

## Prank content creation and its implication on the Nigerian society: An exploratory study of Facebook prank videos

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**Abstract:** This study examined the theme of "prank content creation and its implication on the Nigerian society". The study adopted a mixed research method where content analysis, in-depth interviews, and observation were used. Content analysis was used to study the content of prank videos online, while in-depth analysis was used to know the perceptions of social media users on online prank videos. The population of this study consisted of Facebook users and prank videos uploaded on Facebook. Findings of the study revealed that some of the existing online prank videos have adverse implications on society because they are capable of causing uproar or health complications on victims. Furthermore, it was also found that Facebook users perceived online prank videos as a source of entertainment; however, the majority of them revealed that they would not like to play pranks because of some of the repercussions associated with some pranks. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended, among other things, that there is a need for a professional body that would regulate the conduct of content creators in Nigeria. Furthermore, there is a need for Nigerian content creators, especially pranksters, to be enlightened on media law and ethics.

**Keywords:** Analysis, Facebook, Prank, Social media, Videos

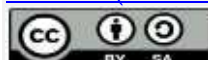
### 1. Introduction

Social media is one of the popular platforms that have drawn research interest on the global scene. This research interest is motivated by various factors. Firstly, social media have enormous potential for mobilizing people to support a cause. Secondly, the uncensored nature of social media in many countries makes it a threat to human society because the platforms serve as a dumping ground for all sorts of malicious content like fake news, misinformation, and other deceptive or mischievous content that is inimical to human society.

In recent years, an avalanche of prank videos has abounded on social media platforms. The popularity of some of these prank videos, coupled with the monetary gain attached, has over time attracted many content creators to venture into creating prank videos. Suffice it to say that prank videos attract an avalanche of followers, likes, and views on social media platforms (Odeh, 2019). However, despite the above auspicious economic and entertainment benefits of prank videos for the content creator and the viewer, pranking can be risky for the targets and even the pranksters.

According to the Ranger (2013: 8), a recurrent phrase among pranksters is that "Nobody ever died from a prank." However, Ranger (2013) debunks the above claim and notes that "the truth is that people have died from pranks, and many people and properties are hurt or damaged daily". Suffice it to say that although pranks can be entertaining, they can also be dangerous. Odey (2019) observed that pranks may not always

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have the desired outcome because it is impossible to foresee how people will behave in every setting. For instance, one prank victim may experience nervous shock upon hearing that a loved one has been abducted, while another may choose to phone his or her pastor to arrange an urgent prayer meeting (Odey, 2019). What is evident is that the more outrageous a prank is, the higher the likelihood that it may go awry and cause harm or injury to its target. Sabrina and Pranesh, (2022) corroborate that although pranks are a major source of entertainment, they are never discussed for the complexity they bring about. There are incidents in which, in the name of playing pranks, people are crossing the line, invading other people's privacy, and sometimes infringing on their fundamental human rights. Haq and Rosyidi (2021) observed that the most disturbing aspect of pranks is that they impair society's ability to distinguish between actual and phony events. It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to examine the social implications of pranks in Nigerian society.

## **2. Statement of the problem**

Pranks could be entertaining in nature but at the same time capable of inciting fear and anxiety, causing restlessness, or making the victims look stupid or ridiculed by others. The above situation has the potency of causing emotional and psychological trauma or even leading to the collapse of people who have health issues such as high blood pressure. In recent times, it was observed by the researchers that content creators on social media platforms have diverted their attention to making prank videos, which are often uploaded on their social media pages (Jarrar, Awobamise, Nnabuiife & Nweke, 2020). In most cases, these videos attract a large number of viewers and likes, which provides a monetary benefit to the pranksters or content creators. However, limited attention is given to the implications of these pranks on the victims and society at large. In fact, there is a paucity of literature on the aforementioned subject matter. The above situation therefore creates a gap that this study seeks to fill. Therefore, this study seeks to analyze the implications of social media pranks in Nigerian society.

## **3. Objectives of the study**

The general objective of this study is to explore the theme of prank content creation and its implication on Nigerian society. The specific objectives are:

1. To ascertain the dominant tone of prank videos uploaded on Facebook.
2. To know the perception of social media users on online prank videos.
3. To discuss the implications of prank videos on Nigerian society

## **4. Research questions**

1. What are the dominant tones of prank videos on Facebook?
2. What are the perceptions of social media users about online prank videos?
3. What are the implications of the prank trend for Nigerian society?

## **5. Literature review**

**Pranks:** in this study, pranks are seen as tricky and mischievous jokes. Pranks are multi-faceted in nature in the sense that they could be between friends and loved ones or between total strangers. Basically, pranks are meant to serve as a source of entertainment. However, some pranks that go extreme could result in inauspicious situations that are inimical to the health and wellbeing of individuals.

**Prank videos:** Prank videos are video clips of prank scenes that were captured on camera and uploaded online for entertainment and monetary purposes. These video clips are often short— between 5 and 10 minutes. In this study, concentration is given to prank videos uploaded on Facebook and YouTube.

In this study, a prank video is said to have a negative tone if it has the potency to incite fear, anxiety, cause restlessness, or make the victims look stupid or ridiculed by others online physically. On the other hand, a prank video is said to be positive if it has some moral lessons to convey (Sharfina, Paserangi, Rasyid & Fuady, 2021). Lastly, a prank video is said to be neutral if the content of such videos does not contain either a negative or positive tone but is simply meant to entertain the viewers (Branley & Covey, 2017).

## **6. Theoretical framework**

Amidst the wealth of theories that abound in the communication literature, this study found the hermeneutic theory relevant. The rationale for choosing the aforementioned theory is associated with its nexus and suitability with this current study. According to Imhanobe (2022), hermeneutic theory was founded by a German philosopher and Bible scholar, Friedrich Schleiermacher. The researcher further notes that hermeneutics is used in a variety of disciplines whose subject matter calls for interpretive approaches. Typically, these disciplines deal with the meaning of human intentions, beliefs, and actions or the meaning of human experience as it is captured in the arts and literature, historical testimony, and other forms of art and literature, among other things. According to Dyer (2010), hermeneutic theory is the study and application of interpretation, which entails a rationally supported understanding.

Hermeneutics of the film (or video) focuses on the method of film (or video) interpretation and is interested in figuring out how various interpretations of the same movie can develop and survive (Baracco, 2017). Film hermeneutics views interpretations as necessarily contextualized and relative when dealing with movies as worlds and viewers as interpreters. Because it is cognizant of the historicity of its (and any) perspective and how film, in its historical transmission and in its engagement with the viewer, is part of an experience that can always provide new interpretations and meanings, it does not pursue the building of a general theory. This continuous process of screening, viewing, and interpretation enriches the movie from a hermeneutic standpoint.

From the foregoing, it is apt to infer that the hermeneutics theory has a nexus with this current study, as this study seeks to critically examine the implication of Facebook prank videos on Nigerian society. Put another way, the researcher would watch and examine the prank videos from a hermeneutic standpoint with the sole purpose of interpreting whether such prank videos have adverse implications for Nigerian society

## **7. Methodology**

### **7.1. Research design**

This research paper adopted a mixed research method. In other words, the study used content analysis and in-depth interviews to elicit data for the study. Content analysis was used to elicit data for research questions one and two, while an in-depth interview was used to elicit data for research question three. The rationale behind adopting the aforementioned methods is associated with their suitability to elicit data in tandem with the research objectives coined.

### **7.2. Population of the study**

The population of this study includes social media users and social media prank videos. The exact number of elements that made up the population is unknown to the researcher due to the lack of a documented database on the total number of social media users in Nigeria and the number of prank videos online. However, according to Sasu (2022), as of 2021, Nigeria has a total of 43 million social network users

### **7.3. Sample/Sampling technique**

This study adopted a purposive sampling technique. The rationale for adopting this sampling technique is that it gives the researchers the opportunity to concentrate on social media users and social media prank videos. The researchers exposed themselves to prank videos uploaded on three Facebook pages for a period of three months, that is, from October to December 2022. The category of content studied by the researcher was the tone/nature of the videos (negative, positive, and neutral).

### **7.4. Data presentation and analysis**

The data in the study are both qualitative and quantitatively oriented. The qualitative data are presented and discussed in a thematic fashion, while the quantitative data are presented in simple percentages and charts and analyzed quantitatively.

## **8. Result and discussion**

The data generated from the content analysis and interview are presented and analyzed in this section.  
*Content Analysis Results*

**Table 1:** Prank-Related Videos Uploaded on Facebook

Months	Frequency	Percentage
October, 2022	68	40%
November, 2022	45	26%
December, 2022	59	34%
<b>Total</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Content Analysis, 2022

The data in Table 1 above shows the frequency of prank-related videos uploaded online by Nigerian content creators. The table shows that from October 2022 to December 2022, the researchers recorded 172 prank-related videos uploaded by Nigerian content creators on Facebook. In October 2022, a total of sixty-eight (68) prank videos were uploaded. In November 2022, fortyfive prank videos were uploaded. In December 2022, a total of fifty-nine (59) files were uploaded. This implies that there is a high rate of prank videos uploaded on Facebook by Nigerian content creators, which is perhaps associated with monetary gratification and the acceptability of such content.

**Table 2:** Nature or Kind of Prank Videos Uploaded to Facebook

Form	Frequency	Percent
Relationship Pranks	55	32
Help/Assistant Pranks	52	30
Social gathering pranks	58	34
Others	7	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Content Analysis, 2022

The data in Table 2 above show the nature or kind of prank videos uploaded on Facebook by Nigerian content creators from October to December 2022. The table revealed that out of the one hundred and seventy-two (172) prank videos uploaded on Facebook, 55 (32% of them) were in the form of relationship pranks, while 52 (30%) fall under the help/assistant category, where pranksters seek help from total strangers to test them. Conversely, 58 (34% of the uploaded videos) were in the form of public or social gathering pranks, and 7 (4% of them) fell under others. This implies that online prank videos surface in different forms on Facebook.

**Table 3:** Priority and Acceptability of Prank Videos on Facebook

Month	Comments	Likes
October	456	4246
November	478	3899
December	456	5589

Source: Content Analysis, 2022

The data in Table 3 above revealed that 1,390 Facebook users commented on the 172 prank videos uploaded. Conversely, thirteen thousand, seven hundred, and thirty-four Facebook users liked the uploaded videos. Considering the large number of comments and likes, it is, therefore, appropriate to infer that priority is given to prank videos by Facebook users. In other words, prank videos are widely accepted among social media users.

**Table 4:** Reactions to Prank Videos on Facebook

Reactions	Frequency	Percentage
Negative	396	28
Positive	899	65
Neutral	95	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>1390</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Content Analysis, 2022

Table 4 above revealed that out of the 1390 comments on uploaded prank videos, 396 were negative, 899 were positive, and 95 were neutral. This implies that a good number of social media users enjoy watching online prank videos on Facebook.

### **8.1. Interview results**

#### **Social media users' perception of online pranks**

The above theme seeks to find out the perception of social media users on online prank videos. The data retrieved from the in-depth interview revealed that majority of the interviewees have been exposed to prank videos on either Whatapp, Facebook or Youtube. The interviewees revealed that the prank videos the watch are entertaining to them. One of the interviewees captured it thus:

To be honest, I watch a lot of pranks videos especially on Facebook and Youtube and these videos keep me entertained. In fact, there are times I subscribe my phone just to watch some of these pranks especially pranks by "Untouchable Comedy" and "The General". **[Interviewee 2]**

Another participant who share similar but different opinion said:

I love watching prank videos but not all kind of pranks because some pranks are annoying and intrusive. Sincerely speaking, some of the pranks are entertaining but very expensive. ...In summary, I only watch pranks that are not too serious. For instance, I do watch pranks like someone pretending to be in need and begging strangers for help and whosoever help the prankster gives the person money or gift. **[Interviewee 5]**

In his opinion, another participant revealed that "pranks are entertaining but sometimes some of the pranks are infuriating especially when such pranks crossed the line by making the victim look stupid and uncomfortable. The participant further note that "some pranks can actually cause heart attack. However, I love watching pranks provided I will not be a victim". The above participants further revealed that:

Lately, some of these social media pranks are demeaning, in other words, these pranks have huge negative effect on victims. For instance, there is this prank I watch which the prankster asked a lady to remove her pant in a public place and promise he will give her the sum of two hundred thousand naira if she does that. The lady did that immediately and the guy was like it is a prank. Now, the lady in question was captured on camera in that prank video, haba! Is that not demeaning, in fact that would affect her reputation. **[Interviewee 3]**

Another participants who has different opinion from the other participants revealed that she does not watch pranks. In her words she captured it thus "Well, I don't watch prank videos because I natural do not like pranks because pranks are generally annoying to me".

From the foregoing, it is apt to infer that majority of the participants are interested in watching online prank videos. However, when these participants were asked whether they are comfortable to be pranked or not, majority of them revealed that they do not want to be pranked. One of the participants said:

Look some of these pranks are expensive, I don't think I have the emotional capacity to go through some of these pranks and still remain myself. Lately, I watched one prank where the prankster pretended to be a terrorist and raise alarm in a public place that a boom he planted is about to explode – you need to see how people were jumping up and down. In fact, I believe that someone with a problem of high blood pressure may just collapse if he witness that scene. So, I don't want to be pranked that way not even in my dream.

From the foregoing, it apposite to say that despite the fact that pranks are entertaining, social media users do not want to be pranked because of the nature of some of the pranks. According to most of the interviewee participants, some pranks are expensive and can kill people with heart related diseases. Some of the participant also revealed that they do not want to be pranks because some of the pranks cold result to physical injury or destruction of property. However, despite the above revelation, an insignificant number of interviewees were of the opinion that they are comfortable to be pranked provided the prank would not make them look stupid or cause injury.

## 8.2. Observation results

### Implications of prank practice on the Nigerian Society

This section analyzes the implications of online (Facebook) pranks on Nigerian society. The analysis is done in tandem with the nature of extant prank videos obtained within the period this research study was conducted. The researchers found that some of the existing prank videos on Facebook have adverse implications for Nigerian society. Some of the implications of the pranks identified by the researcher include:

#### Health implication

The researchers observed that some of the existing Facebook prank videos have the potential to cause health-related problems for their victims. For instance, in one of the prank videos from the "Lord of Lemon" Facebook page, the prankster planned with others to prank his biological brother that the prankster "Lord of Lemon" died. The prank was presented in such a way that his brother was convinced. In fact, the prankster had to enter a casket, which was brought to his brother as evidence that he died. Such pranks are too expensive and may result in heart attacks and the immediate collapse of hypertensive victims. In the same vein, there are a handful of similarly frightening and emotional videos uploaded by pranksters on Facebook between October and November 2022. The argument here is that these prank videos might be entertaining to the viewer, but what happens to the victims? This implies that the victims are mostly on the receiving end.

**Security Implication:** It was observed by the researchers that some of the existing prank videos have adverse security implications. The researchers found a good number of prank videos where pranksters wear military or police uniforms all in the name of pranking people. In fact, some even do kidnap pranks where they pretend to be kidnappers or kidnapped. In as much as these pranks are entertaining, the truth remains that in a country like Nigeria, where insecurity is a serious challenge, criminals will also disguise themselves in the name of a prank and achieve their heinous goals. In the same vein, security-related subjects should not be taken for granted unless they have some moral lessons.

**Social Implications:** it was observed that some of the pranksters intrude into people's privacy all in the name of content creation. For instance, there are a good number of pranks where pranksters entered into people's house without their consent with hidden cameras to prank them. The above situation could amount to appropriation and intrusion offenses.

## 9. Contribution to knowledge

Through research and analysis made in this study, the scholars have shed light on the potential consequences of online prank videos for both the victims and perpetrators. They have highlighted the role of social norms, audience reactions, and online communities in shaping attitudes towards such content. Moreover, the study have explored the ways in which these videos can reinforce stereotypes and perpetuate harmful behaviors. Overall, this study has contributed to a broader conversation about responsible social media use and digital citizenship. It underscores the importance of considering the impact that our actions online can have on others, as well as recognizing our collective responsibility to create a safe and respectful online environment.

## 10. Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers recommend the following:

1. There is the need for social media content creators especially pranksters to be enlightened on what constitute an extreme or expensive prank and what is mild.
2. Pranksters should not go extreme in the name of pranks as some of this pranks could constitute legal implications.
3. There is the need for Nigerian content creators especially pranksters to be enlightened on media law and ethics.
4. There is the need for a professional body that would regulate the conduct of content creators in Nigeria.

## 11. Conclusion

Online pranks have become a popular trend in Nigeria, with many individuals engaging in them for entertainment purposes. However, the health and social effects of these pranks cannot be overlooked. Firstly, online pranks can lead to psychological distress and trauma for the victims. The fear and anxiety caused by such pranks can result in long-term mental health problems. Online pranks can also have negative social effects on the society as a whole. They promote a culture of disrespect and disregard for other people's feelings and privacy. This can lead to a breakdown of trust among individuals and communities. Furthermore, online pranks can also have legal implications as they often involve invasion of privacy or harassment. This can result in legal action being taken against the perpetrators.

In conclusion, while online pranks may seem harmless at first glance, their health and social effects cannot be ignored. It is important for individuals to consider the consequences of their actions before engaging in such activities.

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