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Diatribes in the Gender Communication of Muslim Youth TikTok Influencers in Parts of Northern Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the use of TikTok by Muslim youth influencers in Northern Nigeria and the diatribes it is generating. The study categorized the discursive strategies used in the diatribes and identified the types, targets, and motives of the diatribes. It also explained the gender roles in the diatribes from an Islamic perspective. Discursive psychology was applied to analyse 12 purposively selected TikTok videos. The key findings showed that loud, confrontational, and highly emotive diatribes, including personal attacks on anonymous social media users, institutions, and women, were used to express binary oppositions. The discursive strategies used included denying prejudice, honest phrases, scapegoating, authority, emotional appeal, and polarization. A variety of emotional and social motives were traced through the clips, viz: personal defence, revenge, identity construction, and moral performance. Gender recurred as a conflicting theme across the diatribes and reinforced patriarchal gender norms, except in a few cases. The study concluded that TikTok diatribes among Northern Nigerian Muslim youth influencers are a complex mix of gendered, moral, and social anxieties. These are projected through performance outrage, satire, and reflection, which portray social media as a public morality theatre where individuals navigate identity, shame, and power using highly emotional and symbolic language.

Keywords: speech, gender, communication, diatribes, Nigeria.

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Introduction

Social media is gaining traction as a global platform for diverse communication and interaction across various segments of society. Its proliferation is particularly notable among youth in Nigeria, including in the country's northern region. One of the most widely adopted platforms by youth in Northern Nigeria is TikTok. As of March 2025, TikTok recorded 2.18 billion monthly visits (Duarte, 2025). This study also observed an increase in the use of TikTok for gender-related communication among youth in the region. At times, these engagements degenerate into bitter conversations and confrontations in cyberspace and may even escalate into physical altercations offline. Such open contestations present both benefits and drawbacks, revealing diverse patterns of use and socialization among users.

TikTok serves as a platform for self-expression, talent display, creativity, income generation, and, in some cases, the exhibition of behaviours considered socially deviant such as promoting nudity, frivolous conflicts, and inflammatory diatribes. These behaviours may culminate in cyberbullying and harassment, particularly when they involve individuals of different genders. This study examined these dynamics in TikTok video usage in Kano State, Northern Nigeria.

TikTok is a Chinese social media platform that was acquired and transformed into one of the most successful social media platforms by Beijing Bytedance Technology in 2017 (Montag et al., 2021). It is a short-video platform that allows users aged 13 or older to participate, and its largest user base is youth. In Nigeria, this platform has gained immense popularity, particularly among young people. Omar (2023) argues that while social media adoption is generally higher in Southern Nigeria, TikTok has made considerable inroads in Northern Nigeria, where Islam and cultural as well as societal norms often influence the uptake of new technologies.

This study further argues that, in addition to increased access to mobile data and smartphones, the interconnectivity of cities through globalisation, along with greater awareness of the economic value of social media platforms, cultural relevance, increased desire, and access to platforms for expression by various groups (e.g. women, girls, cross-dressers, gays, and lesbians), has contributed to TikTok's proliferation in northern parts of Nigeria, including Kano State, where influencers use TikTok videos for gender communication. Gender is conceptualised in this study in terms of the psychological, social, cultural, and behavioural characteristics associated with being female or male, while acknowledging that gender roles vary across cultures. Similarly, gender roles refer to the expected norms of behaviour that shape how women and men act in society. These roles are defined by one's gender identity and learned behaviours, which differ from one culture to another and evolve over time within a given culture (Wienclaw, 2011).

TikTok users in Kano and other states in the north of Nigeria, particularly women, girls, and cross-dressers, consistently engage in disputes with the Hisba (Islamic Police), mostly over how they display their gender roles on the digital platform. These disputes largely arise from the intersection of gender dynamics, social media communication, Islamic values, and deliberate attempts to preserve tradition, cultural values, and morality within the region's populations. This occurs within a broader regulatory context of conservative Islamic practice, in which the adoption, use, and exploration of technologies are guided by Islamic principles.

Moreover, it is observed that diatribes produced and distributed by TikTok users (who are sometimes regarded as outcasts) represent a manifestation of the unprecedented opportunity the platform provides for freedom of expression and engagement. This phenomenon has attracted the attention of authorities at various levels. In this study, diatribes refer to powerful and acrimonious verbal onslaughts against someone or something (Chisita et al., 2022), which are produced and distributed by Muslim youth TikTok influencers in parts of Northern Nigeria. These diatribes involve people of different genders and can lead to the polarisation of perspectives and principles regarding various issues and events. Scholars such as Ore and Tannen, cited in Noelle (2011), argue that in gender communication, language plays an important role as the medium of interaction through which social norms are transmitted, allowing individuals to describe their perceptions of reality and shape how others perceive and respond to them.

Existing literature shows that social media provides a platform that widens division and polarisation (e.g. Lane et al., 2023; Walther, 2022), especially in diverse, conflict-prone, and sensitive contexts. Therefore, it is imperative to analyse how popular social media, specifically TikTok induces such polarisation among influencers in parts of Northern Nigeria and how this affects gender roles. Extant research has largely overlooked the gender dimension and the nuances of such polarisation. These arguments inform the rationale for undertaking this study, which seeks to provide insights into how diatribes emerge based on the communicative characteristics of groups and subgroups on TikTok, a platform that has gained unprecedented popularity among young Muslim users in Nigeria's north.

Accordingly, this study examined the categories of discursive strategies used in diatribes, the types and targets of these diatribes, the motives for their use, and the gender roles exhibited within the diatribes, interpreted from an Islamic perspective.

Literature Review

Technology Adoption and Islamic Values in Nigeria's North

Northern Nigeria is richly endowed with vast land resources and economic opportunities. However, most of its youth are unemployed, polarized by populist politics, and disadvantaged by poor socio-economic conditions, limited opportunities, low digital literacy, and weak development indices. Islam is the most widespread religion in the region, and its principles significantly influence the adoption and use of technology by a large proportion of the population.

The popularity of TikTok in Northern Nigeria can be attributed to the country's large youth population, with a median age of approximately 17 years, according to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA, 2022). TikTok's rise is also linked to increased mobile internet penetration in the region. Nigeria's monthly mobile internet usage has surged by 93%, driven largely by smartphone growth (Jaiyeola, 2025). This study also observed that mobile device communication is widespread among Northern Nigerian youth, including those in rural areas.

Contextually, a sizeable number of Northern Nigerian youths may lack formal Western education but are well-versed in Arabic and Islamic education. They also speak Hausa which is the region's unofficial lingua franca alongside several other indigenous languages. These youths find TikTok attractive and gratifying due to its video messaging features, which do not require English language proficiency or advanced technological skills. As such, the platform offers accessible, visually engaging, and aesthetically appealing outlets for content creation in any language of their choice, while also enabling freedom of self-expression and interaction with other users.

Therefore, TikTok swiftly became a "regional village" in Northern Nigeria like McLuhan's concept of the "global village", enabling youth across various Northern Nigerian states to connect, engage, and interact. Many TikTok users are gaining popularity due to the unregulated and uncensored expression patterns they produce and distribute through TikTok videos. For example, users such as Al'amin GFresh, Murja Kunya, Hassan Makeup, Suddenly, Umami Shakira, Muneera Abdulsalam, Sayyada Sadiya Haruna, and Aminu J Town attained "overnight" stardom because of their unique ways of expressing themselves and communicating with followers.

Just like any other social media platform, TikTok uses algorithms to promote content based on user engagement. This makes trends and issues discussed on the platform in Northern Nigeria go viral and fuel further interest on the platform. TikTok plays a key role in promoting regional music genres such as Hausa rap, dances, and other performances (Ahmed, 2023) which have gained popularity. It also promotes lifestyle content (e.g., marriage counselling, humor and memes, dark humor, aphrodisiac ventures), among others. The use of the Hausa Language in videos and the incorporation of local fashion trends have equally solidified TikTok's role as a platform that bridges cultural and generational gaps in the region.

Affordability and access to mobile data are crucial factors for the proliferation of TikTok. Big cities like Kano, which is one of the ancient Northern Nigerian cities, have a rich cultural and religious history, and other parts of Northern Nigeria have witnessed different categories of affordable data plans and services from major telecom companies. This has led to the emergence of multiple data wholesalers and retailers. In 2022, mobile data penetration in Kano State rose by 45 percent, coinciding with the rise in social media use by youth in the region (Mobile Insights, 2022). This trend makes it easy for TikTok users to access seamless high-speed Internet and unfettered social media engagements.

This study shows that TikTok has not only become a tool for entertainment, but also a significant influencer of youth culture in Northern Nigeria. It has bred a new syndicate of youth called 'Yan TikTok' in Hausa Language, which translates as 'TikTokers'. These youths, who identify with their syndicates, are increasingly using TikTok to express their identities and promote gender discussions (Tariq, 2023). This research also observes an emerging culture in terms of exploring trends in dressing, speech, fashion, and other styles and deviance from cultural and Islamic values.

The pattern of TikTok engagement among these syndicates has also contributed to a shift in social norms, particularly regarding perceptions of privacy, public behaviour, and cultural conservatism—especially in contexts where such values are deeply ingrained. For instance, Omar (2023) reported that a TikTok video by a youth from Bauchi (a northeastern Nigerian state), which celebrated the rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and other orientations (LGBTQ+), received backlash from various quarters.

TikTok also presents economic opportunities for its users, particularly through monetization. These syndicates earn income by monetizing their followers or promoting businesses through the platform (Yusuf, 2023). Despite its popularity and potential benefits, TikTok faces ongoing challenges and criticisms due to the extent to which its content can promote values that conflict with the dominant traditional cultural and religious norms of Northern Nigeria. These tensions are well documented in the literature on social media, film, and popular culture, as well as studies on the behaviour of Muslim youth and women on TikTok in Northern Nigeria (e.g., Muhammad et al., 2023; Sule & Ladan, 2023).

Variations in Taxonomy of TikTok Users in Northern Nigeria

The previous section discussed the taxonomy of TikTok users in Northern Nigeria. This section examines the various reasons why different people use the platform. The primary reason many individuals in Northern Nigeria use TikTok is for entertainment, often described locally as “catch cruise,” a Nigerian expression meaning engagement with the platform for the purpose of consuming preferred content or producing personal videos without promoting any business or interacting with other users. These typically include memes or short videos that seldom involve conflict, controversy, or dialogue. In this category, self-expression, privacy, personal identity, and individual lives are strongly protected.

The second category comprises those who use TikTok as influencers. These users engage with current affairs, matters of public concern, and trends to express their opinions and influence their followers or the broader public. Their communication is typically assertive and often involves controversial topics and disputes, occasionally employing harsh or abusive language.

Comedians represent another group who use TikTok to convey various comedic techniques. They create humorous videos to entertain their followers, sometimes incorporating dark humour or satirical content that challenges traditional or religious values, practices, or ideologies. Some of the methods they use include melodramatic sketches, video effects, music, dance, and physical comedy.

Beauty stylists and fashionistas have also emerged as major users of TikTok in Northern Nigeria. These users produce and distribute videos that promote beauty, fashion, and lifestyle content, and they sometimes do so without showing their faces. In addition, chefs use TikTok to share food and cooking tutorials, a trend popularized by “foody” users. They create educational content on recipes, cooking styles, and regional dishes.

Interestingly, Northern Nigeria is home to many Islamic preachers, many of whom have transitioned to become TikTok preachers. These individuals regularly produce sermons and promote religious programs via the platform. Some also share videos from other renowned clerics in the region. Several prominent clerics have even created their own TikTok accounts to distribute content directly, without third-party mediation.

Troublemakers also use TikTok to deliberately generate controversy by making unpleasant references to other users or by transposing offline disputes onto the platform. These individuals are known as TikTok draggers; they engage in diatribes that often escalate into personal insults, harassment, and cyberbullying. This group is sizeable and typically does not maintain TikTok accounts. However, since it is necessary to create an account to access more TikTok videos, they opt not to produce their own content but instead comment on videos created or posted by others. Notably, the categories of TikTok users in Northern Nigeria are not exhaustive, and other user groups not captured in this study may also exist.

Social Media Diatribes, Gender Roles and Socio-Cultural Communication

Social media and sociocultural communication intersect. The platforms are used to post and/or view cyberbullying threads, communicate hate diatribes, and record fights as reported by Lane et al. (2023), who submit that social media serve as turbulent conduits for spewing neighborhood chaos into schools, as well as intersecting community and school events. Walther (2022) argues that social media has the potential to direct startling degrees of hate messages in individuals and groups. These not only expand and sharpen existing regional, racial, cultural, and religious polarizations, but also threaten the psychological and physical well-being of the targets. Further, Banaji and Bhat (2022) submit that the extreme violence and discrimination that social media users initiate against targeted groups are connected to the socio-political contexts, values, and behaviors of users of social media platforms and argue that this would include gender roles.

There is now growing interest in debates on gender roles in Nigeria, and social media and its popular cultural communication dynamics have merely introduced layers to these issues in practice. For instance, Northern Nigeria is considered a region with some rigid views about gender roles, culture, and religion. Sometimes, such views are almost conservative in that they resist emerging subcultures or disruptive cultures and practices. Northern Nigeria's dominant culture draws from the Hausa tradition, which is largely driven by Islamic jurisprudence.

The inherent practices, utterances, behaviors, and attitudes have prescriptions that are exclusively designated as either male or female preserves and not for non-binary gender groups. This means that if there are people who deviate from the binary system, their views are often regarded as socially deviant, and such persons are likely to spiral into silence, as expounded in Elisabeth Noelle Neumann's theoretical argument, due to repercussions and dissent that could manifest if they publicly declare their 'socially-deviant' gender orientations.

Meanwhile, the emergence and spread of TikTok have enabled freedom of expression and introduced nascent trends of outspokenness from diverse gender groups. They can now express long-term hidden ideas, feelings, and identities through their TikTok accounts and videos, including those that contradict the Islamic and Northern Nigerian conventions.

Evidence corroborates that some TikTok users of Northern Nigerian origin exhibit behaviors that contradict Islamic values. Sule and Ladan (2023), who examined the behaviors of some unmarried Muslim women on TikTok in Northern Nigeria, reported that women engage in indecent behaviors by exposing their bodies to social media. Meanwhile, Sule and Ladan (2023) determined that female TikTok users exhibit anti-moral behaviors that contradict the teachings of Islam, while Muhammad et al. (2023), who studied the implications of TikTok usage by teenagers in Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria, demonstrated that teenage users exhibit aggressive tendencies and deviant behaviors in social media spaces. Similarly, Muntari (2024) reported how Kano Hisba arrested a popular TikToker, mainly by posting vulgar skit videos.

Another reason that fuels the diatribes and attracts public interest to TikTok is its interplay with politics and activism. Abbas et al. (2022) found that TikTok is used for political expression, mobilization, and online activism. Some constituents of cyber-diatribes that TikTok users exhibit corroborate the postulation by Rahmawati et al. (2023) that the prevalence of yelling, use of vulgar language (swearing), associating negative nicknames or labelling, isolation, or causing embarrassment and belittling of others are forms of verbal violence on TikTok, which conform to the postulations in Tower's Theory, as well as the depiction of cyber-diatribes among TikTok influencers in Kano State.

Kano Hisba often presents verbal violence as one of the reasons why it apprehends TikTok users, not only because they are against Islamic values, but also because they sometimes have the tendency to incite physical violence and public unrest in the offline environment. These are some of the reasons why the Hisba (Islamic Police) provides for persistent intervention in altercations and cyber-diatribes among Northern Nigerian Muslim youth. A part of the significance of this study's intent to examine the content of such dialogues is to understand their nuances and tendencies to escalate beyond personal contestations.

Meanwhile, other context-specific related corroborative evidence shows that there is an intersection and influence between digital technologies, Islam, its values, and culture. Beta (2019) reported how social media religious influencers in Indonesia conflate religious, political, and commercial elements in online and offline representations. Such creative conflation challenges prevailing ideas about young Muslim women and requires that when they engage in gender communication, they conform to societal notions of gender roles in Islam.

Extant literature (e.g., Hurley, 2022; Shareefa et al., 2024) also shows that technology influences religious identity, practices, and dynamics in Muslim societies. While Wahid (2024) reports that such intersections catalyze transformative shifts in religious practices, community formations, and identity reconstructions in the digital sphere and challenge conventional paradigms of Islam in the digital age, Shareefa et al. (2024) show that social media plays a complex role in shaping religious identity, where core religious beliefs remain stable among Maldivian women, but specific religious practices (e.g., daily prayers) are susceptible to influence, particularly among younger, less educated women. Meanwhile, Middle Eastern women influencers live transnational lifestyles on TikTok beyond their immediate context (Hurley, 2022). Thus, this suggests that digital platforms can influence gender roles and construction beyond regional boundaries and traditional norms.

Gender Roles and Islamic Principles

This study notes that gender roles refer to the expected norms of behaviour that guide how women and men act in society. These roles are shaped by one's gender identity and learned behaviours, which differ across cultures and evolve over time. Several factors influence gender roles, including biology, culture, socialization, and socially acceptable behaviour (Wienclaw, 2011). Arguably, gender roles can also be assessed through language use, for example, general mannerisms, deportment, and demeanor; spontaneous conversational topics; the content of dreams and fantasies; responses to indirect or projective inquiries; evidence of erotic behavior; and an individual's responses to direct questions (Money, 1973).

Some of the above concepts of gender roles are considered in this study within the propositions of Islamic principles based on the provisions of the Qur'an and Hadith. The Qur'an is the primary and central source of guidance to Mankind containing Allah's revelations to His Messenger, while the Hadith contains the sayings, teachings and traditions of the Prophet. Literature shows that diatribes in social media interactions can be used to promote anti-social behaviors, and in the case of TikTok, it could include cyberbullying, cyberstalking, and gender-based violence (GBV).

There are provisions in the Qur'an commanding Mankind to treat both men and women equally, for example: 'O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous...' (Suratul Hujurat, 49:13). This explains why Mir-Hosseini (2003) affirmed that in gender construction, a woman can pursue and achieve equality and justice in Islamic law. For example, where a woman experiences GBV, Imam Al-Tirmidhi in Riyadh as-Salihin 278, Chapter 34 (Recommendations with regard to Women in the Book of Miscellany), reported the Messenger of Allah saying: 'The believers who show the most perfect Faith are those who have the best behavior, and the best of you are those who are best to their wives.'

Similarly, an authentic Hadith by Imams Bukhari and Muslims narrated that: 'Could any of you beat your wife as he would a slave, and then lie with her in the evening?' Abi Dawud (Book 12, Hadith 101, Sunnah 2,146), corroborated by others like Nasa'i, Ibn Majah, and Ahmad bin Hanbal, totally forbade beating women, saying:

Do not beat Allah's handmaidens, but when Umar came to the Messenger of Allah and said: Women have become emboldened towards their husbands, he (the Prophet) gave permission to beat them. Then many women came round the family of the Messenger of Allah complaining against their husbands. So, the Messenger of Allah said, Many women have gone round Muhammad's family complaining against their husbands. They (husbands who take to beat their wives) are not the best among them.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts Discourse Analysis as the primary theoretical framework, supported by Feminist Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory. Discourse Analysis was used to explain how language is employed in a social context and how meaning becomes fixed within a particular domain. The theory posits that language use and meanings created within one domain may not apply to another social context (Johnstone & Andrus, 2024). This underscores the need to analyse language in context rather than rely on fixed interpretations, as the language used in TikTok videos may carry unique contextual meanings compared to other digital platforms.

Accordingly, Discourse Analysis enabled the study to identify discursive devices and the types of diatribes that emerged from TikTok content. The discursive devices were deduced from the socio-cultural contexts, values, and belief systems of Northern Nigeria, based on the following adaptations: denying prejudice (Speer & Potter, 2000); honest phrases (Edwards & Fasulo, 2006); scapegoating, authority, emotional appeal, and polarisation (Hansson, 2015; Rasool et al., 2024; Sakki & Martikainen, 2021). Denying prejudice refers to the display of an understanding of the subject discussed in a video. Honest phrases are used to deny or distance oneself from a prevailing discourse. Scapegoating involves blaming a particular group, individual, or institution for a specific issue. Authority refers to citing experts, statistics, or credible sources to legitimise claims. Emotional appeal involves using emotions, such as crying, to persuade or manipulate the audience, while polarisation refers to constructing binary oppositions between groups based on gender, religion, or ethnicity.

Feminism, meanwhile, has a long history of advocating for women to play central and influential roles in society through opportunities that enable them to express themselves and participate in public discourse. This perspective asserts that women are as capable as men, and this study explores how such liberal feminist ideas manifest in the diatribes. The liberal feminist view holds that gender equality can be achieved through the advocacy of equal opportunities in education, employment, and politics, while emphasising individual rights and freedoms, particularly in relation to expression and participation (Oxley, 2011).

Likewise, the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) enabled the researchers to understand the various needs of TikTok diatribe actors, such as diversion (i.e. escaping reality), personal relationships (i.e. social connection), reinforcement of personal identity, and surveillance, that is, the search for information (see Katz et al., 1973). The potential uses of TikTok enabled the researchers to categorise the actors, infer their gender roles, and enhance understanding of gender dynamics in social media communication among Muslim youth in parts of Northern Nigeria.

One limitation of this study is the exclusion of the theoretical components of gratifications. However, the combination of the chosen frameworks allowed for the effective application of Discourse Analysis to examine gender communication in TikTok diatribes. Uses and Gratifications Theory complemented this by explaining the needs of users, particularly what types of diatribes are produced, shared, and why. Understanding gendered communication within a complex socio-cultural and religious context requires insight into the needs such communication fulfils. This justified the researchers' decision to adopt Discourse Analysis as the primary framework, supported by complementary theories that address dimensions beyond the scope of Discourse Analysis alone.

Methods

This study used discursive psychology to analyse divisions in TikTok gender communication among Muslim youth influencers in Kano State, an ancient city in Northern Nigeria. Kano is home to Kannywood, Nigeria's second-largest movie and film industry. Participants in the industry create and post content that goes viral on TikTok in Hausa, a dominant language in the region, to promote their lifestyles as artists, celebrities, fashion designers, and stylists. Some also create content on marriage counselling, humour, memes, and other topics, all of which constitute discourse in this study.

Discourse is considered a fixation of meaning within a particular domain (Umar, 2018), and discursive psychology is often applied to analyse specific forms of interaction (Wiggins & Potter, 2008) or conversation (Goodman, 2017), including those occurring in social media engagements. Hence, the

researchers applied discursive psychology to understand how gender communication influences diatribes in TikTok videos produced by Muslim youth influencers in parts of northern Nigeria. A TikTok video was considered a diatribe if it contained bitter and harsh content, loud criticisms, one-sided rants, yelling, swearing, negative nicknaming or labelling, isolating or embarrassing behaviour, and belittling language.

Central to the application of discursive psychology is the recording of the interaction that the actors [TikTokers] control (Wiggins & Potter, 2008). The TikTok videos were analyzed with consideration for three theoretical principles of discursive psychology: that a discourse is constructed (i.e., contains linguistic blocks) for presenting certain versions of the world; it is action-oriented (i.e., as the primary medium for social action), and situated (i.e., within a specific sequential environment) (Potter; Potter & Edwards as cited in Wiggins & Potter, 2008). These principles have enabled researchers to analyze language use and how language and social interactions shape the psychology of speakers and users. The literal expressions in the TikTok diatribes were analyzed in connection with emotions and intent, while focusing on discourse as a tool for action in social contexts.

Four TikTok influencers were purposively selected as exemplars, with an emphasis on gender parity (i.e., two males and two females). Three videos were sampled from each influencer. The selection criteria included: involvement in gender-related diatribes, origin or residence in Kano, the level of controversy generated by their content, and potential impact measured by the number of likes and shares. The selected influencers had follower counts ranging from approximately 457,000 to three million—a substantial following by moderate standards. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, the influencers' usernames and associated data were presented anonymously.

The numbers of followers of each influencer are as follows: MK: 3 million; (2) MW: 1.5 million; (3) GA: 1.5 million; and (4) MA: 457,000. In addition, all exemplars attracted the wrath of Kano State Hisba (Islamic Police) and each video was previewed to ensure that it exhibited the characteristics of interest in the study. In total, 12 TikTok videos that were posted between 2020 and 2025 were analyzed. Video transcription was conducted using the Jeffersonian Convention proposed by Gail Jefferson and outlined by Atkinson and Heritage (1999): length of pauses, emphasis and loudness of speech, intonation, and overlapping talk. The study also drew from the explanations of Money (1973), enumerated in the literature review on how gender roles are appraised to analyze general mannerisms, topics of talk in prompted conversation and casual comments, and replies to oblique and direct inquiries.

The data were collected from TikTok, a publicly accessible platform. The videos were downloaded in their original forms (in the Hausa language) directly from each user's account to preserve content authenticity. As native speakers of Hausa, the researchers personally transcribed the videos into English, cross-referencing each other's translations to minimize any loss of meaning during translation. Each video was assigned a pseudonym, TKV1, TKV2, TKV3, ..., TKV12, where "TKV" stands for TikTok Video and the numbers 1 to 12 indicate the total sample. Although the content was already in the public domain and accessible for research purposes, all identifiable information was anonymized to protect user privacy. Additionally, the study fully complies with TikTok's data usage and redistribution policies.

Findings and Discussion

Discursive Categories used in the Diatribes

The findings revealed six (6) prevalent discursive devices across the videos: denying prejudice, honest phrases, scapegoating, authority, emotional appeal, and polarization, as demonstrated in the keywords presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Discursive Categories

Segment	Deny Prejudice	Honest Phrase	Scapegoating	Authority	Emotional Appeal	Polarization
TKV1	Self-control claim	Not part of my habits	Hisba, men, disseminators	-	Rage, threats	Us vs. them
TKV2	-	Even if I'm wayward...	Inherited traits	-	Moral anxiety	Men vs. women
TKV3	-	-	Commenters	-	Swearing, hell	Speaker vs. cursed others
TKV4	Abuse resistance	I allowed him...	Police	-	Powerlessness	-
TKV5	—	—	Gossipers	Court reference	Defensiveness	-
TKV6	Not about me	Women hurt women	Female critics	Religion reference	Resentment	In-group division
TKV7	-	-	Viewers	-	Anger	Collective attack
TKV8	Religious knowledge	Satirical insight	-	Clerics	Irony	Men vs. women
TKV9	-	-	Commenters, parents	Religious authority	Religious fervor	Islamic identity boundary
TKV10	-	-	Women by body type	-	Mockery	Binary exclusion
TKV11	-	-	Wives, women	Celebrity example	Betrayal, confusion	Loyal vs. disloyal
TKV12	Positive female role	Gratitude	-	Mother's education	Hopeful tone	-

Types of Diatribes and their Targets

In terms of the types of diatribes and their targets, this study featured loud, confrontational, and highly emotive diatribes. Many of these diatribes comprised **personal attacks** launched against specific individuals (TKV1, TKV2, TKV5), anonymous social media users (TKV3, TKV9), institutions such as Hisba (TKV1), and broader social categories such as women (TKV6 and TKV11). **Scapegoating** was the dominant strategy across video clips. In TKV1, the speaker blames Murja's critics and religious enforcers for public shaming, threatening to expose secrets in retaliation.

*I swear all these embarrassments... have to end... You who instigated these issues and involved Hisba; your end has come. You will leave Kano naked. I swear you would leave Kano naked... I will neither fornicate nor succumb to anal sex... You motherf*cker... I swear, your end has come since you connived against me. I will reveal your secrets that would leave Kano naked. Useless, villager, dirty f × rnicator (TKV1).*

Blame shifting to others also emerged and can be exemplified with extracts from TKV2, who contrasted her self-perceived moral superiority with her male target's inherited immorality, thus: Whoever is looking for a useless person has found one in you. I thank God that I did not inherit my waywardness... Inherited waywardness is the biggest disaster, calamity and adversity. But I am a woman, whatever I do as soon as I get married will become history. But if you are not lucky, it stays with you forever (TKV2). Meanwhile, TKV3 and TKV9 escalate this into aggressive attacks on commenters, labelling them 'devilish,' 'cursed,' and 'children of prostitutes,' creating binary oppositions indicative of polarization between 'pure self' and 'corrupt others.' In all these, the study established what reinforces the findings of Rahmawati et al. (2023): yelling, swearing, giving negative nicknames or labelling, isolating or embarrassing, and belittling language abilities are the constituents of cyber-diatribes, as corroborated by the findings of Northern Nigerian Muslim TikTok users.

The diatribes in the videos subsequently diverged from confrontations to personal suffering and vulnerability through GBV, which indirectly targets systemic failure, particularly the Police, who has the constitutional responsibility of protecting citizens, as revealed in the following by TKV4: You can see my swollen face... I was assaulted by my boyfriend who often comes to my place to spend the night and I always try to resist him because I am well respected where I live. He assaulted me again and when I reported it to the Police, they said 'this is a lovers' quarrel' ...I stopped him from coming but he came again... I allowed him because I am powerless. This segment leans more toward emotional appeal than aggression and frames the speaker's position as morally justified. The diatribes also turned inward, attacking women who insulted their peers. For example, in TKV6, where the speaker calls out a 'perceived' lack of solidarity, deploying both scapegoating and polarization, as she claims that women are enemies of one another:

'...It always amazes me. Until you marry off your daughter and she is beaten by her husband, or he starves her and sends her packing, and she becomes a harbinger from one hotel to another... You know, those who insult others are not genuinely happy, and they are always patronizing sorcerers, yet they criticize others... We women are enemies of each other. We always want to bring each other down, and the ugly circle continues... Stop hating these young girls; they did not do anything to you [laughs], Whatever you are showcasing to the world, it is clear that you are not happy, but that does not matter... (TKV6)

Although some categories are humorous or satirical (TKV8 and TKV10), they still operate within exclusionary frameworks. For example, TKV10 uses body-shaming to divide women into 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' categories, reinforcing stereotypical perception of beauty standards, viz: '[Silly] Those [women] with big bums should all gather here... Those with small bums should go there [shouting], far! We do not require you here. My fellow men, marry women with big bums... while those with small bums should go away [shouting] far away!!!' Meanwhile, TKV11 accuses women of disloyalty in their relationships, reinforcing harmful gender stereotypes. On the other hand, TKV12 offers a softer discourse, portraying mentorship and care and showing the speaker in a more constructive light – an instance of denying prejudice used to contrast herself with the negative figures depicted in earlier segments.

Motives Behind the Diatribes

The study also found a variety of emotional and social motives in the clips, ranging from personal defense and revenge to identity construction and moral performance. In TKV1, the speaker's primary motive is retaliation against those who have been humiliated or conspired by her. She openly states that what she plans to release is out of character (not part of my habits'), an honest phrase used to justify her aggression. Similarly, TKV5 is motivated by a desire to defend reputation, confronting online rumors about pregnancy, and warning of legal consequences a strategy of invoking authority to silence critics.

TKV2's motive centers on self-distinction by claiming that her waywardness is not inherited. She distances herself from others and seeks moral high ground. TKV3 and TKV9 are motivated by the social

media age and the need to assert dominance over commenters. TKV9 uses religious sentiment as a justification for extreme insults, turning emotional appeal into a weapon of legitimacy while also asserting herself as a religious gatekeeper. The motive in TKV4's diatribe is more personal and systemic, as she shares her experience of abuse and police inaction, using her story to highlight institutional neglect. This narrative is strengthened by emotional appeal and is perhaps the most sympathetic and socially reflective of the clips.

The divisions in TKV6 and TKV11 appear to be motivated by social disillusionment and the desire to correct perceived moral decay in the community. While TKV6 expresses frustration with women who attack others, TKV11 laments the breakdown of trust and loyalty in relationships, particularly blaming women for infidelity and disloyalty. These represent deeper anxieties about social norms and the perceived loss of moral order, leading to scapegoating and gender-based generalizations. The diatribes in TKV8 offer a moment of reflective satire motivated by a critique of gendered religious expectations, particularly around fasting in the Holy month of Ramadan. Here, the speaker uses an honest phrase and denies prejudice to subtly question why men are exempt from experiences like menstruation that give women a legitimate reprieve.

Gender Roles in the Diatribes and Islamic Perspectives

Gender roles recurred often and conflicted in the TikTok videos, where many diatribes reinforced traditional or patriarchal gender norms, although some subtly challenged them while others were overt. In TKV1, for example, the speaker aggressively defends herself as a woman under moral and social scrutiny while projecting herself as a protector and avenger. Her threats of exposure and humiliation operate within the masculine logic of dominance, blurring gender roles and expectations. In reinforcing traditional or patriarchal gender norms, the perspective of gender construction in the Islamic legal system prescribes that women can pursue and achieve equality and justice (Mir-Hosseini, 2003).

Double standards regarding gender morality were also reinforced in these videos. TKV2 suggests that women can erase past waywardness through marriage, while men are permanently marked by inherited flaws. This reflects a culturally embedded belief in female redemption through marriage and male determinism through lineage. It also provides additional insight into why many women in Northern Nigeria use TikTok to engage in behaviours that contradict Islamic values, as reported by Sule and Ladan (2023). This may be linked to the assumption in one of the videos that all wayward behaviours exhibited by a woman would disappear once she got married, which could serve as a strong motive for such actions.

Evidence of double standards in gendered morality from other contexts, such as Turkey, reveals contradictions in how women's and men's sexual behaviours are perceived. As reported by Savas and Yol (2023), more positive attitudes are shown towards the sexual behaviour of males, including pre- and extra-marital sex, while both men and women tend to hold similarly favourable views towards male sexuality.

A rare, subversive gender commentary appears in TKV8, which imagines a scenario in which men menstruate and are therefore exempt from the spiritual obligations of fasting. This satire provides a gentle yet poignant critique of gendered religious practices. In TKV10, there is a reduction of women's value to their physical attributes, favouring those with large bodies while dismissing others. This represents a hyper-gendered, performative reduction of worth to physical appearance. Finally, TKV12 portrays a nurturing and empowering image of womanhood, investing in the future of a young girl. This depiction contrasts sharply with the hostility in earlier clips and introduces a progressive and supportive gender identity, potentially countering the misogynistic undertones prevalent throughout much of the transcript.

There was also evidence of the female experience of GBV, as showcased in the video by TKV4 on how social institutions, including the police, who have the constitutional obligations of protecting lives and property, failed to protect women. Her reluctance and eventual powerlessness reflect the reality of how women feel trapped by love, fear, and institutional neglect. This diatribe implicitly critiques the patriarchal power structures that dismiss violence against women. The Islamic perspective on GBV

against women is explicit. Imam Al-Tirmidhi in *Riyadh as-Salihin* 278, Chapter 34 reported that the Messenger of Allah said: 'The believers who show the most perfect faith are those who have the best behavior, and the best of you are those who are best to their wives.' Furthermore, TKV6's narrative positions women as their worst enemies, echoing the sentiment of internalized misogyny. She claims, 'women don't support women,' directly opposing feminist narratives of solidarity. This argument can be furthered with an example in TKV11 by focusing on female disloyalty, especially within romantic relationships, and reinforcing traditional narratives that portray women as morally weak. However, the preceding argument can be countered with the Hadith by Imams Bukhari and Muslims: 'Could any of you beat your wife as he would a slave, and then lie with her in the evening?'

The diatribes also portray women as morally weak, but this contradicts the Islamic position. The Qur'an honors both men and women equally and this is supported with the Qur'anic verse that commands that: 'O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous... [emphasis ours]' (Suratul Hujurat, 49:13). This confirms that both men and women have similar obligations to Allah, but the one who is most pious occupies the higher rank, while it is society that misinterprets Allah's command.

Conclusion

This study concludes that TikTok diatribes by Northern Nigerian Muslim youth influencers represent a rich and complex mix of gendered, moral, and social anxieties, projected mostly through outrage, satire, reflection, and occasionally, concern. The discourse reflects how social media has become a theatre for public morality, where individuals navigate identity, shame, and power through highly emotional and symbolic language.

This confirms the intersections between Islamic traditions and digital technologies, and how they catalyse transformative shifts in identity reconstruction within the digital sphere. It also corroborates existing literature asserting that technology influences religious identity, practices, and dynamics in Muslim societies, and that digital platforms can shape gender roles and constructions beyond regional and traditional norms. Furthermore, gender emerged as both a source of pride and contention, shaped by cultural double standards, patriarchy, and fragmented solidarity.

The study confirms that discursive strategies especially scapegoating, emotional appeal, and polarization are central to constructing and defending personal narratives. Diatribes also function as tools for social positioning, identity defence, and moral enforcement. Scapegoating and emotional appeals, framed within gendered assumptions, are amplified on TikTok as a digital platform. However, amidst aggression and polarization, there are also glimpses of vulnerability, satirical critique, and mentorship, highlighting the layered and contested nature of public discourse in digital spaces shaped by gender and morality.

The divisions are largely between content creators, certain TikTok users, and other stakeholders such as government institutions, the police, Hisba, and Islamic clerics. TikTok influencers have navigated complex terrains marked by religious authority, gender norms, social media visibility, and personal trauma.

These divisions, in some cases, have transcended digital boundaries and provoked real-world reactions. This indicates a tendency to disrupt public order and morality, potentially threatening the safety of participants. Against this backdrop, the study concludes that TikTok diatribes among Northern Nigerian Muslim youth influencers exhibit characteristics that may undermine the sustenance of Islamic values among youth, particularly when such digital interactions escalate into cyberbullying, physical violence, or gender-based violence (GBV). Therefore, the study recommends that stakeholders such as government agencies, religious bodies, and educational institutions collaborate to regulate excessive and unacceptable conduct on social media. It also encourages engagement with TikTok to develop institutional frameworks that better protect younger users on the platform.

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Authors' Contribution Statement

SD and MAU: Conceptualization, validation, project administration, methodology, and original draft preparation. MAU: Data curation, writing and analysis. SD: Review, proofreading, editing and final draft.

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Ethics Statements

This research did not require IRB approval because it used publicly available secondary data with no identifying personal information. The data were collected from publicly accessible TikTok videos. Although the content was publicly available, all identifiable information was anonymized to protect user privacy. No direct interaction with users occurred, and no attempts were made to contact content creators. The study complied fully with TikTok's terms of service and data use policies.

Data Access Statement

Research data supporting this publication are available upon request to the corresponding author.

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