**Cross-dressing and Identity Negotiation: Exploring the Gender Narrative of Olanrewaju Idris Okuneye (Bobrisky)**

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**Abstract**

Cross-dressing is a visual medium of popular culture through which individuals not only express their creativity but also negotiate their identities. In Nigeria, Idris Okuneye who is popularly known as Bobrisky has embraced and adopted cross-dressing as a form of self-expression and performative art with the aid of social media to publicly construct and negotiate her identity as a trans woman. Bobrisky’s flamboyant persona has consistently challenged traditional gender norms. This article, therefore, seeks to examine Bobrisky’s gender narrative, exploring the complex dynamics between cross-dressing and identity negotiation. It considers Bobrisky’s use of social media as sites of identity negotiation and gender narrative. Through qualitative analysis of social media content, public statements, and media coverage across social media platforms, this study argues that Bobrisky uses digital platforms to construct, navigate and present alternative gender expression and identities within Nigeria’s sociocultural landscape.

**Keywords:** Bobrisky, Cross-dressing, Identity Negotiation, Gender Narrative, Nigeria, Gender Identity.

**Introduction**

Olanrewaju Idris Okuneye, known as Bobrisky and popularly called “Mummy of Lagos”, is a Nigerian internet sensation who has a flamboyant cross-dressing persona. Bobrisky has caught the public’s attention with the significant controversy, debate and analysis of her lifestyle. She is someone who uses cross-dressing as both a performative art and a means of negotiating her identity. This is often done on social media platforms in ways that imitate, lampoon and authenticate binary gender norms. Within the multiethnic Nigerian society, cross-dressing was practised for ritual, festive or ceremonial purposes and was not tied to personal or contemporary gender identity. So in some festivals, male masqueraders represent female ancestral beings in the physical world. This serves symbolic, spiritual and performative functions that reflect flexible gender roles in sacred contexts (Senayon, 2017). Despite conservative social attitudes in Nigeria, there has been an increased openness and acceptance towards nonconformity and gender fluidity in fashion as seen in the rise in cross-dressing. Cross-dressing has become a popular practice, regardless of the personal motivations of individuals (Nwolu et al., 2022). It is currently accessible on social media with enormous appeal among youths, especially males influenced by renowned cross-dressers who have challenged social norms, the cultural perception of gender and traditional understandings of gender stereotypes and norms (Bello & Sanusi, 2022).

Cross-dressing is a potentially accessible way to play with boundaries that are otherwise unattainable but serve as a unique form of self-discovery, self-expression, social commentary or political statement depending on the individual’s intention. It allows for breaking free from cultural norms that limit people but provide people with an opportunity to construct and negotiate their identities, which comes with the changing socio-cultural notions of the public. Social media has concretised cross-dressing and encouraged cross-dressers, who have connected with different communities, resources and information. These links with the global space have made these persons actively explore, express, manage and shape their identity in the social media space (Cannon et al., 2017). It enables them to manipulate, control and maintain the impressions these dressers make to manage their identity across platforms to perform their fluid, multiple, and alterable gender identities through diverse actions to negotiate their identities (Syed et al., 2018). In the realm of Nigerian Pop culture, a few cross-dressers have captured the attention of the public through their presence on social media spaces, one such person is Bobrisky.

The article examines Bobrisky’s cross-dressing as a form of identity negotiation and performance that challenges conventional understandings of gender identity and reinforces societal expectations. It contends that Bobrisky uses cross-dressing as a personal agency to express and negotiate his identity. The study is significant because contemporary cross-dressing in Nigeria embodies a complex interplay of self-expression, identity, resistance, social commentary and entertainment, so is a widely taboo and stigmatised area due to deeply ingrained cultural, religious and societal norms related to gender roles and expectations. As such, understanding the individuals who partake in it could further help lessen the stigma they face. Such an understanding could not only enhance the concerns of the performativity of gender but also how identities are constructed to disregard gender norms, providing a theoretical and practical structure to disrupt cisgender and heterosexual normativity. This paper provides an overview of relevant opinions in the literature while looking at cross-dressing as a form of identity expression and negotiation. Since Bobrisky is the subject, the work focuses on her persona, gender identity, sensational online presence and her influence on the public. It examines Bobrisky’s identity depiction, intersectionality, reception, and controversies.

**Cross-dressing as a Performance of Identity and Self-expression**

Historically, people who cross-dress were called transvestites in the global North, this term is generally considered outdated and derogatory; but presently, the term “cross-dresser” is more widely accepted. It is a nonjudgmental replacement and a subject of fascination and controversy (Thanem, 2022). Cross-dressing is wearing clothing and accessories typically associated with gender in a particular society that is different from the one usually presented by the wearer (Ekins, 1997), but does not involve any body modification. It has existed since time immemorial till date with many meanings and motivations behind it. Cross-dressing has historical and cultural significance across different cultures and societies and is not just a peripheral act but a performative expression of identity and resistance against societal norms.

In Africa, cross-dressing reveals a multifaceted interaction of cultural norms, colonial influence, and new media. Though, seen as an aspect of some traditional cultural practices. This act temporarily suspends daily rules to create opportunities for reversal of roles, spiritual connection, community bonding and social commentary. With this, cross-dressing was not viewed as a new phenomenon or social threat but as a significant aspect characterising their ritual and festive experiences of a people for decades. Examples are the Meru men disguising themselves as women or their union with other men in Kenya, in Burkina Faso among the Dagara, homosexual men are integrated into the community as intermediaries between this world and the other, while in Angola, a special diviner order called omasenge is dressed as women and engaged in marriages with other men, in Central Africa, the Zande practised sex between a man and a boy, as it was considered beneficial to the diviner and not just for ritual reasons and in Nigerian, the patriarchal masquerade performance tradition showcases male carriers in women costumes like the *Adamma* and *Agbogho mmonwu* of Igbo, *Mammy water* of the Tiv and *Gelede* of the Yoruba people, (Blessol, 2013; Epprecht, 2009; Lamp, 2002). Men masquerade dress in beautifully built female attires and masks traditionally linked to feminine deities, which form part of the festivities. This role reversal enables participants to engage with deeper cultural meanings fully, enable spiritual values and preserve the symbolic life of the community.

Cross-dressing in Nigeria took another turn in the 1970s in Southeastern Nigeria with Uzoma Odimara (Area Scatter), the first-ever bold personality (Iwalaiye, 2022), known for cat-walking on the streets of Owerri dressed like a woman with braided hair and pierced ears. He was a civil servant, musician and Television presenter. Then in the 1980s, Bob Actor popularly known as Calypso King came on board with a different perspective to cross-dressing, wanting to change his genitals from male to female. The Northern part of Nigeria was not left out as some males are called *Yan Daudu* because they exhibit feminine mannerisms. In the 1990s and till date, cross-dressing is full-blown in Nigeria, taken a bigger dimension with the likes of Charles Oputa popularly referred to as Charly Boy, Denrele Edun, Bobrisky, Onyx, James Brown, and Jay Boogie. Quite recently, comedians and skit-makers started indulging in cross-dressing to entertain and gain popularity and followership while contributing to the employment index of Nigeria (Ben-Iheanacho et al., 2023). Though the traditional purpose for cross-dressing was acceptable and still exists to date in Nigeria, the recent concept which deals with self-expression, identity and sometimes, sexuality is often viewed as anti-culture, improper, and un-African, and the persons who indulge in it face stigmatisation, discrimination, and violence (Casteleyn, 2019; Kapasula, 2006).

Cross-dressing is an instrument for exploring the themes of identity, desire, variance, sexuality and power dynamics (Garber, 1992). It is viewed as a performance of identity and self-expression, challenging gender stereotypes; a deliberate tool of empowerment and subversion, meaning that cross-dressing is not a fixed act but helps individuals explore personal identity and express their true selves. Its fluidity aids in disrupting traditional gender norms (Butler, 2006). Currently in Nigeria, cross-dressing and gender-bending fashion have dominated the pop culture scene, allowing individuals like Bobrisky to take up diverse roles. Cross-dressing for her is not just a choice of attire but a deliberate act of self-expression, a method of embodying her self-identified gender. This allows Bobrisky to express some aspects of her identity that do not correspond with her assigned gender with a strategic presentation that challenges societal expectations.

Furthermore, Judith Butler’s theory of performativity provides a useful framework to understand this phenomenon that “there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (2006, 33). This historical perspective provides a backdrop for understanding Bobrisky’s cross-dressing narrative of performance of femininity; a narrative that not only challenged the authenticity of her gender expectations but has expanded the boundaries of her identity with political statements that celebrate her freedom of choice. Bobrisky’s repeated performances through dress, makeup, and mannerisms communicate her gender fluidity as a trans woman, challenging traditional gender norms. This performative aspect is essential in her process of self-construction, allowing her to exist visibly and loudly as a trans person, which is both an art form and a political statement. Thus, this gender performance reflects Nigeria’s social and cultural understanding of gender, destabilising normative constructs and inviting discussions. It encourages audiences to question their assumptions about gender identity, thereby influencing the social and cultural understanding of gender.

**Cross-dressing as Identity Negotiator**

Identity plays an important role in every individual’s life. It is seen as a performance that enables people to present themselves differently based on who they are and where they are. Identity is how an individual’s presence is shaped within their society; it provides people with reference points which enable them to answer the question of “who someone is” and establish the lifestyle that makes them unique and different from other individuals (Roesler, 2008). Historically, gender identity in many Nigerian cultures is considered fluid and flexible especially as it is rooted in indigenous practices like age, seniority and social function. These allow one to project an identity that is consistent with one’s self as a result of the recognised cultural symbols portrayed. The identity is traditionally understood through a complex mix of fluidity, complementarity, cross-gender practices, and social roles have been in existence before external influences like colonialism and religious ideologies came to impose the rigid male/female binary (Tamale, 2011; Oyewumi, 1997; Amadiume, 1987). In contemporary Nigerian society, both binary and non-binary perception of gender co-exists with the Western binary model. This coexistence has become prevalent as a result of modern opportunities, prevailing formal structures like law, politics, and religion, globalisation, and a combination of traditional values that have aided in the creation of a dynamic and evolving landscape for gender in Nigerian society.

The binary model occasioned by environmental changes has adversely altered, impacted and shaped people, the identity is a derivation from a negotiation process involving culture, environment, individualised self-conception, social interactions and communication. People, therefore, negotiate their identities to establish them in ways that increase the probability of coherence and continuity. Despite this widespread influence and acceptance of Western gender binary ideologies, Nigerian society has continuously shown resistance to some of these alternative gender styles, especially among traditional communities, seeking instead to recover the pre-colonial gender fluidity, flexibility and inclusivity models (Mama, 1995).

Cross-dressing in pre-colonial Nigeria was an integral part of most traditional communities, particularly in cultural practices like festive and ritual performances and social entertainment (Gaudio, 2009; Drewal, 1992). Currently, cross-dressing is an identity negotiator that explores how individuals use clothing associated with another gender to navigate, express, or negotiate their personal and social identities. The process acts as a mediator between internal feelings of self and external societal expectations regarding gender roles, particularly in the Nigerian society that upholds rigid gender binaries. For some, cross-dressing allows for expressing gender fluidity, non-conformity, or an exploration of a broader spectrum of gender identities, where individuals use dress to express identities that do not align with socially prescribed gender norms. It becomes a transitional step in understanding oneself on the axis of gender, sexuality, and personal expression (Onanuga & Schmied, 2020). This way, cross-dressing can subvert and contest the idea that gender is an inherent or fixed characteristic and a tool for experimenting with gender fluidity. It challenges societal norms by blurring the lines between masculine and feminine especially as it confronts the binary notions of gender, and can be seen as resistance against power dynamics in terms of taking up roles not traditionally assigned to a person. Cross-dressing can be used to question the validity of societal expectations surrounding gender while also becoming a tool to express personal agency.

Identity negotiation occurs when individuals remove themselves from cultural canons and play with boundaries. It is not static but actively constructed through social interactions and personal choices, often involving strategic decisions. Butler claimed that learning to be a woman involves identity performance and negotiation. She further argued that gender identity, “is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a stylised repetition of acts” (Butler, 1988, p. 519). In this case, both genders conform to cultural and societal expectations of their roles, learning to perform their gendered identities through any desired means. Though freely expressing their gendered identities outside of heteronormative bounds but the binary concept limits free expression and reinforces stereotypes, biological determinism, and stigmatisation.

Cross-dressing is a powerful tool for identity negotiation, challenging traditional gender roles and contributing to gender fluidity discourse. However, cultural and societal factors can influence this process (Bullough & Bullough, 1993). Bobrisky uses cross-dressing to authentically express her feminine aesthetics and identity, which she feels is suppressed by her male persona but negotiates her identity within an environment that often restricts expressions and where conservative values predominate. Fashion scholars assert that clothing is a communicative tool that reflects individual and group identity, societal values and cultural expression (Crain, 2008; Okeke, 1996; Eicher, & Roach-Higgins, 1992). Looking at Bobrisky, her adoption of feminine attire and styling can be seen as a critical tool for identity negotiation in a society that often marginalizes LGBTQ+ identities. Bobrisky’s choice of embracing cross-dressing and becoming a trans woman opens up a discourse on the intersection of fashion, identity and socio-political constraints, which reflects the notion that cross-dressing is not merely a form of self-expression but also a strategy of resistance against restrictive gender norms (Epprecht, 2008). So, Bobrisky’s form of expression and public identity have challenged normative expectations surrounding gender and sexuality and reinforced existing gender stereotypes.

**Method**

This research used a qualitative method, employing digital ethnography which prioritised the study of contents created by Bobrisky on different social media platforms as well as audience engagements on her posts. Other primary data used are unstructured interviews while consulting relevant literature in books, journals and internet websites (Taherdoost, 2021). The work used cross-dressing as an identity negotiator, offering insights into the interplay between Idris Okuneye’s (Bobrisky) gender narrative and Nigerian society on the global social media space.

**Bobrisky: Persona and Influence**

Bobrisky has been described as a cross-dresser even when she has explicitly identified herself as a Nigerian transwoman, a term used for a male who identifies and lives as a woman. She takes up this unassigned identity not given at birth, choosing to dress in clothing she feels comfortable in and appropriate to her gender. Though this identity is distinct from cross-dressing, wearing clothing traditionally associated with the opposite gender has aided in authenticating her gender identity shift. According to Legit online journalists, Bobrisky’s interest in cross-dressing may have been sparked by her rough childhood due to the difficulties of growing up in a polygamous family and the subsequent divorce of her parents, which forced her to engage in stereotypically feminine pursuits (Walubengo & Simwa, 2023). From a young age, her parents punished her for exhibiting these extreme feminine tendencies, they could not sustain the discipline because Bobrisky started fending for herself at the early age of 16; largely because her father could not meet the financial needs of their large family. Bent on carving a niche for herself, Bobrisky continued in the contentious demeanour of feminine cross-dressing in school especially as she went into selling unisex clothes. She confirmed in an interview that “… I also had a side hustle, I was selling unisex clothes. Most times, I try the female clothes on myself and I love the outfits” (Ogungbenle, 2024). Because of her distinct style, she rose to fame at university, dressing like a woman, and putting on moderate facial makeup as a highly skilled makeup artist to trick men in bars and clubs.

Nigerian communities, like worldwide, have traditionally emphasised gender roles introduced with colonial religions and laws, with marriage and procreation being social obligations. Heteronormativity, a social construct originating from religious perceptions and cultural sentiments, is pervasive and deeply ingrained in various societal institutions, leading to strong disapproval of homosexual and transgender identities (Bankole et al., 2023; Rosenfeld, 2019). Nigeria has historically established gender roles, despite cultural and religious influences. Under President Goodluck Jonathan, the law criminalising same-sex relationships in 2014 reinforced heteronormativity, reinforcing binary gender norms (Olaogun, 2024). So, transgender behaviour, public displays of affection, and cross-dressing are seen as expressions of prejudice even though it has been in existence since the 1970s in Nigeria and has evolved with artists like Uzoma Odimara, Bob Actor, Charles Oputa, Denrele Edun, Bobrisky, Onyx, James Brown, Tobi the Creator, Jay Boogie, and some skit makers. Scholars continue to argue that queerness, gender, and sexuality intertwine with traditional African societies’ history, culture, and social dynamics (Okwenna, 2021; Epprecht, 2010; Gaudio, 1998).

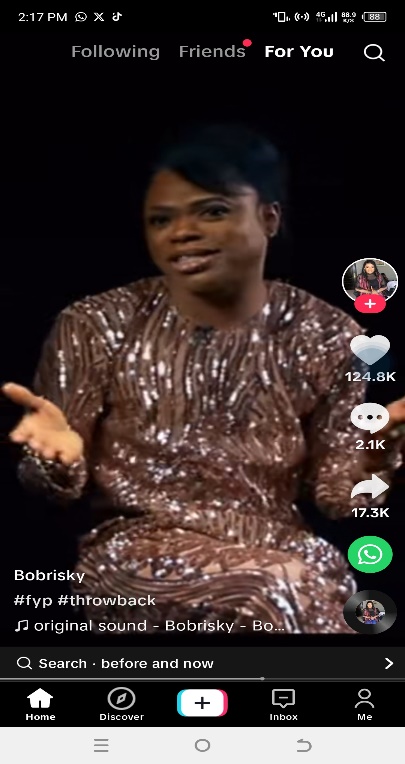
Nigerian fashion model, beauty therapist, entrepreneur, choreographer, and LGBTQ+ activist, Bobrisky, has gained fame through her social media presence and followership on social media apps such as Snapchat, TikTok and Instagram. She has made her Nollywood debut in a Yoruba film titled *Ojuloge Obiri*n and has gained fame in the US as a guest for multiple events like club appearances and private meet-ups. Bobrisky has undergone a gender transformation, transitioning from male to female and using various products to promote her journey. Since she is not shy about her ‘chosen’ identity, Bobrisky publicly announced her gender identity, discussing her sex life and declaring her marital status by showing the world the man she refers to as her boyfriend. Bobrisky has also publicly announced her gender identity and created the “Bobrisky Dance” in 2021 on TikTok, blurring the lines between masculinity and femininity and shaping Nigerian cultural narratives.

Bobrisky’s expressions, using pronouns associated with women and self-identification models through her attires, and physical transformations using wigs, and makeup have led to her being referred to as a transwoman than simply a cross-dresser. Transwomen are known to often begin their self-discovery journey by cross-dressing to feel more at ease and be treated as a woman, regardless of their heterosexuality. Cross-dressing in contemporary times deconstructs gender roles by highlighting how clothing is a tool for forming and determining power dynamics in society. It reveals that gender is a social construct, highlighting the oppression of trans individuals. This strategy encourages thought and understanding of the struggle for social change and equality (Şentürk Tatar, 2024). So, Bobrisky falls into this category, especially with her adoption of feminine characteristics that challenge the rigid Nigerian gender norms thus exposing her to stigmatisation and oppression.

The media, particularly in Nigeria has played a major role in normalising non-traditional gender expressions and blurring gender identities, which is reflected in the acceptance of cross-dressing in the entertainment industry (Ben-Iheanacho et al., 2023). This multifaceted phenomenon reflects broader societal attitudes towards gender and identity via the media in the public space. Social media has become a tool people actively use to manage and shape their identities and self-presentations (Kramer & Winter, 2008). Identity work involves creating a desired self-image, controlling impressions, and managing presentation across platforms. This process, including visual representation, content creation, and diverse audience engagement, shapes public perceptions and contributes to gender norms. Bobrisky uses these media as ‘counterpublics’ for creating and maintaining members and groups to ‘test ground for [her] identity’ (Cavalcante, 2016, p. 115), negotiate her identity and drive home her “supposed” marginalised identity (Jenzen, 2017). An interview with Bobrisky on TikTok before the full transformation:

Social media is a very good platform whereby it makes you popular. I wasn’t thinking of the famous Bobrisky, and this famous, bae. Okay, I happen to like posted a short video of me dancing on Snapchat and I got to see many people tagging on top. Oh my God, you got to go and check Bobrisky’s Snapchat; it’s fabulous, the way he dances, his makeup, his outfit. Before I know, people kept sending me messages and requests and I thought it’s a very good thing like I’m getting popular. You have to work harder to survive or to do anything you think you want to do to make you are good at what you to do (bobrisky202, 2023).

Bobrisky’s picture below shows the number of followership, comments and reactions (fig. 1). Her comment above further propelled her to indulge in transgressing gender norms, while prompting more discussion on gender identity in the conservative Nigerian society.



**Fig. 1: “Bobrisky’s Dance Performance and Interview in the Beginning,” image by**

**[@Bobrisky] on TikTok, retrieved April 16, 2024.**

Bobrisky’s gender narrative in Nigeria is a complex negotiation of identity through social media. Despite these issues, she uses social media to build her public persona and attract followers (fig. 2 & 3).

**Fig. 2 & 3: Bobrisky’s Transformative Stage till Date. Image by Doyinsola A. Ilori**

**Facebook, March 26, 2024; Johnson Ogunfeyimi, Facebook, March 29 2024.**

Her visibility challenges the status quo and sparks conversations about gender fluidity and marginalised identities. However, it’s important not to glorify Bobrisky’s narrative, as it could reinforce harmful stereotypes about LGBTQ+ individuals.

Discussions with some individuals, including cross-dressers also gave different perspectives of Bobrisky’s personality and influence. While some believe she calls herself a trans woman in other to attract traffic on social media, others think it is a business strategy for her beauty products. A good example is a TikTok display with her ‘supposed boyfriend’ (figs. 4 & 5). Yet, a few others like Onyx (Godwin Ogaga) believe in her trans woman narrative, which influenced him as a minority belonging to a marginalised set deprived of their rights to freely express their gender identity. But coming from her directly in a TikTok video titled ‘I’m a woman, I’m not a man anymore’ confirms the position of her gender, in her words: “I am no longer a man, I’m now a woman. … I have done many successful surgeries, I can say with my full chest that I am a woman and have evidence to prove …” (2024).

**Figs. 4 & 5: “Bobrisky displaying her Beauty Product with her Boyfriend,” image by**

**[@Bobrisky202] on TikTok, retrieved April 16, 2024.**

**Reception and Controversies**

In 2016, Bobrisky used social media to attract public attention by uploading a very controversial statement that she would be a ‘sweet wife and caring partner’ to her future ‘husband’. All these acts and statements to conservative Nigerians, including her parents, are frowned upon but non-conservatives are indifferent or nudge her to continue. However, there are recent outbursts from women whose reasons arise from socio-cultural and personal dynamics because of Bobrisky’s controversial updates of posts, pictures, videos and messages on her social media platforms, stating that she was more beautiful than 75% of Nigerian girls. Another controversy is the recent pronouncement at the film début of Beasts of Two Worlds that Bobrisky is the ‘Best Dressed Female’. The film producer, award presenters, and recipient Bobrisky received negative backlash from the public, claiming it was disrespectful to female guests and women in general. The reactions and acceptability of Bobrisky’s persona within Nigerian culture reflect a broader societal dichotomy surrounding gender identity and LGBTQ+ rights, which highlights both advancement and constant challenges in Nigeria.

These are not the only controversies that Bobrisky has been involved in. Anytime her name is mentioned, social media go ‘crazy’ and ‘unsettled’ especially as her stories are sensational and because she has taken cross-dressing trends to another level. Bobrisky has been charged to court after several arrests over the years. She was once detained at Lekki by the Lagos State Police Command not long after she came out as a transwoman, petitioned and arrested by her business partner, Toyin Lawani and in 2020, arrested for a fraud allegation of ₦30 million by an unnamed businesswoman. She was stopped by the police from celebrating her well-publicised birthday even with the presence of some famous Nigerians, gays, and transvestites. Recently, Bobrisky was arrested by the EFCC on April 3, 2024, for abusing the naira and [arraigned on a six-count charge](https://www.pulse.ng/entertainment/celebrities/bobrisky-begs-court-for-mercy-over-spraying-naira/w81j8vm). She pleaded guilty to the count charges of spraying naira notes at four different events, which led to her incarceration at the Kirikiri Prison for 6 months. Though charged with abusing the Nigerian currency, gender/sexual identity was the overriding reason for Bobrisky’s incarceration by the Nigerian government. Bobrisky can better negotiate her identity in a global context thanks to the public backlash, police arrests, and legal battles resulting from her identity; however, an official of the Nigerian Security Prisons has stated that her recent incarceration at the facility disproves her claims of a sexual transformation from male to female.

… Bobrisky is being held in the same prison cell with male inmates in the facility and he is being treated as a normal inmate. Bobrisky was examined at the point of admission and the outcome of the examination revealed that the convicted cross-dresser had no realignment of gender or genital organs (Oyewo, 2024).

Nigeria Correctional Services (NCoS) in a statement by its spokesperson, Rotimi Oladokun, has denied claims that controversial cross-dresser Bobrisky shares the same cell with other convicted male inmates, stating that s/he is treated like any other inmate without special amenities or privileges. Bobrisky wears male-designated correctional clothing and follows all regulations at the centre. The spokesperson aims to disprove these claims and inform the public that all inmates are entitled to family, friends, and legal visits. This opened up an avenue for Nigerian cross-dresser James Brown and others to visit their colleague Bobrisky at the Kirikiri Correctional Centre in Lagos (Sanusi, 2024). This raises questions about Bobrisky’s personality, quest to be seen as a woman, and the impact on the LGBTQ+ community.

**Intersectionality and Representation**

Intersectionality, according to Crenshaw, has become a tool for understanding how various forms of discrimination overlap and intersect to create experiences of oppression or privilege (1989). It aims to challenge systemic inequalities and create a just and equitable society. Cross-dressing, on the other hand, intersects with several socially constructed factors like gender, religion, race, economic status, sexual orientation, and ethnicity to create unique experiences of gender expression.

Dressing is linked to self-expression, gender, and sexual identity but may not necessarily have a direct correlation with a person’s sexual experiences. This relationship between dressing and sexual experiences may vary depending on cultural, psychological and personal factors but it may influence how a person expresses and experiences their sexuality. Thus, cross-dressing could be a practice that combines a variety of gender identity possibilities and sexual orientations. While some interviewees think that cross-dressing’s purpose is for identity exploration, self-expression, or role-play, but do not necessarily identify as transgender. Others believe that it is not indicative of sexual orientation but marks the beginning of transgender identity, influenced by experiences with opposite-sex clothing and changing behaviour.

As a famous cross-dresser, Bobrisky can be examined from the perspective of intersectionality as she may experience unique challenges and opportunities shaped by the Nigerian socio-cultural background. Interestingly, while cross-dressing challenges traditional gender norms, liberty and autonomy, intersectionality reveals that representation of Bobrisky’s persona is not only about gender but also involves other social categories like his sexuality, class, religion and even race. In other words, intersectionality is used as “a method for interrogating the institutional reproduction of inequality” (Grabham et al., 2009, p. 1), acknowledging the fact that everyone **has their own unique experiences of discrimination and oppression so cross-dressing becomes an avenue where various social inequalities are experienced and resisted.**

Bobrisky’s social media and cross-dressing persona become insightful for examining intersectionality in gender expression, cross-dressing, sociocultural norms, class, sexual identity and religious representation. **Her** experiences on media platforms shaped her identity and gender narratives, highlighting the role of intersectional methods in understanding gender identity. Bobrisky’s sartorial choice and transgender expressions are seen as forms of resistance against normative gender roles, challenging Nigerian rigid gender norms while raising questions about representation, identity and fame. Her intersectional experiences elicit reactions from the public, revealing how public oppressive tendencies and privilege help shape and influence the experiences of cross-dressers and transgender persons, especially in conservative societies like Nigeria. Bobrisky’s case highlights the complex nature of gender identity in Nigerian society where traditional gender norms and legal structures conflict with the recent global trends on gender expression and LGBTQ+ visibility. Her persona is associated with luxury and wealth, intersecting with class inequality, thus making it difficult for low earners to participate fully.

**Conclusion**

The gender narrative of Idris Okuneye (Bobrisky) is complex, multifaceted and defies categorisation. His cross-dressing can be interpreted as a form of identity negotiation, allowing him to express his feminine identity and challenge societal norms. These raise questions concerning the authenticity of Bobrisky’s gender expression as his cross-dressing is commodified and often promotes products and services while dressed in feminine attire, which some scholars believe is exploitative because of its commercial gains. Bobrisky’s cross-dressing is a flamboyant and provocative performance primarily aimed at gaining attention and followers by social media consumers, rather than reflecting his true gender identity (Stone, 2006). By critically examining these aspects, we gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of gender expression and the ongoing debates surrounding cross-dressing and transgender identities.

Bobrisky’s falsehood has raised questions, however, he has used cross-dressing to negotiate an identity for himself as a source of wealth creation; thereby reducing a sensitive issue like transgender to mere performance for followership. This attitude could expose Nigerians to re-examine the problems of wealth, social influence and status in the country. It shows that authenticity and transparency must be key concepts in this digital age, especially with the complexities of gender and identity in the rapidly changing global space and its impact on society. It also exposes the roles of the media in shaping perceptions of reality and performance, considering online and offline identities in terms of personal construction.

Bobrisky’s gender narrative on social media has influenced discussions on gender, identity, and sexuality, highlighting the need for further inquiry and advocacy for homonormativity and opposition to heteronormativity (Colosi et al., 2023; Adams-Santos, 2020). His rise to fame has sparked complex responses within and outside the queer community in Nigeria and beyond. Some see Bobrisky as a symbol of resistance, while others see her as a trailblazer for marginalised transgender and gendered diverse individuals. However, concerns remain about her inauthenticity and potential exploitative ventures. Generally, Bobrisky’s gender identity presence has made an indisputable impact in Nigeria and beyond, but the degree of these impacts remains a topic for future debates.

In conclusion, cross-dressing is a site of marginalisation, a space for agency and self-definition within the constraints of societal structures. It reinforces stereotypes and prejudices, thus a reflection of broader societal attitudes towards gender and other intersecting social categories and how it shapes the experiences of cross-dressers like Bobrisky.

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