



# Influence of satirical media content on orientation to politics among Nigerian youth

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the political enculturation roles of mediated political satire and comedy in a developing democratic milieu. Amidst anxieties and controversies about whether increasing dominance of political satire in the media intensifies political apathy or stimulate political interest among the youth, we surveyed 366 undergraduates in two universities in North Central Nigeria to test the predictive power of exposure to mediated political satire on young people's political knowledge and attitude towards politics. Findings confirm the pedagogical utility of political satire for youth political socialisation and the ability of the content to prime positive orientation to politics. Importantly, the media with higher democratic features are found to be better predictors of youth political behaviour, through mediated political satire, than state-owned and elite-dominated mainstream media. These results highlight the need to intensify democratisation of the media space in order to attract cynical youths who are critical to sustenance and consolidation of democratic values in the African largest democracy.

Keywords: *mediated political satire, comedy, politics, public affairs, Nigerian youth*

## INTRODUCTION

There is a general consensus among political communication scholars, media professional and other key political actors that the mass media system is tangential to deliberative and participatory politics (Bakker & de Vresse, 2011; Mustapha, Ahmad & Abubakar, 2014). The (r)evolutionary nature of the media ecology, however, precipitates, oftentimes, controversies on the mechanisms by which the mass media function to produce informed and engaged citizenry. The dichotomy between the role of news/current affairs programming and the entertainment genres for political orientation and participation is an instance of unresolved polemics about the media-politics nexus (Baum & Jamison, 2006). Hence, political communication scholars and other political actors have voiced differing opinions and/or frustrations about the roles and consequences of both news and entertainment programmes (satire, humour, comedy, etc.) for citizens' political and civic engagement (Holbert, 2005; Young, 2004, 2006).

Due to a *a priori* notion that news and current affairs programmes have natural linkage with learning and orientation about the external environment (McCombs, 2004, 2005), the rising popularity of entertainment programmes creates serious concerns, particularly in relation to the increasing political disengagement among young citizens (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Young & Tisinger, 2006). This fear arises from the belief that mediated satirical content trivializes the political and media systems, thus widening and increasing the already established democratic deficit and political apathy among the youths, respectively (Baum, 2005; Moy, Xenos & Hess, 2005a). The sentiment that mediated comedic and humoristic content lacks intrinsic political values has, however, been rejected by a number of scholars on the ground that such content serves as a gateway into a formalised political reality appropriate through the mainstream news content (Baum, 2003; Baumgartner, Morris & Walth, 2012; Feldman, Leiserowitz & Maibach, 2011). These diverging opinions have triggered the publication of a sea of studies examining the cognitive, affective and behavioural consequences of satirical media content, particularly in the advanced democratic spheres (Xenos & Becker, 2009; Warner, Hawthorne & Hawthorne, 2015; Young & Tisinger, 2006).

Given the accepted, if contested, estimation that mediated political humour is an integral part of the political public sphere (Kim & Vishak, 2008; Young, 2008), politicians have leveraged on the entertainment genre to access the inattentive and dispassionate electorate in the United States and other advanced democratic settings (Holbert, 2013; Nazir & Bhatti, 2016). In Nigeria, the American variants of entertainment media and programmes such as *Teju Baby Face Show*, a comedy talk show that represents contemporary social issues using satires, and *The Other News* with Okey Bakkasi on *Channels Television*, which helps add spice to seemingly boring hard news (Akingbe, 2014; Sani, Abdullah, Ali & Abdullah, 2012), are still in their infancy. However, other comedic content targeted at parodying politicians and political issues are apparent in the newspapers' cartoons, radio comedy, home videos and stand-up comedy (Filani, 2017).

Chiefly among satirical content that has gained prominence in the consideration of political communication scholars is political comedy exemplified by *The Daily Show*, *The Late Night Show*, *The Colbert Report*, among others in the United States (Holbert, Lambe, Dudo & Carlton, 2007; Kim & Vishak, 2008;) and their adapted variants in other developed and developing democracies (Nazir & Bhatti, 2016; Opdycke, 2013). Hence, a majority of empirical research in the past years have focused solely on late-night comedy shows at the detriment of other satirical sketches and caricatures which are also platforms for political humour (Baumgartner et al., 2012; Morris, 2009; Moy et al., 2005a).

More recently, there is an emerging culture of political parodies being developed and shared via the social media to subtly communicate the ills of the political system among Nigerian youths (Chen, 2018). These social mediated comedic content are also gaining grounds in advanced democracies, albeit with little scholarly attention being paid to their mechanisms and effects (Baumgartner, 2013; Chadwick, 2013; Mulligan & Habel, 2013). In view of the fact that accumulated evidence on how satirical media content that primes audience cognitions and influence their evaluation of the politics, politicians and political institutions (Jennings, Bramlett & Warner, 2018; Young, 2006), concentrates on television comedic content only (Baumgartner & Morris, 2008; Moy et al., 2005a; Young, 2004, 2006), with little if any consideration for consequences of mediated humour in other traditional and social media platforms, this study surveyed young Nigerians to extend the frontiers of comedic political communication literature and cross-culturally validate extant findings on political consequences of mediated political satires and comedies in a developing democracy.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Priming effects of mediated political satire*

According to Moy, Tewksbury and Rinke (2016), priming is one of the theories that explicate how individuals perceive and respond to their vast political and social worlds. Developed in 1982 by Iyengar, Peters and Kinder, the theory is used by social psychologists to understand human information processing and judgement (Dillman, 2009; Valenzuela, 2009). Elaborating the conceptualization of priming, Scheufele (2000) asserts that priming is linked to attitude accessibility reinforced by salience of issues and ease of retrieval from the memory when making political judgment. Therefore, audience perceptions of mediated political satire and humour result not only in the evaluation of political processes, systems and actors, but observable political behaviour (Becker, Xenos & Waisanen, 2010).

Priming basically relies on the salience of issues in the media content. Hence, Iyengar and Kinder (1987, p. 63) contended that making some issues more salient than the others influence “the standards by which governments, presidents, policies, and candidates for public offices are judged.” Generally, political infotainment, rendered through satire, comedy and humour, has become another important avenue for political information acquisition and attitude formation, rivalling the mainstream news (Kim & Vishak, 2008; Moy et al., 2005b). Hence, a number of Pew Research reports established that political comedy has become the basic source of political information among young people (Higgie, 2017; Moy et al., 2005b; Young, 2004, 2006; Young & Tisinger, 2006). Based on the principle that attitude formation and decision making are oftentimes premised on the strength of the most salient and most accessible considerations (Moy et al., 2016), political comedy could, however, prime the audience for certain perceptual, attitudinal and behavioural inclinations.

By nature, satirical media content is a focused body of texts addressing an aspect of the political life as well as issue stances and attributes of politicians. This has made many studies on the impacts of televised comedy to be theoretically grounded on priming (Moy et al., 2005b; Holbert, 2005; Xenos & Becker, 2009). Young (2006), for instance, posited that the frequent display and repetitive nature of political comedy make the candidates’ caricatured traits to be chronically accessible in audience memory thus priming evaluation of the candidates along the traits that are common, recent and repetitive in the satires consumed by the audience. Jennings et al. (2018) also averred that *priming* viewers’ perceptions of political comedy as entertaining and informative enhances its effects (emphasis intended). Quickly forgotten, oftentimes, acquired comedic and satirical information influences the processing of subsequent messages through the mechanism of affective priming (Warner et

al., 2015). It follows, therefore, that politically inattentive youths, currently regarded as the greatest patrons of mediated satirical and comedic political content (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Baumgartner et al., 2012; Holbert, 2005; Young, 2006; Young & Tisinger, 2006), could acquire relevant political information and form political judgment based on their exposure to political satires in the media.

### ***Mediated political satire***

Etymologically, satire, the Latin term *satira*, roughly means “a mixed bag” and when associated with politics, it becomes an admixture of various political messages couched in sarcasm, parody, irony, etc. (Holbert, 2013). According to Abella and Reyes (2014), satire constitutes written or graphical mockery and humorous criticism of a person or institution of cultural and political significance. Political satire subtly uses humour and wit to challenge mainstream ideas with a view to precipitate appropriate response (Obadare, 2009, 2010; Mukherjee, 2016). Initially doubted as having significant influence on the outcome of presidential election, particularly among political scientists, entertainment-oriented media of political comedy hue has emerged from the margin to become a dominant political communication strategy in the contemporary time (Baum, 2005; Holbert, 2005).

Although political satire predates the modern media system, it is currently rivalling other formalised and conventional media and election-specific media events like debate and convention in the diffusion of important political information that triggers cognitive, attitudinal and behavioural political consequences (Moy et al., 2005a). Mediated political satire has been synonymously used with other forms of comedic and humoristic political communication featuring on the mass media sphere (Hmielowski, Holbert & Lee, 2011; Holbert, 2005). Abella & Reyes (2014), for example, see humour as human artistic creation, which are either used to amuse people or to connotatively critique political objects, subjects and institutions. In Africa in general and Nigeria in particular, scholars have documented how humoristic strategy was devised and mediated as a means of deconstructing, critiquing and engaging authoritarian tendencies exhibited by post-military political leaders and as symbolic instruments of social transgression (Obadare, 2009, 2010).

Through the simplification and elaboration of high-level political issues, satirical media content has become an important political pedagogical site for the hitherto disinterested electorate. In their efforts at returning the citizens back to deliberative and participatory democracy, satirists such as Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert have gained cultural and political capital and considered truthful and trusted journalists (Faina, 2012; Higgie, 2017). The success of mediated political satire in the United States has triggered the mushrooming of the industry in other developing democracies, including India, Egypt, Malaysia, and Nigeria (Abella & Reyes, 2014; Filani, 2017; Khin, 2016; Opdycke, 2013). While there are contentions as to the utility or otherwise of mediated political satire, there is a consensus that the genre has become important political information resources for the young people (Baumgartner et al., 2012; Higgie, 2017; Young & Tisinger, 2006).

### ***Mediated political satire and the youth***

Recent studies have shown that late-night political satires, such as *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report*, have the capacity to positively impact on the society, especially through their influence on younger and less educated viewers (Feldman et al., 2011; Hollander, 2005; Young & Tisinger, 2006). Mediated political satire provides the opportunity for young people to reflect on politics and deconstruct complex political realities (Street, Inthorn & Scott, 2013). In particular, young people could greatly benefit from entertaining politics; and popular culture that is characterized by the inclusive mode of representation and potential to connect them with varying topics of interest, including politics (Baumgartner, 2013; Parkin,

2010). Relying on Pew Center's polls, scholars have documented the increasing potential of satirical and comedic content to sway young voters (Higgie, 2017; Moy et al., 2005b; Young, 2004, 2006). According to these polls, younger voters, who hardly use newspapers and network news are depending on late-night shows to obtain campaign information and as an avenue for political learning (Baum, 2003, 2005; Young, 2006; Young & Tisinger, 2006). Bertram (2016) stated that youth-oriented media political satire offers one of the most powerful ways of strengthening the public sphere. According to this scholar, engaging the youth in politics through satirical programmes helps establish shared connections through online communities, fosters a sense of solidarity and mobilises collective consciousness, regardless of geographical distance or location.

Media political satire attracts younger audience who sees political comedy programmes as more stimulating alternatives to the traditional forms of news broadcasting (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006). Besides, contemporary youths, due in part to cynicism, are disenchanted about politics and political discourses in traditional news and are thus finding safe haven in comedy shows, which shield them from elite-supporting mainstream media that usually bamboozle them with high-end, unobtrusive policy and political discourses and propagandistic messages (Baum, 2005; Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Moy et al., 2005a). This belief resonates with the contemporary description of the national television as being fraudulent and the notion that the mainstream media have become the guard dog for the elite, rather than playing their normative watchdog role (Holber et al., 2007). As an alternative to using the elite-dominated news media to connect with the external reality, young people are finding platforms that critique the mainstream media and the political systems interesting. Hence, late-night TV comedy and other entertainment media genres are increasingly becoming the default political communication avenues for the youths (Landreville, Holbert & LaMarre, 2010; Xenos & Becker, 2009). Despite the uninspiring opinion that mediated political satire trivialises political discourses and ridicules political actors and institution, thus strengthens political cynicism among the youth (Nabi, Moyer-Guse' & Byrne, 2007; Young & Tisinger, 2006), scholars have arrayed veritable evidence that the genre provides the youth the opportunity to know and learn about happenings in the political environment (Cao & Brewer, 2008; Young, 2006; Warner et al., 2015).

### *Mediated political satire and political knowledge*

Political knowledge represents an important resource in democratic discourses, influencing political opinion, attitude and behaviour (Brewer & Marquardt, 2007; Milner, 2007; Young, 2004, 2008). Mediated political satire has substantial influence in the public's understanding of politics, public affairs and global events (Brewer & Marquardt, 2007). Young (2008), for example, found that *The Daily Show* viewers have higher campaign knowledge than national news viewers and newspaper readers, even when controlling for education, party identification, following politics, watching cable news, receiving campaign information online, age, and gender.

Political comedy fills the void created by decreasing interest in political news as audience seeking entertainment content opt for political comedy thus learning incidentally from such exposures (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Feldman, 2013; Parkin, 2010). For instance, Warner et al. (2015) provided literature evidence on learning from exposure to political comedy. According to these scholars, people learn from political comedy through the gateway effect, which entails viewing and learning more about politics from other outlets after initial exposure to political information via satire and comedy. Tuning-in into political satire programmes encourages young people to seek out additional information from traditional news sources, follow the course of political campaigns, feel better about own

ability to participate in politics, and even feel more inclined to participate in lower commitment oriented acts of political expression (Becker et al., 2010).

Political comedy and mediated political satire have become influential means of knowing candidate's stances on issues and personality traits, surpassing the power of other strategic forms of political communication such as political advertising, debates and media-saturated political conventions (Hoffman, 2012; Mukherjee, 2016; Young, 2004). Using experiment to examine how students, considered as the greatest patron of political comedy shows, follow and learn substantive policy issues in John Kerry's 2004 campaign, Parkin (2010), for example, found that entertainment content contributed more to learning about key issues than formal news programme. Even when considered to be brief and limited, knowledge acquired from political comedy primes future information processing, evaluation of and attitude towards political objects among the viewers (Warner et al., 2015).

Explicating the linkage between comedic political content and political knowledge, scholars have employed a multi-theoretical perspective, contending that priming, elaboration likelihood model, uses and gratifications are theoretical bases for learning from political comedy (Boukes, Boomgaarden, Moorman, & de Vreese, 2015; Jennings et al., 2018; Mukherjee, 2016; Young, 2004, 2008). The incorporation of digitally-mediated comedic content also expands the influence of mediated political satire (Mulligan & Habel, 2013; Rahimi, 2015). The possibility of making satirical YouTube clips and sharing them on other viral social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook elongate the presence of the comedic content in the virtual public sphere and extend political knowledge dissemination (Baym, 2010; El Marzouki, 2015; Zipkin, 2016). Satirical and humoristic elements in human arts and mediated formats like comic strips and print media cartoons also have expositional potential that confers knowledge on the audience beyond their entertainment utility (Abella & Reyes, 2014). In view of abundant evidence that mediated satirical and comedic political content predicts audience knowledge about politics (Warner et al., 2015; Xenos & Becker, 2009; Young, 2013) and the assertion that communication studies that do not bring multiple information outlets into the equation will result into systemic under-representation of the overall effect of communication in political contexts (Landreville et al., 2010), we hypothesised that:

**H1a:** Exposure to mediated political satire on the mainstream media predicts political knowledge among the Nigerian youth.

**H1b:** Exposure to mediated political satire on the social media predicts political knowledge among the Nigerian youth.

### *Mediated political satire and political attitude*

Political attitude entails predispositions towards certain political objects or subjects, which could be favourable, unfavourable or neutral. It is the degree to which people are supportive or antagonistic of certain political beliefs, values, actors and institutions (Sibley & Wilson, 2007). Political attitudes are products of the influence of socialisation agents, personal experience, as well as political and historical circumstances (Blais & St-Vincent, 2013; Markovic, 2010; Gerber, Huber, Doherty, Dowling & Ha, 2010). Evidence abounds on the relationship between exposure to media political satire and formation of attitude sequel to exposure and learning (Morris, 2009; Warner et al., 2015). Making allusion to the works of humour and joke scholars, with a special emphasis on the incongruity theory of humour, Young (2004) argued that humour audience needs to be an active participant in making meaning from the joke through interpolation. The cognitive elaboration resulting from the

interpretation of humour, together with the repetitive nature of political satire, according to Young, explains recall and attitude change.

Baum (2005) also documented the influence of exposure to entertainment talk show featuring presidential candidates on subsequent evaluation of the candidates by less knowledgeable and politically passive viewers. The reduction of policy and strategic political issues into anecdotal entertaining small talk is, according to Baum, the source of influence of political comedy on this category of audience. Other experimental and survey studies evidenced the effects of mediated political satire on viewers' attitudes with some contending that the comedic content exposure contributes to favourable political attitude (Abella & Reyes, 2014; LaMarre & Walther, 2013; Young & Tisinger, 2006), while others believe it precipitates negative dispositions and inappropriate political ideals (Baum & Jamison, 2006; Baumgartner, 2013; Becker et al., 2010). When political satire and comedy trivialises and sensationalises significant political issues as horse race, for example, it reinforces the already established political and media cynicism in the minds of the audience and create negative dispositions (Nabi et al., 2007; Xenos & Becker, 2009). A study examining the effect of impersonating Sara Palin's vice-presidential debate outing by Tina Fey on the *Saturday Night Life* revealed effects on attitude towards her candidature and disapproval of her choice as the running mate of candidate John McCain during the 2008 U.S. presidential election (Baumgartner et al., 2012).

Explaining how fictional television content influences political attitude, Mutz and Nir (2010) offered that content (factuality), kind of audience (active or passive seekers of current affairs issues) and method of processing (degree of emotional involvement) are incidental to the effect. Besides the television-based satirical shows, studies have documented the attitudinal effects of other platforms featuring political satires (Mukherjee, 2016; Xenos & Becker, 2009). In a panel experimental survey of young people aged 18-24, during the 2008 United States presidential election, Baumgartner (2013) found negative impact of animated online video, lampooning political candidates, on evaluation of political objects, government and the media system among viewers than non-viewers. He concluded that "attitudinal effects of political humour extend well beyond its explicit target" (p. 23). In sum, mediated satire, unlike the rational discourse of traditional news which envisions politics should be learned, enjoins playing with politics (Gray, Jones, & Thompson, 2009; Holbert, 2005). While a lot is known about the consequences of political satire and comedy, the changing political comedy landscape occasioned by diversified platforms for creating, disseminating and consuming political humours calls for continuing exploration of the phenomenon. Hence, we hypothesised that:

**H2a:** Exposure to mediated political satire on the mainstream media predicts political attitude among the Nigerian youth

**H2b:** Exposure to mediated political satire on the social media predicts political attitude among the Nigerian youth

### ***Study context: Mediated political satire in Nigeria***

As Africa's largest democracy and a country that has been consistently rated as fairly free (Freedom House, 2019), Nigeria offers a perfect laboratory for examining the media-political nexus along different media genres including media political satire and comedy. While media humoristic and satirical content have been an understudied area in Nigeria (Obadare, 2009), an avalanche of evidence supports the notion that political comedy has been a part of Nigerian political communication environment from the period of colonisation till contemporary times (Akingbe, 2014; Filani, 2017; Haynes, 2006; Obadare, 2009, 2010). For

example, Chen (2018) opined that comical political cartooning has been a part of Nigerian newspapering project since the anti-colonial struggle. This was followed by other satirical content in subsequent media outlets like television, theatre, and digital media platforms in recent times.

Elaborating the role of jokes and comedy in an African political setting, with Nigeria as the main focus, Obadare (2009, 2010) asserted that ordinary Nigerians as well as Nigerian mass mediated spaces use humour to critique government and institutional misnomers and as a means of coping with the rigours of their daily lives emerging from misgovernance. In his words, “jokes have always been iconic tools in the hands of society’s subalterns, used to caricature those in power, subvert authority, and, in some instances, empower themselves.” (2009, p. 245). Abioye (2009) also documented how doyens of Nigerian theatre and oral satirists such as the late Hubert Ogunde, Kola Ogunmola, Moses Olaiya and Adebisi Afolayan, among others produced films that satirically teach not only moral lessons, but addressed Nigerian social, political and economic challenges. In addition, films and home videos parodying Nigerian political leaders and critiquing political inadequacies are a common feature of the Nigerian entertainment genres, with the Nigerian National Film and Video Censors Board at a time calling on movies producers to delve into production of films and movies addressing a myriad of political discourses thus facilitating political emancipation of the people (Haynes, 2006).

More recently, stand-up comedians have made political satire endemic by using their platforms to mimic and subtly critique political actors, particularly current office holders. It has also become a common practice to have popular stand-up comedians performing at national events either as a part of interlude or as compere. With Internet and its numerous social media outlets, citizens across the world, particularly the youth, embrace the platforms for political information and as horizontal spaces for political participation (Kahne, Middaugh & Allen, 2014; Sveningsson, 2015; Xenos, Vromen & Loader, 2014). With 92.3 million Internet users, representing a 47.1% Internet penetration in Nigeria in 2018, 50 million users access the Internet via inexpensive smartphone (Statista, 2018). Additionally 29.3 million Nigerians, predominantly the youth, stay connected to social network sites (Statista, 2019), with Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, among those predominantly used social media (Statcounter GlobalStat, 2019). The reasons for preeminence of Facebook as the most popular social media site among the youth have previously been documented in Dhaha and Igale’s (2014) study which revealed that the site offers the youth tremendous social interaction, entertainment and political gratification. The social media spaces have assumed the status of potent political sphere among the youth who prefer the platforms as an alternative to state-controlled and subscription-dependent public and private broadcast space, respectively (Hari, 2014). These platforms have also featured comedic representations of powerful political personae of sitting presidents and First Ladies (Chen, 2018). The dominant status of political satire in the entire political landscape of Nigeria is evidenced by the open mimicry of a sitting president, who is of northern Nigerian extraction by a South-easterner comedian, Obinna Simon (MC Tagwaye), who leveraged on his physical resemblance of the president to endear himself to powerful politicians, including the president, through his numerous stand-up comedies and YouTube clips that mimic the president (Bada, 2018). Indeed, the Nigerian sociopolitical space is not only accommodating of satire and comedy, it welcomes multifaceted humours except those relating to religious matters (Eko, 2010).

## METHODOLOGY

This study used exploratory, cross-sectional design and survey methodology. Data for the study were primarily sought through self-administered questionnaires served on students in undergraduate programmes at two universities that attract students from the entire country in North Central Nigeria. 400 students participated in the study, but only 366 questionnaires were valid and used for the final analysis. University of Ilorin and Kwara State University provided the population for the study due to their distinct characteristics. Apart from being a top-ranking federal university (Stutern.com, 2018; uniRank, 2019), attracting the highest number of applicants seeking placement into the Nigerian system (“UNILORIN, ABU”, 2017; “UNILORIN”, 2017), the uninterrupted academic calendar that University of Ilorin maintains for more than two years makes it an educational hub for all young Nigerians and other foreign students, particularly from African countries. Further, being a state-owned institution, Kwara State University which has also been modelled after University of Ilorin, has had no record of closure, common to most Nigerian higher learning institutions, since its inception a decade ago. The lack of academic interruption, in a country where incessant closure of tertiary institutions due to industrial disputes elongates years of completion for students, makes these two institutions from which the respondents were drawn, a mini Nigeria of sort for the youth.

The study utilised the non-random, purposive sampling technique common to other exploratory studies of this nature (see, for example, Higgie, 2017). However, proportional sampling, based on the population of each university, was adopted in choosing respondents. Besides demographic variables, the study gathered data on other key variables like exposure to political satire on mainstream media, exposure to political satire on social media, satirical content exposed, political knowledge and political attitude.

### *Measures*

Exposure to political satire on mainstream media:

This was measured on the five-point Likert scale (1=Never, 5=Always) for newspaper, radio, television and home video.

Exposure to political satire on social media:

Also measured on the five-point Likert scale (1=Never, 5=Always) for Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and WhatsApp.

Satirical content exposed to:

This measured the comedic forms consisting of cartoon and caricatures, late-night show, comedic fake news, stand-up comedy and campaign humours that youths were exposed to. It was measured on the five-point Likert scale (1=Never, 5=Always).

Political knowledge:

This measured political-oriented knowledge acquired through exposure to mediated political satire on a five-point scale (1=Not at all, 5=very knowledgeable). Statements consisted of “mediated political satire makes me to be politically-informed”, “makes me to be politically knowledgeable”, “gives me knowledge about political process”, “gives me knowledge about political institutions and gives me knowledge about political office holders”.

Political attitude:

Measured dispositions towards politics and public affairs on the five-point scale (1=very look warm, 5=very warm), including attitude towards politics, democratic political system, political happening, political issues and political education.

## RESULTS

A series of regression analyses were conducted to test the hypotheses advanced in this study. As the scaled items used in this study were self-constructed based on literature review and the need to explore the phenomenon anew in a cultural setting where political comedy is just being mainstreamed, the reliability of items were tested using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The results of the test are detailed in Table 1. Scaled items were eventually indexed to obtain summated scores used for the final analyses.

**Table 1.** Reliability Tests

Constructs	No of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Mainstream Media Satire Exposure	4	.721
Social Media Satire Exposure	4	.656
Content Exposed	5	.651
Political Knowledge	5	.861
Political Attitude	5	.793

The results reveal that all the items meet minimal thresholds for observing the constructs. Only social media satire exposure and satirical content exposed are below .70 and above, considered to the best measure of scaled items. However, other exploratory studies of this nature have used Alpha levels of above .60 in the past (Cao & Brewer, 2008; Moy et al., 2005b). We also ran inter-item correlation tests to ensure non-violation of multicollinearity. The results in Table 2 show that constructs in the study were not inordinately correlated and fit for testing the predictions hypothesised.

**Table 2.** Inter-item Correlations

Constructs	MSSE	SMSE	CONT	KNOW	ATTI
MSSE	1				
SMSE	.609**	1			
CONT	.337**	.402**	1		
KNOW	.225**	.308*	.377*	1	
ATTI	.350**	.156**	.373*	.493**	1

*Note: MSSM: Mainstream media satire; SMSE: Social media satire; CONT: Satirical content  
KNOW: Knowledge from political satire; ATTI: Attitude formed from satire exposure*

There exist correlations among all constructs that are not extreme and inordinate. The correlation between mainstream satire exposure and social media satire exposure tends to be higher because the two constructs measure exposure to political satire using the same five point scale. However, since the items in the scale are different media, we retained the measures.

### *Descriptive statistics*

Of the demographic variables measured in this study, two (age and gender) are considered in the analysis based on extant findings in the field (Hmielowski et al., 2011; Kim & Vishak, 2008; Young & Tisinger, 2006). Respondents in this study are between the age of 16 and 29

years old ( $M=19.8$ ,  $SD=2.62$ ). The female (63.4%) outnumbered the male in tandem with the current gender demographic in most of Nigerian universities today. Other demographic variables like course of study, faculty and religion, which have no bearing with the study were not used in this analysis.

Respondents' exposure to political satire on the mainstream media ( $M=2.64$ ,  $SD=1.21$ ) and social media ( $M=3.00$ ,  $SD=1.29$ ) exceeded the average point of the scale, although marginal in terms of mainstream media. This means that they are only getting exposure to political satire occasionally. For the mainstream media, home video ( $M=3.11$ ,  $SD=1.27$ ) is the medium that recorded the highest exposure, while political satire on the radio ( $M=2.20$ ,  $SD=1.17$ ) recorded the lowest score. For the social media, the Facebook ( $M=3.64$ ,  $SD=1.29$ ) offered more political satire than other platforms, with Twitter ( $M=2.57$ ,  $SD=1.13$ ) being the least. These results reflect the popularity of various media with the youth respondents. It is not surprising that home video leads the pack among the mainstream media. Being a developing democracy, Nigeria is yet to tolerate extreme mockery of politicians and political institutions that are usually the main focus of political satire and comedy in developed democracies. Besides, the majority of the mainstream media are owned and controlled by the government or major "political gladiators". Hence, it will be inappropriate to make jest of owners of the media organizations on the altar of satirising the political system. The popularity of Facebook among the youth is also an established paradigm, given its high networking capability and its compatibility with other social media platforms like Twitter and YouTube (Jennings et al., 2018).

With regard to satirical content exposed to, respondents also surpassed average threshold ( $M=3.02$ ,  $SD=1.24$ ) in their exposure to cartoons and caricatures, late-night shows, comedic fake news, stand-up comedy and humorous political campaigns. Stand-up comedy, is, however, the most watched political satire among the respondents. Stand-up comedy has become a huge industry in Nigeria's social and political scenes (Sani et al., 2012). It is also not uncommon to share some of the recorded performances of stand-up comedians on social media sites and messaging applications like Facebook, YouTube and WhatsApp. Late-night show was the least viewed because it is featured in the controlled media space of government- or political elite-owned television stations, where comedians would not be able to bare it all.

The two criterion variables of the study, political knowledge ( $M=3.09$ ,  $SD=1.19$ ) and political attitude ( $M=3.22$ ,  $SD=1.38$ ) were also above the average point of the scale used. This shows that the respondents, to some degree, agreed to learning from and forming attitude based on content of political satires exposed to on the mainstream and the social media. These scores fairly help to test the predictions advanced about the relationship between exposure to political satire on the media and orientation toward politics and public affairs among the Nigerian youth.

### *Hypotheses testing*

Hypotheses 1a and 1b predict the influence of exposure to political satire on mainstream and social media, respectively, on knowledge about politics and public affairs among the Nigerian youth. The results reveal that political satire exposure on the mainstream and social media are significant predictors of knowledge about politics and public affairs among the youth, even after the effects of demographic variables and differential content have been controlled for (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Regression predicting influence of media political satire exposure on political knowledge

Variables	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	(SE)	$\beta$	B	(SE)	$\beta$
Constant	3.027	(.077)	***	1.330	(.207)	***
Age	-.109	(.107)	-.056	-.118	(.098)	-.061
Gender	.335	(.110)	.118***	.264	(.100)	.133**
Content				.354	(.063)	.294***
Mainstream media exposure				-.266	(.116)	-.253*
Social media exposure				.452	(.126)	.409***
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>			<b>.020</b>			<b>.201</b>
<b>F<sub>change</sub></b>			<b>4.632(2, 361)*</b>			<b>26.235 (3, 358)***</b>

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$  \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

Dependent Variable: Political Knowledge

The results in Table 3 affirm hypotheses 1a and 1b of the study. While exposure to political satire on the mainstream media was found to be a negative predictor of political knowledge ( $\beta = -.253$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), exposure to political satire on the social media political positively predicts political knowledge ( $\beta = .409$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Model 2 shows tremendous improvement in  $R^2$  change .176,  $p < 0.001$ . All the models predicted 20.1% variance in political knowledge, with social media political satire exposure being the strongest predictor. The findings also show that only gender contributes to gaining political knowledge from exposure to political satire content on the media. The male was coded higher than their female counterparts for learning politics via mediated political satire, as found in previous studies (Baumgartner et al., 2012; Young & Tisinger, 2016). These findings are presaged in the descriptive statistic which reveals that social media are far better sources of exposure to political satire among the youth sampled in this study.

Table 4 also affirms hypotheses 2a and 2b, which stated that exposure to political satire content in the mainstream and social media significantly predicts attitude towards politics. Again, the mainstream media exposure remains a negative predictor of political attitude ( $\beta = -.312$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

Variables entered into Block 1 accounted for 5.9% variance in attitude towards politics, with only gender being statistically significant. Content exposed to and media political satire exposure (mainstream and social) increased the variance explained to 23.2%, representing  $R^2$  change of .216,  $p < 0.01$ . Political knowledge gained from exposure to mediated political satire also contributed significantly to the total variance of 34.6% in attitude to politics and public affairs as a result of exposure to political satire in the mainstream and social media. With these results, hypotheses 2a and 2b of the study are supported and thus affirmed.

**Table 4.** Regression predicting influence of media political satire exposure on political attitude

Variables	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$
Constant	2.902	(.078)	***	1.445	(.208)	***	.930	(.203)	***
Age	.001	(.108)	.001	.023	(.099)	.012	.069	(.091)	.035
Gender	.497	(.111)	.244***	.449	(.101)	.220***	.437	(.094)	.170***
Content				.460	(.063)	.372***	.322	(.061)	.261***
MSM				-.439	(.116)	-.407**	-	(.108)	-.312**
satire							.336		
SM satire				.409	(.127)	.361***	.234	(.119)	.206*
P.							.387	(.049)	.377***
Knowledge									
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>			<b>.059</b>			<b>.232</b>			<b>.346</b>
<b>F<sub>Change</sub></b>		<b>11.415 (2, 363)*</b>			<b>26.853 (5, 363)***</b>			<b>62.130 (6, 363)***</b>	

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$  \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

Dependent Variable: Political Attitude

## DISCUSSION

Based on the findings of this study, it appears that entertainment media content is assuming an important role in the political landscape of a developing democracy just as it has been established in advanced democratic climes. Premised on the notion that mediated political satires, in addition to providing entertainment utility, have pedagogical and persuasive potential to aid the political socialisation of young adults in Nigeria as seen in other democratic climes around the world, we explore differential contribution of humoristic content on the mainstream and social media to political enculturation. The study reveals moderate level of exposure to mediated political satire, with the social media being the veritable sites to access comedic political content than the mainstream media. Interestingly, the Facebook, arguably the most patronised social media platform, offers the greatest avenue to glimpsing Nigeria-based political jokes, humours and comedies. This finding confirms the recent clarion call on the need to explore how social media, with their capacities to cause viral diffusion of political comedy, are changing the political communication landscape (Baumgartner, 2013; Baym, 2010; Chadwick, 2013; Zipkin, 2016). Given the democratic features of social media like portability, interactivity and hypertextuality, which allows the youth to construct their own world (Bakker & de Vreese, 2011; Gustafsson, 2012) and increasing cynicism about the political and media systems (Borge & Cardenal, 2010; Kirk & Schill, 2011), it is not surprising that young people are heavily inclined towards the digital-social communication ecosystem.

The preeminence of social media as democratic information resources among Nigerians does not portend media displacement. The platforms have only become means of satiating the political information needs of audience in an atmosphere where the mainstream media are being controlled through subtlety. These results concur with earlier findings on media use for political engagement among Nigerian youths (see, for example, Mustapha, Gbonegun & Mustapha, 2016; Mustapha & Mustapha, 2017). In addition to the dominant usage of social media for appropriation of political comedy, home videos, which are privately-packaged cultural products, featured prominently among the mainstream media offering some quantum of political satires to the youths. Being the only medium produced and disseminated with minimal if any elite-based political economy influence, home video is

also democratic to a greater extent compared to broadcast media that are predominantly owned and operated by the government as well as the political and economic elites. The consideration of stand-up comedy as an avenue for political satire is bolstered by the belief that the democratised media spheres interest Nigerian young people the most. This, perhaps, explains the increasing affinity of the youth for stand-up comedy, whose content they usually redistribute through their social media handles and social networking sites (Baumgartner, 2013; Baym, 2010).

Interestingly, Nigerian youths sampled in this study, to some degree, confirmed that humoristic content of political satire could serve as political tuition for young ones and prime them to have a favourable worldview about politics. The moderate but significant contributions of political comedy to youths' political indoctrination found in this study validate extant viewpoints on the contribution of entertainment and soft political information to political education (Young, 2006; Young & Tisinger, 2006) despite the fear in some quarters that the genre potentiates political and media scepticism and cynicism among the youth (Baumgartner, 2013; Baumgartner & Morris, 2006). The results here also strengthen the belief that democratic culture is getting entrenched in Nigeria given the preference of the youth for such media platforms that offer unrestricted access to political information over those being subjected to the whims and caprices of the powerful political and corporate elites. These findings have theoretical and practical democratic promises, which could reignite the return of the youth to politics and political affairs and set Nigeria on the right path to a vibrant political future.

## CONCLUSION

We set out to explore the import of mediated political satire for the Nigerian growing democratic system with a view to cross-culturally validate and extend extant findings in the field. Being a modest exploratory study, we obtained primary data from young people studying in two universities in the North Central Nigeria that attract students nationally in concord with the sampling design used by previous studies of this nature (Baumgartner et al., 2012; Mukherjee, 2016; Parkin, 2010; Warner et al., 2015). Premised on priming theoretical paradigm, which posits that individual rely on mental heuristic to interpret complex information and use the most cognitively accessible messages to evaluate political issues, objects and actors (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987), we investigate whether the content of political satires in the mainstream and social media function as means of political socialisation and tutelage for younger Nigeria.

Although, there are a plethora of studies on the political implications of satirical content in political communication scholarship, most of the studies are not only from advanced democratic climes, predominantly the United States, they also rely on political comedy of *Late-Night Show* and *Today Show* variants and, most importantly, secondary data. This study also extends the frontiers of political comedy scholarship by bringing the contributions of social media to the understanding of the ramifications of political satire consumption among the youth, who are not only being seen as politically apathetic (Baum, 2005; Moy et al., 2005a), but found to be staying glued to virtual democratic participation alone (Omar, 2017; Shetty, Rosario & Hyder, 2015; Valenzuela, 2013).

While findings on the political implications of mediated political satire and comedy are mixed, the results of this study confirm the belief that the genre has positive utility for democratic practices among the youth. Interestingly, the genre was seen as having pedagogical values by the youth and the capacity to affectively prime them to develop positive orientations and dispositions towards the entire ramifications of politics and political

affairs. Most importantly, the findings establish the preference of the youth for highly democratised media sphere, which calls for rethinking on the political economy influence on Nigeria media space in order to pull young people back to the civic and political life of engaged citizenship.

Although this study has modestly contributed to the established notion that mediated political comedy is not inherently poisonous, it is marred with certain limitations that could be sources of study for future researchers. The use of non-random sampling technique definitely reduces the external validity of this study and constrains generalisability of the finding to the humungous Nigerian youth. However, the study paves a path for empirical exploration of the role of political comedy as a political communication avenue within a developing democratic setting. Although the predictors employed in this study yielded significant contributions to the political knowledge and political attitude, even after controlling for effects of some identified confounding variable, it is still possible that the results are artefacts of unexamined variables such as political interest, political efficacy, etc. or a function of socially desirable responses of the respondents. While scholars are always suggesting experimental design as an antidote to the fallibility of cross-sectional survey design, the limited external validity of experiment is also an important issue that is difficult to trade off.

The incorporation of social media into the equation in this study is no doubt a novelty, as previous study have mainly focused on television comedy alone. The bundling of the results of media exposure via summation and indexing may have inflated or hidden the unique effect of each medium. This is also possible in the case of type of political content exposed to. Although, we are able to descriptively profile the differing level of exposure to each medium and content type, an elaborate exploration of their unique contributions would have offered important practical implications of this study. Despite the limitations identified, this study opens a new vistas in the field of mediated political satire as a subgenre of political communication in African most populous democracy.

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