



Headlines to Hard-Lines: Media Intervention in Managing Bullying and Cancel Culture in the Entertainment Industry

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the complex dynamics of bullying and cancel culture within the Nigerian entertainment industry, focusing specifically on the impacts exerted by social media and socio-economic factors. Employing a mixed-method approach that incorporates thematic and sentiment analyses of academic literature spanning from 2015 to 2024, the study identifies a predominantly negative sentiment surrounding these phenomena. Detailed analysis reveals profound psychological impacts on celebrities, exemplified by increased instances of anxiety and depression. It also acknowledges the dual nature of celebrity influence, both as victims and perpetrators of online aggression, significantly shaped by their public interactions and media portrayals. The study further delineates how economic disparities heighten online aggressive behaviors, with specific

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cases illustrating how economic stress contributes to the virulence of online interactions among different socio-economic groups. In response, the study proposes several targeted interventions: the establishment of a comprehensive digital literacy program tailored for entertainment professionals, the creation of an entertainment industry ombudsman to adjudicate disputes, the development of an AI-powered early warning system for detecting potential harassment campaigns, and the implementation of a "Digital Wellness" certification for companies adhering to prescribed best practices in managing digital interactions. These recommendations are designed to not only mitigate the challenges identified but also promote a more resilient, ethical, and supportive entertainment industry in Nigeria. The paper discusses potential models for implementing, monitoring, and evaluating these measures to ensure their effectiveness and sustainability, aiming to forge a pathway towards substantial industry reform.

Keywords: Cyberbullying; cancel culture; Nigerian entertainment industry; celebrity influence; digital media ethics.

1. INTRODUCTION

The advent of social media in the Nigerian entertainment industry has significantly modified the way information is disseminated and consumed, particularly with the increasing role of platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, which have not only democratized content production, allowing users to both consume and produce media but have also become arenas for public discourse and conflict [1]. This transformation has blurred the boundaries between public and private life, intensifying both positive outreach and detrimental behaviors such as cyberbullying [2]. Hence, celebrities and influencers, by virtue of their visibility, face both the benefits of a direct conduit to their audience and the risks of heightened scrutiny and cyberbullying.

Reality television, another significant aspect of modern media, has been critiqued for normalizing bullying and toxic behavior through its portrayals of conflict and drama [3]. Such programming not only shapes viewers' perceptions of acceptable social interactions but also sets a precedent for how these behaviors are perceived and managed in the broader societal context. In Nigeria, where reality TV is rapidly gaining momentum, coupled with the rising number of influencers, skit makers, and prank shows, its influence is particularly profound, molding public attitudes and potentially fostering an environment where negative behaviors are seen as tolerable or even entertaining [4]. The digital shift in the Nigerian media industry, with the increasing shift towards online platforms for news and entertainment, has significant implications for how incidents of bullying and cancel culture are reported and perceived. The immediacy and indelibility of

digital news can magnify the negative effects of press coverage, complicating public figures' efforts to rehabilitate their images and exacerbating the spread of misinformation [1]. The proliferation of fake news, as well as deepfake technology, further inflames these issues, complicating the public's ability to discern truth from sensationalism and potentially magnifying incidents of cancel culture unjustly.

According to Tandoc et al. [5], the interplay between economic hardship and social inequality further affects the prevalence and public perception of bullying and cancel culture since economic pressures and social disparities heighten tensions, which can manifest as increased aggression in digital spaces. Additionally, these socio-economic factors influence both the targets of bullying or Cancel culture and the likelihood of individuals recovering from public controversies [6].

The examination of high-profile cases, such as those involving Kevin Hart's canceled deal to host the Oscars in 2019 due to resurfaced homophobic tweets from his past [7], and those of Folarin Falana (Falz) a prominent Rapper, singer, songwriter, and actor; and Debo Adebayo (Mr. Macaroni) an influential comedian and actor who alleged to have had several deals and endorsements canceled following their roles in the outburst and outcomes of the #EndSARS protests in Nigeria represent the mechanics and consequences of cancel culture. Particularly in the cases of Falz and Mr. Macaroni, sources aver that both celebrities were not only subjected to online harassment, threats, and intimidation campaigns orchestrated to silence their voices but also subjected to smear campaigns aimed at discrediting their character and undermining their credibility [8]. These cases reveal how past

behaviors can resurface to affect current public and professional lives, emphasizing the media's role in either fostering a narrative of redemption or extending the period of vilification.

According to Milosevic et al. [9], cancel culture is an extension of bullying (intentional aggressive behavior towards another), which can also translate to cyberbullying (in the digital space). These victimizations are particularly becoming virulent in the entertainment industry due to the high visibility and public scrutiny that celebrities endure, in addition to the anonymity provided by digital platforms, which often exacerbates these behaviors, making it challenging for victims to defend themselves. Cancel culture, while serving as a mechanism for public accountability, also poses risks by potentially stifling free expression and creating a climate of fear and retribution within the industry. Hence, this study analyzes the complex interplay between social media, bullying, and cancel culture within the Nigerian entertainment industry, with a focus on the experiences of celebrities and the influence of recent media trends to propose strategies to stakeholders in lessening the cases of bullying and cancel cultures in the entertainment industry. The objectives of the study includes:

1. To analyze the psychological impacts of bullying and cancel culture on celebrities within the Nigerian entertainment industry.
2. To investigate the role of social media in shaping public perceptions and fueling bullying and cancel culture.
3. To explore the interplay between socio-economic disparities and online aggressive behaviors.
4. To propose and evaluate strategies for mitigating the impact of bullying and cancel culture within the Nigerian entertainment industry.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The entertainment industry, characterized by its perceived glamour and success, harbors a darker undercurrent of bullying, presenting unique challenges, particularly for celebrities subjected to intense public scrutiny and media pressure [10]. This scrutiny magnifies the impacts of bullying, affecting mental health and career longevity, while competitive industry environments and power imbalances exacerbate these issues [11,12].

Research indicates that individuals in high-profile roles, such as celebrities, are at an elevated risk

of experiencing bullying due to the high levels of stress and scrutiny associated with their positions [13,14]. The public's constant evaluation can foster feelings of vulnerability, with some resorting to bullying as a competitive tactic within the hypercompetitive atmosphere of the entertainment industry.

2.1 The Role of Social Media in the Entertainment Industry

The profound transformation of the Nigerian entertainment industry through social media has significantly improved the dynamics of media production, distribution, and consumption, as platforms like Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok have democratized content creation and dissemination, enabling Nigerian artists to bypass traditional industry gatekeepers such as record labels and media companies [15,16,17]. This shift has not only allowed for direct engagement with a global audience. Still, it has also markedly increased the visibility of Nigerian content on international platforms such as Netflix and Spotify, thus opening up new revenue streams and enhancing production quality and diversity within the industry [18,19].

These platforms have facilitated a more intimate and direct interaction between celebrities and their audiences, diversifying media consumption, with social media becoming a primary channel for both consuming and producing content [20]. The rise of user-generated content (UGC) on platforms like YouTube and TikTok exemplifies this trend towards a more participatory culture, blurring the lines between creators and consumers [21,22]. Moreover, the feedback mechanisms inherent in social media have enabled rapid adaptations to audience preferences, which have been particularly influential in sectors such as Nollywood, improving both the relevance and quality of productions. The integration of these digital tools into production processes indicates a significant enhancement in the quality and diversity of media outputs [23,24].

Nevertheless, the integration of social media into the entertainment sector is accompanied by substantial challenges, as the necessity for celebrities to maintain an online presence can exert considerable pressure, potentially leading to mental health issues [8,9,11,13]. Additionally, these platforms can become arenas for cyberbullying and cancel culture, contributing to a potentially toxic online environment.

2.2 Cyberbullying and Online Harassment

Cyberbullying, characterized by aggressive and intentional acts conducted through electronic means, significantly magnifies the emotional distress typically associated with traditional bullying [25]. The anonymity of the digital environment provides perpetrators with a veil of impunity, encouraging them and exacerbating the frequency and severity of their attacks [26,27]. Unlike traditional bullying, which allows for physical escape, cyberbullying invades all aspects of a victim's digital life, continuously amplifying its psychological impact. Victims of cyberbullying often experience depression, anxiety, and, in severe cases, suicidal ideation, with their overall quality of life notably deteriorating [28,29].

The public and permanent nature of online platforms further contributes to prolonged psychological trauma and social ostracism since harmful content can remain visible indefinitely, complicating recovery as the digital traces of harassment persist [30]. The blending of online and offline worlds means that victims may face harassment both virtually and physically, intensifying the adverse effects and complicating their ability to find refuge. The dynamics of cyberbullying are complex, particularly on social media platforms that promote anonymity and detachment from the consequences of one's actions. This phenomenon, known as the online disinhibition effect, reduces social inhibitions and can lead to aggressive, uncivil behavior. It enables users, including celebrities, to express themselves in ways they might avoid in face-to-face interactions, often without immediate repercussions [31,32].

In Nigeria, the impact of cyberbullying is palpable, with several public figures experiencing intense online harassment that affects their mental health and career trajectories, from which some may never recover [28]. According to Smith and Urbas [33], enforcing legal measures and regulations to combat this issue is challenging due to the anonymity and jurisdictional complexities of online interactions. Ethically, the responsibility also lies with the platforms themselves to balance user privacy with effective measures against abuse using measures that can include moderating content while respecting user rights, a balance that is crucial yet difficult to achieve [34,35]. As a result, Ansary [36] affirms the urgent need for effective strategies that include both prevention and

robust responses to incidents of cyberbullying, in consideration that these incidents can persist long after the initial attack, causing lasting emotional trauma due to the viral nature of social media, which allows harmful content to spread rapidly and remain accessible indefinitely.

2.3 Cancel Culture: Mechanisms and Effects

According to Norris [6], cancel culture represents a significant form of bullying and ill-treatment in the entertainment industry. Cancel culture, a term deeply embedded in contemporary discourse represents the public withdrawal of support from individuals or organizations whose actions or statements are deemed objectionable [37,38]. This phenomenon, significantly amplified by social media, facilitates rapid collective actions against public figures, mirroring historical practices of social accountability within marginalized communities yet magnified in visibility and scope in the digital age. Historically, similar practices served as mechanisms within communities to sanction those causing harm. Still, with the advent of social media, these practices have evolved into a more expansive phenomenon, enabling swift mobilization against public figures. For instance, incidents involving celebrities such as Kevin Hart, Falz, and Mr. Macaroni illustrate the significant public backlash and career repercussions faced due to their statements or actions. Notably, Kevin Hart stepped down from an Oscars hosting gig due to resurfaced tweets, while Falz and Mr. Macaroni faced threats for their political activism during the #EndSARS protests [7,8,39].

The dynamics of Cancel culture involve a combination of social media shaming, economic boycotts, and extensive public pressure, leveraging the collective power of the community to enforce societal norms. Malik and Dadure [40] argue that it can conflate minor missteps with grave offenses, leading to disproportionate responses that may not necessarily foster positive change but rather suppress dialogue and reform. Pearson [9] highlights that Cancel culture initiates profound psychological and social implications for those subjected to it. This practice, often manifesting through social media, often results in severe repercussions, ranging from public backlash to substantial losses in career opportunities and personal well-being. Psychologically, individuals affected by cancel culture often endure heightened levels of anxiety, depression, and social isolation. The public

nature of the shaming intensifies these effects, leading to a deterioration in self-esteem and a profound sense of personal violation. Research highlights the correlation between social rejection and increased depressive symptoms, which is particularly exacerbated when such ostracism is experienced in the public sphere [6,7,41].

From a societal perspective, the implications extend beyond individuals to affect broader social structures and institutions, potentially undermining trust and contributing to a more divisive public atmosphere. Studies aver that the cancel culture and cyberbullying phenomenon can trigger a chilling effect on public discourse, as fear of similar retribution may deter individuals from expressing dissenting opinions, potentially stifling free speech and contributing to an echo chamber effect [42,43,44]. The emphasis on public condemnation can foster a punitive rather than rehabilitative approach to justice, which may not necessarily lead to constructive social change. The persistence of online content and the viral capabilities of social media mean that the effects of cancel culture can linger and amplify, highlighting the need for comprehensive strategies that address both prevention and intervention, including legal frameworks that can keep pace with technological advances, platform responsibility in moderating content, and educational initiatives that inform individuals about the impact of their online behavior [36,45,46]. In addition, the pervasive nature of cancel culture indicates the necessity for a multifaceted approach that includes all stakeholders—lawmakers, social platforms, and the community at large—to mitigate the profound effects of these digital aggressions [47,48].

2.4 Socio-Economic Factors Influencing Bullying and Cancel Culture

Economic disparities and social inequality intensify frustrations and disparities among the populace, contributing significantly to the aggressive online behaviors that manifest as cyberbullying and cancel culture [49]. Okolie and Igbini [50] allude that the pervasive economic conditions in Nigeria, characterized by high unemployment rates, especially among youth, and inadequate public services, create a fertile ground for such expressions of discontent. On equal note, Klanderud [51] notes that the wealth disparity sees a small elite enjoying substantial wealth while the majority struggles, fueling a sense of injustice and social tension that spills over into social media interactions. Quispe-

Torreblanca et al. [52] argue that societies with significant income inequality tend to exhibit higher levels of social issues, including aggression and violence, a theory that aligns with the observed behaviors in Nigeria considering that this environment, combined with the challenges of economic hardship, exacerbates feelings of frustration, anger, and resentment, which may manifest in impulsive and destructive online behaviors. Additionally, the allure of quick wealth and fame in the entertainment industry can intensify feelings of relative deprivation among economically disadvantaged groups, fostering envy and resentment towards successful individuals which has been found by Hendershott [53] to manifest as cyberbullying and participation or support in cancel culture, targeting public figures and celebrities [54,55].

Lee et al. [56] mentions that the lives of public figures, especially celebrities, are significantly shaped by both economic and social pressures, which not only influence their susceptibility to public controversies but also their ability to recover from them especially when the high visibility and public engagement that celebrities endure is factored in, which often place them at the mercy of public opinion amplified by the pervasive reach of social media. This visibility, while beneficial for their careers, also exposes them to intense scrutiny, rapid escalation of controversies, and severe economic and social ramifications [57,58].

Economically, in the views of Liu et al. [59], celebrities face immense pressure to maintain a certain lifestyle and manage their brand partnerships and business ventures with the possibility of a single controversy can lead to significant financial losses, impacting not just their personal finances but also those of associated companies. For example, Cristiano Ronaldo's public dismissal of Coca-Cola significantly impacted the company's stock value, illustrating the financial ripple effects of celebrity actions [60]. Socially, the expectation to maintain a perfect image while being authentic creates a paradox that is difficult to manage, as celebrities are expected to be role models, and any deviation can lead to public backlash [61,62]. The role of social media complicates this further, facilitating the rapid spread of controversies and making it challenging for celebrities to manage their public image and recover from missteps. The invasive scrutiny by paparazzi and media, which often sensationalizes aspects of celebrities' lives, adds to the pressure, invading

their privacy and significantly shaping public perception, often leaving little room for celebrities to make genuine mistakes without facing severe repercussions [63,64].

The ability to recover from public controversies is influenced by a combination of economic resources, which can facilitate effective crisis management and public relations strategies, and strong social support networks that provide the emotional and psychological resources [65,66] necessary to navigate through challenging times. However, the persistent and pervasive nature of social media content can hinder the recovery process, as negative content can persist indefinitely, complicating efforts to rebuild a tarnished reputation [67,68].

2.5 Media Ethics and Responsibility

The digital era has introduced a dynamic interaction between the public and media, significantly altering both the dissemination and consumption of information, raising concerns about the propagation of misinformation and the potential for media to either perpetuate or counter harmful campaigns against individuals or groups [69]. The rapid response capabilities of digital platforms can sometimes lead to premature and potentially damaging coverage of sensational stories, highlighting the ongoing debate regarding the media's role in either exacerbating or mitigating the effects of cancel culture.

Bastian et al. [70] contends that central to maintaining ethical standards in journalism is the commitment to accuracy and fairness, in consideration that journalists wield substantial influence over public opinion; their reporting can significantly affect the subjects of alleged bullying or cancel culture incidents. Thus, ensuring the verification of information from multiple sources and presenting a balanced view are crucial to avoid sensationalism that prioritizes engagement over factual reporting [71]. Furthermore, journalists must carefully consider the language they use, avoiding terms that may stigmatize or place undue blame on victims simply with the aim of arriving at attention grabbing headlines and engaging journalistic contents. In addition, Russo [72] argues that privacy protection is a paramount concern, as journalists must balance the public's right to information with the need to respect the privacy of individuals involved in bullying or cancel culture scenarios. Indiscriminate dissemination of personal details

can exacerbate the trauma for victims and contribute to the perpetuation of harmful content online. Digital platforms, therefore, bear a significant responsibility to implement stringent measures that combat the spread of harmful content, enhance fact-checking, and ensure algorithmic transparency and accountability [73].

To address the complex challenges posed by the unchecked influence of digital media, a comprehensive regulatory and policy framework is essential, encompassing both the enhancement of transparency in content moderation and the strengthening of privacy protections to ensure equitable access to platform resources [74]. Enhanced transparency and data access are imperative, requiring regulators to ensure that social media companies provide comprehensive access to their data and moderation processes. Such transparency is crucial for understanding the impacts of platform algorithms on public discourse and assessing the effectiveness of content moderation practices. Akinrinola et al. [75] argues that algorithmic accountability is a critical component, introducing ethical guidelines for algorithmic operations to prevent biases and ensure fairness in automated decisions. Utilizing "regulatory sandboxes," where new technologies can be tested in controlled environments to assess their social impacts before wider deployment, can help mitigate unforeseen consequences [76]. Robust privacy laws, such as the proposed Online Privacy Act, are crucial to ensure that users can control their personal information and influence how it is used [77]. Similarly, stricter age verification processes are necessary to protect minors from online harms, potentially raising the minimum age for social media use to better enforce these limits. Redefining the responsibilities of social media platforms under laws like Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act is essential to address online harms [78]. Removing immunity when platforms knowingly facilitate harmful content would encourage more proactive steps in content moderation without infringing on free speech.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study incorporates both thematic and sentiment analysis to derive comprehensive insights into public discourse and sentiment regarding bullying and cancel culture in the Nigerian entertainment industry. The data for this analysis was sourced from a diverse collection of academic publications that were systematically

selected based on their relevance to the study's objectives. The inclusion criteria focused on publications from 2015 to 2024 that specifically addressed the intersection of the entertainment industry with bullying and cancel culture. Publications that did not directly relate to the Nigerian entertainment industry or lacked empirical data were excluded from the analysis. This rigorous selection process ensured that the literature reviewed provided a comprehensive and relevant foundation for the study. Thematic analysis was conducted to explore detailed narratives and recurring themes within the selected scholarly articles. NVivo software was employed for initial descriptive coding, allowing for the systematic organization of data into meaningful categories. These categories were then meticulously analyzed to identify themes that elucidate patterns, particularly regarding celebrities' experiences and the media's influence in shaping public perceptions of bullying and cancel culture.

Simultaneously, sentiment analysis was performed on the same academic publications to quantify public sentiment and emotional responses. Python libraries, specifically TextBlob and Vader, were used to classify the content into positive, negative, or neutral sentiments. Each paper's sentiment was categorized, and the proportions of these sentiments were calculated to identify overall public sentiment trends. The sentiment score for each text segment was calculated using the formula:

$$S = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n Si}{n}$$

Where S_i represents the sentiment score of individual text segments, and n is the total number of text segments analyzed. The proportion of each sentiment category was then determined by:

$$Proportion = \frac{Number\ of\ Segments\ in\ Category}{Total\ Number\ of\ sentiments} \times 100$$

The sentiment scores provide a quantifiable measure of public emotion and sentiment, which is essential for understanding the prevailing attitudes toward bullying and cancel culture within the Nigerian entertainment industry. To ensure the robustness of the findings, a triangulation analysis was employed to integrate the results of the sentiment analysis with the qualitative insights derived from the thematic analysis. This approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the effects of

bullying and cancel culture by ensuring that the qualitative and quantitative results corroborated each other. In cases where discrepancies arose between the thematic and sentiment analysis, they were carefully examined to identify underlying causes, such as context-specific nuances or differences in interpretation. These discrepancies were then addressed by revisiting the data and refining the analysis, ensuring that the overall findings were coherent and reflective of the complex dynamics within the industry.

4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Figs. 1 and 2 illustrates the number of articles reviewed on bullying and cancel culture in the Nigerian entertainment industry from 2015 to 2024. The chart shows that no relevant articles were accessed from 2015 to 2017. In 2018, there was one article on cancel culture. The year 2021 saw a significant peak with six articles on cancel culture and one on bullying. In 2022 and 2023, there were a few articles on both topics, with a slight increase in 2023.

Table 1 Explains the tabular analysis of thematic research on celebrity experiences and media trends and identifies six key themes from literature, examining the impact of media portrayals on public perceptions, highlighting positive influences of Nollywood and often negative portrayals by US media.

The study addresses the significant effects of cancel culture on celebrity mental health and the real consequences of public shaming. It also covers the prevalence of cyberbullying against celebrities, their emotional impacts, and coping strategies. Additionally, the table reflects on the influence celebrities have on youth and in advocacy, how they manage public relations and ethical issues, and their roles in branding and advocacy. This shows their contribution to national identity and social change, emphasizing their power in shaping societal norms and values. This comprehensive analysis outlines the complex relationships between celebrities and media.

4.1 Sentiment Analysis

The sentiment analysis (Table 2 and Fig. 3) revealed a predominantly negative public sentiment (75%) regarding bullying and cancel culture in the entertainment industry, with a significant portion (25%) reflecting a neutral perspective. No positive sentiments were identified in the reviewed studies.

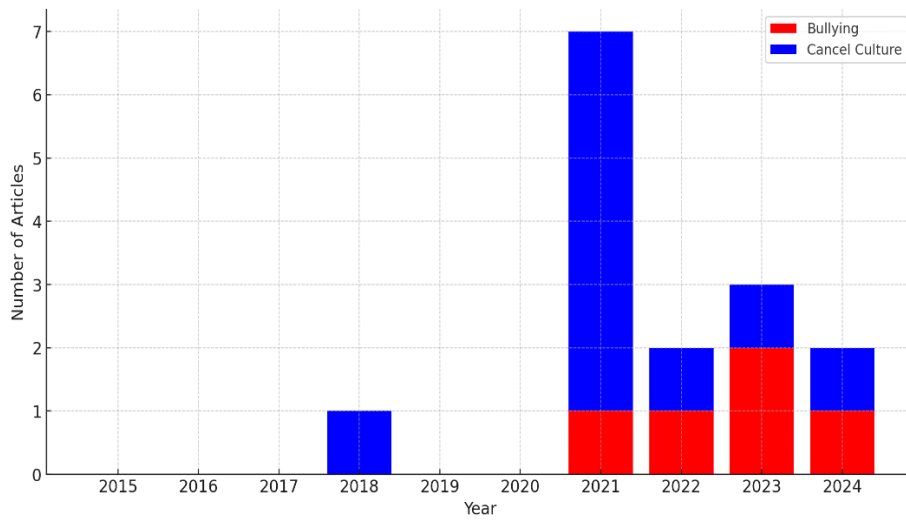


Fig. 1. Frequency distribution of accessibility to the number of Articles reviewed on Bullying and Cancel Culture

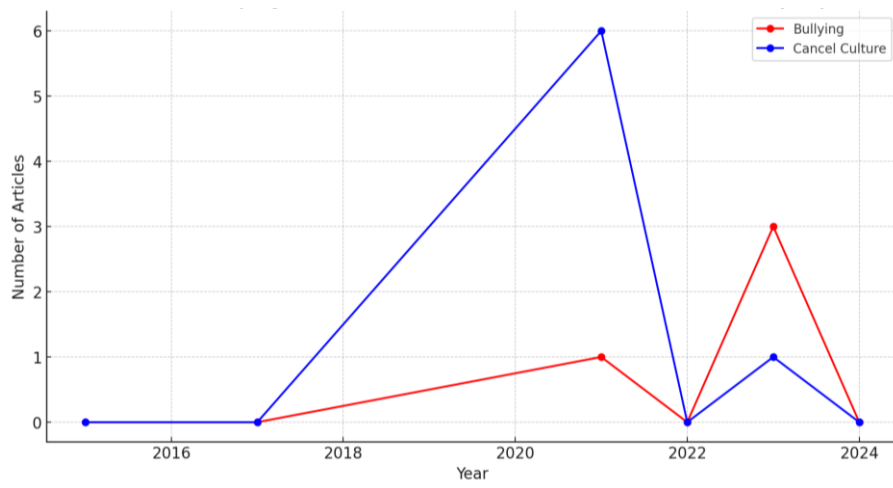


Fig. 2. Prevalence of Bullying and Cancel Culture in the Entertainment Industry (by Year)

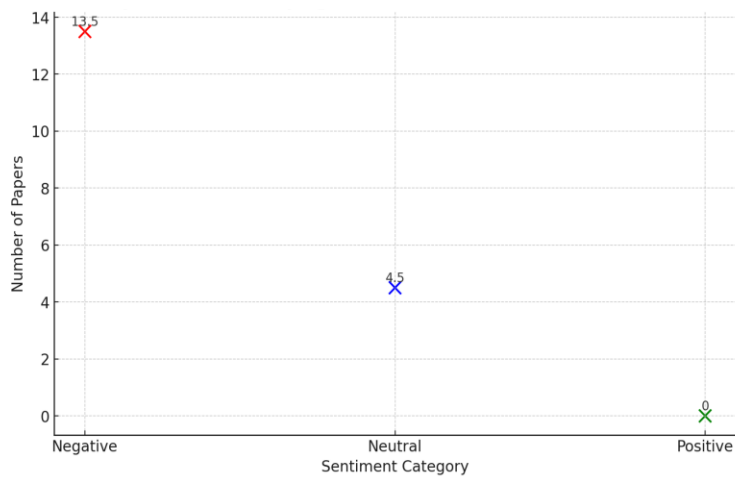


Fig. 3. Sentiment Analysis Results: Bullying and Cancel Culture in the Entertainment Industry

Table 1. Thematic analysis

Theme	Summary	Key Findings	Illustrative Quotes
Media Portrayal and Celebrity Perceptions	Media portrayal of celebrities significantly influences public perceptions.	- Evolution of Nollywood has reshaped the image of Nigerian celebrities. US media often presents a negative depiction of Nigerian celebrities.	Abiola [79]: "Nollywood has not only provided entertainment but has also been instrumental in crafting the modern Nigerian celebrity." Adegbola et al. [80]: "US media often frames Nigerian celebrities within a context of crime and corruption, overshadowing their contributions to arts and culture."
The Consequences of Cancel Culture	Cancel culture has a profound impact on celebrities, affecting their mental health and leading to public shaming.	Cancel culture leads to severe anxiety and depression among celebrities. Public shaming practices are a reality for many celebrities.	Ramsey-Soroghaye et al. [81]: "Cancel culture can lead to severe anxiety and depression among celebrities." Norris [82]: "While some argue that cancel culture is exaggerated, the experiences of many celebrities suggest that public shaming and social ostracism are very real consequences."
Cyberbullying and Celebrity Experiences	Cyberbullying is prevalent among celebrities, leading to significant emotional and psychological effects.	The rise of social media has increased cyberbullying incidents. Celebrities develop coping mechanisms to manage cyberbullying experiences.	Akeusola [83]: "The rise of social media has given a platform to cyberbullies, with celebrities often being prime targets due to their visibility." Kehinde & Dipeolu [84]: "Celebrities in Ibadan have developed various coping mechanisms, including seeking support from close friends and family, to mitigate the effects of cyberbullying."
The Influence of Celebrities	Celebrities wield significant influence over youth, shaping their lifestyles and promoting advocacy efforts.	- Nigerian youth look up to celebrities as role models. Celebrities use their platforms to champion women's rights and social causes.	Uzuegbunam [85]: "Nigerian youth often look up to celebrities as role models, adopting their fashion, language, and even social attitudes." Popoola et al. [86]: "Celebrities have used their platforms to champion women's rights, bringing attention to issues like gender-based violence and inequality."
PR Strategies and Ethics in Celebrity Culture	Celebrities use sophisticated public relations strategies to manage their image.	- Effective PR strategies are essential for navigating public opinion. Ethical considerations and regulatory bodies play crucial roles in	Omoera [87]: "Effective PR strategies are essential for celebrities to navigate the complexity of public opinion and media scrutiny." Onebunne & Okeke [88]: "The behavior of celebrities on reality shows often raises ethical questions, influencing public

Theme	Summary	Key Findings	Illustrative Quotes
Celebrity Advocacy and Nation Branding	Celebrities play a pivotal role in branding Nigeria and advocating for various causes.	- Nollywood celebrities are ambassadors of Nigerian culture. Celebrity advocacy leads to significant social change in Nigeria.	discourse on morality and social norms." Onwuliri [89]: "Nollywood celebrities are ambassadors of Nigerian culture, helping to brand the nation positively on the global stage. Popoola [90]: "Celebrity advocacy has led to significant social change in Nigeria, from promoting education to fighting against human trafficking."

Table 2. Sentiment analysis results

Sentiment Category	Number of Papers	Proportion (%)
Negative	13.5	75
Neutral	4.5	25
Positive	0	0

Fig. 2 visually expresses the number of scholarly articles focusing on bullying and cancel culture in the Nigerian entertainment industry over time. From 2015 to 2024, there is a noticeable fluctuation in the number of articles published on these topics. The trend for cancel culture peaks significantly in 2021 with six articles, indicating heightened academic interest or relevant incidents during that year. In contrast, articles on bullying show a gradual increase, peaking in 2023 with two articles, suggesting a growing but less pronounced concern.

5. DISCUSSION

The examination of bullying and cancel culture within the Nigerian entertainment industry reveals a complex interplay of social media influence, celebrity experiences, and broader societal factors. This study's findings both align with and expand upon existing literature, offering new insights into the unique context of Nigeria's entertainment industry.

The predominance of negative sentiment (75%) in the analyzed literature underscores the severity of cyberbullying and cancel culture, echoing concerns raised by Milosevic et al. [9] about the virulence of these phenomena in the entertainment industry. This aligns with the assertion that the high visibility of celebrities, coupled with the anonymity provided by digital platforms, exacerbates these behaviors. The psychological impact on celebrities, including anxiety and depression, corroborates the findings of Pearson [9], who highlighted the severe

repercussions of cancel culture on personal well-being.

The evolution of media portrayal, particularly through Nollywood, has significantly reshaped perceptions of Nigerian celebrities. This transformation aligns with observations by Abiola [79] regarding Nollywood's role in crafting the modern Nigerian celebrity image. However, the study also reveals a dichotomy between local and international media portrayals, with U.S. media often presenting negative depictions of Nigerian celebrities. This contrast extends the discourse beyond the predominantly positive narrative of social media's impact on the Nigerian entertainment industry presented by scholars such as Oluyomi and Adebajo [15,16,17].

The study's findings on the prevalence of cyberbullying against celebrities support earlier research by Smith and Urbas [33], who noted the challenges in enforcing legal measures against such behavior due to online anonymity. The development of coping mechanisms by celebrities, as identified in this study, adds a new dimension to the existing literature, suggesting an adaptive response to persistent threats. This aspect warrants further investigation, as it could provide valuable insights into resilience strategies for public figures facing online harassment.

The dual nature of celebrity influence emerges as a significant theme, echoing the observations of Uzuegbunam [85] regarding the role of celebrities as role models for Nigerian youth.

This influence extends to nation branding and social advocacy, as noted by Onwuliri [89] and Popoola [90], demonstrating the potential for leveraging fame for societal benefit. This finding adds depth to the discussion of social media's role in the entertainment industry, moving beyond the focus on content creation and dissemination. The importance of effective public relations strategies in navigating the complexity of public opinion emerged as a crucial factor, supporting Omoera's [87] assertion about the necessity of PR in managing celebrity image. This finding underscores the need for a more nuanced understanding of image management in the digital era, where the line between public and private life is increasingly blurred, as noted by Tandoc et al. [5].

The temporal analysis of literature from 2015 to 2024 indicates a growing academic interest in these issues, with a notable peak in studies on cancel culture in 2021. This surge may reflect broader societal trends or specific high-profile incidents during that period, such as the cases of Falz and Mr. Macaroni [8]. The gradual increase in research on bullying, peaking in 2023, suggests an evolving awareness of its impact on the entertainment industry, aligning with the observations of Malik and Dadure [40] about the conflation of minor missteps with grave offenses in cancel culture.

These findings must be considered within the context of Nigeria's socio-economic, as it supports the assertions of Okolie and Igbini [50] and Klanderud [51] regarding the role of economic disparities and social inequality in fueling aggressive online behaviors. This perspective adds depth to the understanding of cyberbullying and cancel culture, framing them not just as digital phenomena but as expressions of broader societal tensions. In addition, following the study's results which shows significant implications for policy and practice within the Nigerian entertainment industry, the necessity for comprehensive strategies to address cyberbullying and mitigate the negative effects of cancel culture is evident, supporting the calls for multifaceted approaches by scholars such as Ansary [36] and Bastian et al. [70]. The role of media ethics in reporting on celebrity controversies also warrants attention, given the potential for sensationalism to exacerbate harm, as highlighted by Liu et al. [59]. However, while the impact of cyberbullying and cancel culture on celebrities is well-documented, there is limited research on the long-term psychological effects

and the efficacy of various coping strategies. Additionally, the potential for positive uses of social media influence in counteracting cyberbullying and promoting constructive public discourse remains underexplored.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the comprehensive analysis of bullying and cancel culture in the Nigerian entertainment industry, this study concludes that these phenomena represent significant challenges with far-reaching implications for celebrities, the industry, and society at large. The research reveals a complex interplay between social media, public perception, and socio-economic factors that contribute to the prevalence and impact of cyberbullying and cancel culture. While social media platforms have democratized content creation and dissemination, they have also created new avenues for harassment and public shaming, particularly affecting high-profile individuals in the entertainment sector.

The study demonstrates that the consequences of these phenomena extend beyond immediate psychological distress, influencing career trajectories, public discourse, and even national branding efforts. However, it also highlights the potential for positive change, showcasing how celebrity influence can be leveraged for social advocacy to mitigate bullying and cancel culture in the entertainment industry. In light of these findings, the following specific recommendations are proposed:

1. Key stakeholders, including government agencies, entertainment industry leaders, and educational institutions, should collaborate to develop a comprehensive digital literacy program tailored specifically for the entertainment industry. This campaign would be rolled out in phases, starting with major entertainment hubs like Lagos and Abuja, before expanding nationwide. The program would include workshops, online courses, and interactive sessions designed to educate celebrities, industry professionals, and aspiring artists about online safety, responsible social media use, and effective strategies for managing their digital presence. The campaign should include modules on recognizing and responding to cyberbullying, understanding the mechanics of cancel culture, and utilizing

social media platforms for positive engagement and brand building. These modules should be developed in consultation with mental health experts, digital media specialists, and legal professionals to ensure they are comprehensive and relevant. The campaign's effectiveness should be monitored through periodic surveys, participant feedback, and an analysis of online harassment incidents before and after the campaign. This will allow for continuous improvement and adaptation of the program to meet emerging challenges.

2. An independent regulatory body should be established, serving as an independent authority within the Nigerian entertainment industry, tasked with mediating disputes, investigating severe online harassment cases, and addressing unfair cancellations. This body should be able to issue public statements, recommend remedial actions, and work closely with social media platforms to address systemic issues affecting Nigerian celebrities. The body could build on existing regulatory frameworks, such as the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) and the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB), to ensure a cohesive approach. It would operate under a clear legal mandate, with defined protocols for handling complaints and supporting affected individuals. To ensure buy-in from industry stakeholders, the regulatory body should involve representatives from the entertainment industry, social media companies, legal experts, and civil society organizations. This collaborative approach will help balance the need for regulation with the industry's creative freedom.
3. Regulatory bodies within the entertainment industry should institute a "Digital Wellness" certification for entertainment companies, record labels, and talent management agencies that adhere to best practices in digital well-being for their artists. This certification would require companies to provide mental health support, digital security training, and crisis management resources for their talent. Companies would need to demonstrate ongoing commitment to these practices to maintain their certification. Certified companies would be recognized as industry leaders in promoting a healthier digital environment, which could positively

influence hiring decisions and public perception. Additionally, certified companies could benefit from government incentives, such as tax breaks or grants, to support their efforts in maintaining digital wellness standards. This certification should align with global standards for digital well-being, drawing on best practices from similar initiatives in other countries. This will ensure that Nigerian companies remain competitive on an international level and adhere to the highest standards of artist welfare.

4. Future studies should explore the long-term psychological effects of cyberbullying and cancel culture on celebrities using participant observatory methods or longitudinal qualitative studies. These methodologies would allow researchers to monitor the development of celebrity cases over time, providing deeper insights into the enduring impact of these phenomena. Also, studies should focus on developing targeted interventions, such as support groups for affected celebrities, digital detox programs, and resilience-building workshops. These interventions could be pilot-tested within the industry before wider implementation. Further studies should investigate how celebrities can be mobilized to combat bullying and cancel culture through positive social influence. This could involve analyzing the effectiveness of celebrity-led campaigns and advocacy efforts in changing public attitudes and behaviors, particularly in the context of the Nigerian entertainment industry.

In conclusion, the recommendations and strategies proposed by this study have the potential to significantly mitigate the challenges of bullying and cancel culture within the Nigerian entertainment industry. By implementing these measures, stakeholders can create a more resilient, ethical, and supportive environment for all industry participants. The integration of these strategies with existing frameworks and global standards will ensure that the Nigerian entertainment industry not only addresses these pressing issues but also sets a benchmark for other industries facing similar challenges.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models

(ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of manuscripts.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that they have no known competing financial interests or non-financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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