a broom held, metaphorically casts him as female, though his baldhead and male gown denotes gender ambiguity. He was shown later in a full shot hyperbolically tying and untying his wrapper - emphasizing his intense feelings of femininity.

Realizing (from the shot) that *Ta Kubutu* was dancing, another Trans character (*Kawajo*) appeared in the shot dancing while dressing in line with syntagmatic structure of feminine clothing. He looked a woman as even his physical sex organs comply with that of women. There was then a sudden diminuendo and the Trans characters sat down as the sound completely fell into silence - to direct the audience to that they want to know (i.e., the characters real gender). during their discussion, they imitate feminine gestures with intensity and addressed one-another using feminine pronoun - to add to their gender claim.

Right from the explication to denouement, the Trans characters address one-another using feminine pronoun to reinforce their feeling of femininity. Yet, upon addressing Cis characters, the Trans address male characters as females - proving gender as performance by destabilizing the category of Cis characters themselves.

Having fully dressed as female, *Kawajo* was misperceived by the film characters (except the other Trans character *Ta Kubutu*) to the extent some male characters even proposed to marry him, with the other Trans (*Ta Kubutu*) not considered as female - reinforcing the constructivist assumption that gender is a social construction and mostly determined by clothing.

An indexical signifier that exaggerates feminine gender is how the Trans characters often tie and untie their garments - ironically rendering Trans as males as they could not firmly tie their garments and hence fortifying the normative gender. The second symbolic signifier (apart from the Trans mode of address) worthy of attention is the expression *"Ay ma'anar wannan suna Kawajo ko ina muna nan (The name Kawajo implies that we belong everywhere)"*. While the denotative meaning implies "everywhere we are", the connotative may probably implies "we belong to any gender".

Moreover, while *Kawajo's* appearance indicates feminine belonging, the way he addresses his own self using two ambiguous referential mode of address reinforces the performativity of gender as he was blurring the binary mode of address.

The next scene marked the first Trans song scene. The way *Kawajo* was winking his eyes while singing at the midst of women and yet applying powder (a task performed by none of the female characters at the scene) - exaggerates feminine gender.

The coup de theatre, which marked the denouement, was the exposition of *Kawajo'*s real gender. The utterance "*Wannan yarinya Kawajo! Wai ya kake ne, namiji ko mata-maza, ban sani ba* (This girl Kawajo! Who you really are, a man or an intersex, I don't know)." indicates that, despite the Cis characters misperception of *Kawajo'*s real gender, he was able to detect Ta *Kubutu'*s own as he was not dressing in full feminine clothing ensemble. The response by Ta Kubutu, *"Duk dai dai ne (All the same)"*, shows that the Trans characters regard themselves as "both" (belonging to each of the binary). The subsequent expression unveiled the whole truth behind the film's dramatic irony as Ta Kubutu said, *"Kai min kallo ka karewa Kawajo kallo, yadda nake haka kawajo take* (Look at me very well! The way I look so do Kawajo's real gender)."

Adon Gari

Adon Gari depicts Shehu Hassan Kano and Rabiu Rikadawa as transvestite characters. It was produced by Umar Mai Jalingo and directed by Ali Gumzak Sak in 2015. The name of the film is expression commonly attributed to women, which implies "The beauty of the land".

Synopsis

The film with forty-nine scenes and twenty-three targeted ones depicts two Trans' characters (Amada and Salo) who work in Hajiya's restaurant along with other female workers. Amada was one of the leading characters in the film. Serving as the rising action, his son Adam A. Zango (named Anas in the play) was denied his proposed marriage due to his father's transvestism. The denouement was set as Amada finally gave up transvestism and unveiled the truth that his daughter in-law's father was also a Trans in the past.

The Cast

The characters of Anas, Jamila, Nusaiba, Barira, Amada, Alh. Harzuka, Malam (Dodiro), Ayashe, Hadiza, Ladidi and Salo are represented by Adam A. Zango, Jamila Nagudu, Rahma Sadau, Hauwa Waraka, Rabiu Rikadawa, Sulaiman Yahya Bosho, Shehu Hassan Kano, Aisha Dan Kano, Hadizan Saima, Ladidi Muhammad and Jibril Usman.

Setting

The film was shot in the city of Kano. It featured Amada's residence, Bosho's and Hajiya's own more than any other place. It was entirely shot in the day hours.

SIGNS: Signifiers and Signified

Unlike the previous film, Adon Gari depicts a Tran's character who dressed in-between the two gender binary. The metaphorical shot depicts Amada in a full shot washing plates - the task accompanying the iconic signifier (i.e., head tie) to prevent audience from reading him as male. The manner in which he talked contradicts the tone of his voice, as the former was typical of males with the later reflecting feminine mode.

The two Trans characters (Amada and Salo) were male gowned, with a headtie being the metonym to prevent audience from reading them as males. The Trans characters address one-

another using masculine and feminine pronoun interchangeably - reinforcing the assumption of performativists. While talking, they were fully imitating feminine gestures - an iconic signifier reinforcing their feeling of femininity. Having dressed in-between, the Trans characters were not at all addressed as females by the Cis characters - signifying that people define gender by clothing.

Amada was set in a pitch shot with Nusaiba (his unknown in-law). They were later framed in a two shot to compare their metonymic gestures. The way Amada often use multiple gestures and how Nusaiba was not adopting much of it signifies how Trans exaggerates feminine gender.

Amada was often shown at the midst of his family (his wife and son) - and to depict a Trans with his family is to contradict his gender claim (going by the essentialists' perspectives) and reinforces the post-structuralists' view that gender is different from sexuality. The expression "*Wannan Daudun kara shiga jikinsa take* (He is becoming more addicted to transvestism)" by his wife proves gender as performance.

Realising that a bike hurtles near him, Amada shouted and ran the other direction - indicating fright. As Amada saw the rider, he said *"Tabariki"* - signifying close acquaintance. Tabariki was quick to denounce the mode of address, saying "that was before" - yet reinforcing gender normativity on one hand the fluidity of gender on the other.

When called by one of the customers at the restaurant, Amada dawdled with much feminine gestures. He talked women-like and Alhaji was quick to denounce as he asked Amada to talk like a man so they set a deal he would benefit. Amada wasted no time to switch his voice - still proving gender as performance.

The camera fades to frame the top of a cushion, panning left to frame the subject. Before getting to the subject, the camera frames a headscarf and a handbag - signifying feminine appearance at the scene. Amada was then shown in a medium close up applying powder while looking at the hand mirror. He then stopped the makeup and thought of his son's words cautioning him to abandon transvestism. He then tossed the mirror and powder at the cushion - manifesting regrets.

Uwar Mata

Uwar Mata is also selected for this paper as it depicts Trans characters. The film was produced by Jibril Musa and directed by Buhari A. Kurmawa in 2015. The name of the film itself categorizes Trans as females as the name *"Uwar Mata"* stands for "Female's Mother".

Synopsis

The film has eighteen scenes and for this study, it is only nine that are relevant because of their depiction of Trans characters (*Gamboliya* and *Subai'a*) who work as bus boys along with other female workers. *Gamboliya* as one of the Trans characters was the main character in the movie. Due to his stubbornness, he often quarrels and fights with people to the extent that his father not only scolds him but also cursed him. He made up his mind to depart to the city so he would be free of such insults in his life and above all to earn a living.

The Cast

The characterization of Gamboliya, Subai'a, Hajiya, Alhaji Sani, Zubaida, Baby, Bintalo, Dije, Taufik, Malam Ali, Idi, Hamza, and Bosho perfectly fits the roles they played as Ayatullahi Tagge, Buhari A. Kurmawa, Aisha Dan Kano, Sani Garba S.K., Sha'awa Adam, Ummi Rano, Fati El-Yusuf, Hajiya Muhd., Abdul A. Buba, Baba Labaran, Nura Dan Kuda, Musa Mai Sana'a and Sulaiman Bosho.

Setting

The film was shot in metropolitan Kano before it sets back to village for the denouement. It depicts Hajiya's home and restaurant more than any other place as all the workers reside there. The film featured Amada's residence, Bosho's and Hajiya's more than any other place. It was shot completely in the day hours.

SIGNS: Signifiers and Signified

It all starts with a Trans character heading to the rest room while dressing in masculine attire and a wrapper tied from his waist to knee and a head tie - the two metonyms putting his gender in crisis.

Subai'a adopted multiple feminine gestures and often ties and unties his wrapper - still emphasizing his feminine belonging while ironically exaggerating feminine gender. As he came out, he was framed in a wide angle shot along with four female characters and another Trans dressing exactly as he did. The metaphorical shot made possible to compare the Trans dressings and gestures with that of the female characters. Both the two Trans were tying and untying their wrapper with none of the Cis characters engaging in the act - a signifier meant to emphasize their intense feeling while ironically proving the essentialists assumptions of normativity as they could not firmly tie their garments. The Trans also blend the two-gender mode of address, sometimes addressing one-another as females and males in other instances - a signifier proving the notion of performativists. Throughout the film, the Cis characters address Trans as males except when they need something from them, so they address them as females to please them.

Gamboliya came out of the restaurant tying and untying his wrapper. He stood at the threshold as he met a Cis character who gaped his mouth at the sight of Gamboliya dressing half-male half-female - an indexical signifier indicating surprise. The subsequent symbolic signifier explicate their real feelings as the Cis uttered *"Namiji ne ko mace* (is it a male or female)?" In addition, the Trans responded *"Cire namijin, bar macen* (take out the male title, address me as female)". This unlike the previous film (*Ibro Kawajo*), Trans characters strictly adhered to their adopted gender.

Subai'a was slapped by a diner at the restaurant and reacted *"Na shiga uku namiji ya mare ni* (l am in a quandary, a man has slapped me) - to reinforce his feminine adherence. The Cis character responded *"Ko kunya baka ji, katon namiji dakai ka daura zani ka shafa janbaki* (Are you not ashamed, a strong man like you, you tie a wrapper and put a lipstick)" - disproving the Trans claimed gender. Subai'a was quick to denounce as he said *"Kar ka kara kira na namiji, ka kira ni mace* (Don't ever call me a man, call me woman)".

Hajiya was having a meeting with all her workers (Trans and Cis) and she uttered some words paradoxically contradicting one-another "... the time you (feminine) were not addicted to

transvestism". This along with the subsequent expression proves the performativity of gender as Subai'a said *"Ay jin dadi ne daudu ta kama mutum* (It is a pride to be addicted to transvestism)".

Realizing that his son was male and having seen him dressing in-between at the midst of females, Gamboliya's father said "*Gambo! Kai ne haka!* (Gambo! Is it you like this!)" - indicating surprise. The other Trans (Subai'a) rebuked "*Me yasa kake kiranshi da sunan katti, mun canja mai suna Gamboliyas sannan ina so in tabbatarma cewar ba namiji ba ne* (Why do you address him as male? We have changed his name to Gamboliyas, and I want to assure you that he is not a male)" - signifying gender as individual construction and one can switch to any gender anytime he/she likes.

Theoretical Application

The way transvestite characters are depicted in Kannywood movies supports the assumptions of Queer theory whose foundation was the constructivists' movement to challenge essentialists' binary and fixed notions. Queer theory assumes that one can be either a woman in female body and a man in male body or a woman in a male body and a man in female body. Geiseking (2008) affirms that, Queer theory is a framework of ideas that suggests identities are not stable or deterministic, particularly concerning an individual's gender sex, and/or sexuality. These Trans films depict male characters in female body and sometimes in-between. They fully adopt feminine mannerism and speech, and they sometimes fully cross dress as females (i.e., *Kawajo* in *Ibro Kawajo* and *Tabariki* in *Adon Gari)*. The rest of the Trans characters depicted in the other two (2) films on my corpus (i.e., *Uwar Mata* and *Adon Gari*) adhered to feminine way of speaking, manner and blurred the binary using single or two metonyms from feminine clothing items (i.e., a wrapper and a headtie/headscarf).

Such depictions in *Ibro Kawajo* reifies the theory of social construction theory (which claims that one cannot be locked into one of the gender binary) as one of the Trans characters (*Kawajo*) disguised as a woman and was misperceived as such since his visual mode (i.e. dress and body) conform absolutely with that of females. However, his aural and gestural mode conformed not to that of females as the tone of his voice sounds more of masculine and his reaction to horrible things were often masculine too. The essentialists will take this as prove that one cannot deviate from his birth assigned gender. Yet to highlight the normativity of gender, the Trans characters (except in *Uwar Mata*) were forced to switch back and adhered to the gender they were assigned at birth.

The other Trans characters that used one or two metonyms to blur the binary prove the Butler's notion of performativity, which claims that gender is performance. Butler offers performativity as a possibility to move beyond the binary modes of construction. Butler's theories on gender identity and gender performativity were based on the notion of destabilizing gender identities and categories.

Butler's theories of gender performativity mean that our gender identities are performed or played out for observation by society. However, by doing (performing) gender, we reinforce the notion that there are only two mutually exclusive categories of gender. To prove the performativity of gender in these films, the Trans characters dressed differently, with some dressing full feminine and others blurring the binary by adding one or two metonyms from feminine clothing paradigm to their male clothing. It was also found that the Trans characters

blur the syntagmatic structure of dressing to prove what Garber termed as "category crises", but they are yet proving the existence of the category.

Concerning the issue of representation, these films are constitutive of Tran's identities as this reflects the Trans actions and behaviour in Hausa cultural settings. However, one aspect of the representation which is constraining (and does not have to be as it may probably aggravates the negative stereotype) was presenting a Trans character (*Kawajo*) proposing to marry men, as this may likely affect the audience perceptions regarding the sexuality of transvestites as they are often seen as homosexuals by the essentialists.

Gender and Trans Image in Kannywood

Kannywood movies depict Trans characters as people who destabilizes the category and exaggerates feminine gender to prove the notions of fluidity. This reminds people within and outside the film of the normative gender and yet proves the existence of the category questioned by the post-structuralists. Hence, the predominant trait in transvestites' portrayal in Kannywood movies is to challenge the notion of gender fixity despite displaying the normativity as they still remind audience that boundaries are permeable.

Conclusion

Trends in the Depiction

The trend in the depiction goes along with the paradigm shift from the hegemonic notions of gender binary to the so-called theory of gender performance. The early Kannywood films, which started 1970s, did not pave the way for Trans people to thrive until around 2006 when Ibro Kawajo for the first time featured a Trans character. The Trans character (*Kawajo*) was depicted in a way that proves the constructiveness of gender. The Trans character in this film was totally misperceived as a woman until the denouement when his Trans friend disclosed his real gender. This is perhaps because of the way he dressed as a woman and even constructs the outer feminine sex organs for him to be fully regarded as a woman.

The later films however, depict Trans characters dressing in line with the Butler's theory of performance. This is perhaps because some scenes (in *Ibro Kawajo*) yet would be questioned by the essentialists as he was often shown failing in one gender-coded behaviour or the other. Hence, the later films (*Uwar Mata* and *Adon Gari*) depict Trans characters blurring the binary clothing ensemble and adopting both the masculine and feminine gender-coded behaviours to create a category crisis and prove gender as performance.

Since the essentialists would question the gender-coded behaviour of the Trans, the theory of gender performance was introduced to destabilize the category. Hence the transvestites' manner, clothing structure and the mode of address used upon addressing one-another are always subject to change.

Regarding sexuality however, the later films deviate from the norm as they depict Trans characters with family to disrupt the essentialists' assumptions that Trans are homosexuals.

Finally, toward the end of these films, the Trans would have to switch and adhered to the gender they were assigned at birth.

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