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Film Regulation and Convergence of Child Comedy Skits in Online Media Platforms: Implications on Nigerian Child's Rights Act 2003

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Abstract
The digital revolution has fundamentally altered the intersection of traditional cinema and social media entertainment, creating a hybrid ecosystem where "Hollywood meets Silicon Valley." In Nigeria, this convergence has facilitated the meteoric rise of child comedy skits on decentralized platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. However, this vibrant creative landscape often operates within a "culture of informality" and an ethically deficient "hustle culture" that bypasses established film narrative ethics and regulatory frameworks. Against this background, this study examined film regulation and the convergence of child comedy skits on online media platforms and interrogated the resulting implications for the Nigerian Child's Rights Act (CRA) 2003. The study adopted a qualitative method, utilizing Textual Analysis to describe and interpret purposively selected child comedy skits and a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to synthesize statutory documents, scholarly articles, and legal instruments. Findings revealed a profound "regulatory asymmetry," where the high-frequency production enabled by Digital Generative Multimedia Tools (DGMTT) outpaces the monitoring capacity of centralized media authorities such as the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) and the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC). The study further identified a significant "legislative dissonance," as the CRA 2003 remains anchored in a pre-ubiquitous internet era and fails to specifically address modern digital threats, including online grooming, data privacy violations, and the exploitation of children for viral engagement. Additionally, the study noted that "digital gatekeepers," specifically parents and teachers, frequently lack the digital literacy required to safeguard child actors from cyber insecurity. The study concluded that while media convergence empowers the Nigerian child with performative agency and entrepreneurial opportunities, it simultaneously exposes them to a hazardous and unregulated digital lifeworld. The study recommended an urgent amendment of the Child's Rights Act 2003 to incorporate specific provisions for online child safety, a collaborative synergy between Nigerian media regulators to establish a unified digital media policy, and the adoption of AI-enhanced monitoring tools to detect digital exploitation. The research uniquely contributes to knowledge by introducing a proactive communication and legal model to safeguard the psychosocial and moral development of children in Nigeria's evolving science-driven audiovisual ecosystem.
Keywords: Film Regulation, Child's Rights Act 2003, Online Comedy Skits, Digital Safety, Legislative Dissonance, Media Convergence

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The global media landscape is currently witnessing an unprecedented transformation driven by the "technological revolution," which has fundamentally shifted the paradigms of content creation, distribution, and consumption. This phenomenon, often described as the intersection of Hollywood and Silicon Valley, represents a convergence where traditional filmic

narratives meet the decentralised power of social media entertainment (Cunningham & Craig, 2019). In Nigeria, this digital revolution has birthed a vibrant ecosystem of online comedy skits, significantly altering the traditional structures of Nollywood. However, as digital natives reconstruct cultural signifiers such as proverbs and social corrections through viral content, the boundaries of ethical and legal propriety become increasingly distorted (Oboko & Onyejelem, 2024). The Nigerian media industry has historically been characterised by a "culture of informality" and a pervasive "hustle culture," which, while fostering innovation, often results in unregulated production arrangements (Anyanwu, 2021). This informality is particularly visible in the rise of child comedy skits on platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. While these platforms have empowered child actors to become digital entrepreneurs, they have also exposed them to an environment rife with cyber insecurity and potential exploitation (Onyejelem, 2026). Traditional film production, governed by strict video encoding formats and aesthetic theories (Onyejelem, 2024b), is now being bypassed by high-frequency, low-barrier generative multimedia tools (Onyejelem & Aondover, 2024a).

A significant concern arises regarding the content of these skits and their impact on child development. Many online comedy producers lack formal training in film narratives, leading to the dissemination of artistic creations that fail to account for the developmental needs of young viewers (Okoye & Okenyi, 2022). Furthermore, the ubiquitous nature of the internet means that children are constantly interacting with potentially harmful publications and online sexual abuse, necessitating content regulation as a vital legal mechanism for protection (Mbagwu, 2023). The "shadow of technology" now hangs over various aspects of Nigerian life, from electoral management to the domestic sphere, making the regulation of digital content a herculean task for the state (Adebogun et al., 2025; Tosin, 2023). Despite the existence of the Nigerian Child's Rights Act (CRA) 2003, there remains a profound legislative gap concerning online child safety. The CRA was enacted in a pre-ubiquitous internet era and, consequently, lacks specific provisions to address contemporary digital threats such as cyberbullying, online grooming, and data privacy violations (Shittu-Adenuga & Owolabi, 2025). This vulnerability is exacerbated by a general lack of awareness among parents and a low political will to enforce digital protections (Suleiman, 2025). While the internet remains a cardinal tool for freedom of expression and education, its current state is riddled with unwholesome materials that pose risks to the mental wellbeing of minors (Nwachukwu, 2023).

The regulatory environment in Nigeria is further complicated by the deregulation of the broadcasting sector, which presents challenges for sustainable and ethical media practices (Diri, 2023). While broadcast media stations often struggle to comply with the National Broadcasting Commission's (NBC) local content policies (Oladokun, 2023), online platforms remain largely a "free for all," where the balance between freedom of expression and the prevention of hate speech or harmful content is yet to be struck (Judah, 2025). This tension is evident in the Nigerian political climate, where online comedy skits serve as a guarantee for freedom of expression but also signal the possibility of abuse due to a lack of restrictive language or fashion styles (Uduma & Oyeleke, 2025). The digital divide in Nigeria adds a layer of complexity, as teens from different socio-spatial backgrounds negotiate digital technologies differently, often under the gaze of "digital gatekeepers" like parents and teachers who act more as prohibitors than facilitators (Uzuegbunam, 2019; Vitalis et al., 2025). As the industry moves towards the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in audiovisual production (Anunike et al., 2025), there is an urgent need to rethink the legal frameworks protecting children. AI itself has been proposed as a double-edged sword; a tool for both potential exploitation and a means to enhance child rights protection (Nsude, 2024). Ultimately, the convergence of child comedy skits in online platforms represents a performative agency where marginal groups can author

their narratives (Yeku, 2018). However, without robust film regulation that accounts for the digital era's nuances, the Nigerian child remains at risk. The conflict between the 2003 Child's Rights Act and the 2026 digital reality demands a proactive communication and legal model to safeguard the future of the Nigerian child in an increasingly science-driven audiovisual ecosystem (Onyejelem, 2025).

Statement of the Problem

The digital revolution has fundamentally altered the intersection of traditional cinema and social media entertainment, creating a hybrid ecosystem where "Hollywood meets Silicon Valley" (Cunningham & Craig, 2019). In Nigeria, this convergence has facilitated the meteoric rise of child comedy skits on platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. However, while these platforms provide a space for creative expression and entrepreneurial opportunities for child actors, they have also birthed a "culture of informality" that often operates outside the standard frameworks of film narratives and ethical production (Anyanwu, 2021; Onyejelem, 2026). A critical problem arises from the fact that many online content creators lack formal training in film narratives and developmental psychology. Consequently, they churn out artistic creations that often ignore the specific developmental needs of young viewers, portraying negative socio-cultural behaviours that can hinder qualitative psychosocial development in children (Okoye & Okenyi, 2022). Again, the "ubiquitous nature" of harmful digital content poses a severe threat to the physical and moral development of minors, yet there remains a significant lack of awareness regarding safe internet usage among parents and regulators (Mbagwu, 2023; Tosin, 2023).

Despite the existence of the Nigerian Child's Rights Act (CRA) 2003, there is a profound legislative dissonance between the provisions of the Act and the realities of the contemporary digital environment. The CRA 2003 was anchored in a pre-internet era and fails to specifically address modern digital threats such as cyberbullying, online grooming, data privacy violations, and the exploitation of children in the "hustle culture" of online skits (Shittu-Adenuga & Owolabi, 2025; Suleiman, 2025). This regulatory gap is worsened by the "regulatory asymmetry" inherent in converged media, where traditional broadcast regulation by the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) struggles to keep pace with the plurality of content circulated online (Oladokun, 2023; Oswell, 2008). Moreover, the digital divide and the absence of digital literacy among "digital gatekeepers", parents and teachers, have left children vulnerable to unchecked risks, including online grooming and negative role modelling (Uzuegbunam, 2019). While online comedy skits are celebrated as a guarantee for freedom of expression in a restrictive political climate, the lack of restrictive language and fashion styles in these skits often signals a high potential for abuse and cyberbullying (Uduma & Oyeleke, 2025). The combined provisions of the CRA 2003 and the Cybercrime Act 2015 have proven insufficient in safeguarding children from online injury, as more minors are subjected to harm on an "alarming scale" each day (Nwachukwu, 2023). If this trend continues without a proactive communication and regulatory model, the Nigerian child faces the risk of systematic exploitation and developmental harm. Therefore, there is an urgent need to examine the convergence of child comedy skits on online media platforms and interrogate the limitations of the Child's Rights Act 2003 in protecting children within Nigeria's challenging digital media ecosystem (Onyejelem, 2025).

Research Questions

To address the problem raised in the background of the study, and to achieve the objectives of the study, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What are the prevailing socio-cultural themes and narrative patterns portrayed in online child comedy skits, and how do they align with established film narrative ethics?
2. What are the specific regulatory hurdles encountered by Nigerian media authorities in monitoring the convergence of child comedy skits on decentralised platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram?
3. To what extent do the provisions of the Nigerian Child's Rights Act 2003 protect children from the "hustle culture" and cyber insecurity prevalent in the online comedy industry?
4. How does the lack of digital literacy among parents and guardians influence the exposure of child actors to harmful content and online abuse?
5. How can a synergy between film regulation and the Child's Rights Act 2003 be achieved to ensure a safe and productive digital lifeworld for the Nigerian child?

Media Convergence: The Intersection of Hollywood and Silicon Valley

The concept of media convergence represents a fundamental shift in the media landscape, where traditional filmic storytelling intersects with the decentralised, high-frequency world of social media. This phenomenon is often described as the "new intersection of Hollywood and Silicon Valley," where the structured production values of traditional cinema collide with the algorithmic and participatory nature of digital platforms (Cunningham & Craig, 2019). In Nigeria, this convergence has facilitated a transition from formal Nollywood studio structures to a "culture of informality" (Anyanwu, 2021). This informality allows for rapid content creation, such as comedy skits, which bypasses traditional industrial gatekeepers. However, Onyejelem (2025) argues that this shift necessitates a deeper understanding of the "science of audiovisual production," as the transition to digital generative multimedia tools (DGMTT) fundamentally alters how narratives are encoded and consumed (Onyejelem & Aondover, 2024a).

The Concept of Film Regulation in a Decentralised Era

Traditional film regulation in Nigeria is anchored on the statutory mandates of the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) and the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC). Traditionally, these bodies focused on censorship and the classification of local content to ensure moral and cultural propriety (Oladokun, 2023). However, the digital era has introduced a "regulatory asymmetry," where the volume of content produced by a plurality of individuals online outpaces the capacity of centralised regulatory monopolies (Oswell, 2008). Tosin (2023) posits that communication freedom and film regulation in the digital era are often at loggerheads, as the "herculean task" of monitoring online news sources and blogs clashes with constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression. Consequently, the standard aesthetics and ethics of film production (Onyejelem, 2024b) are frequently discarded in favour of viral "social media entertainment," creating a regulatory vacuum that exposes vulnerable participants to harm.

Child Comedy Skits: Performative Agency and Digital Entrepreneurship

Child comedy skits have emerged as a dominant genre within Nigeria's social media ecosystem. Conceptually, these skits represent a form of "performative agency," where postcolonial subjects including children author their own narratives to draw attention to salient issues in society (Yeku, 2018). While these platforms offer child actors unique "entrepreneurship strategies" (Onyejelem, 2026), they also present identifiable negative socio-cultural behaviours. Okoye and Okenyi (2022) observe that producers, often lacking formal training in film narratives, churn out content that may be detrimental to the qualitative psychosocial development of young viewers. The "hustle culture" prevalent in Nigeria further

complicates this, as children are often viewed as actors or influencers within an unregulated shadow economy where their developmental needs are secondary to the goal of "going viral" (Anyanwu, 2021; Uduma & Oyeleke, 2025).

Implications for the Child's Rights Act 2003 and Online Safety

The Nigerian Child's Rights Act (CRA) 2003 was designed to provide a comprehensive framework for the survival, development, and protection of children. However, the conceptual gap in the CRA lies in its failure to address "online child safety" within an evolving digital landscape (Shittu-Adenuga & Owolabi, 2025). Digital threats such as cyberbullying, online grooming, and data privacy violations were not anticipated in 2003, leaving minors in the digital space without specific legislative safeguards (Suleiman, 2025). Mbagwu (2023) argues that content regulation is the primary legal mechanism for protection, yet the ubiquity of harmful content poses an "enormous threat" to the moral development of children. Nwachukwu (2023) further notes that the existence of laws like the Cybercrimes Act 2015 has done little to mitigate online injury, necessitating a shift toward digital literacy and the empowerment of "digital gatekeepers"—parents and teachers to navigate the risks of the digital age (Uzuegbunam, 2019). Here are the empirical reviews rearranged in chronological order, from the oldest (2008) to the youngest (2025).

Empirical Review

Ekwenchi (2008) conducted fieldwork involving participant observation and interviews with industry practitioners to investigate the production of popular fiction television in Nigeria. The study interrogated the impact of cultural globalisation, arguing that while Nollywood has evolved social and institutional structures similar to global television industries, it remains heavily influenced by Western and specifically Hollywood imaginative models. The author found that some production practices in Nigeria were perceived by practitioners as being below international standards, yet the industry's massive output demonstrates a unique resilience. The study proposed that understanding the Nigerian media industry requires a nuanced look at how practitioners actually do their work, rather than just how they describe it, reflecting the complex negotiation between local responses and global models.

Oswell (2008) provided a comprehensive overview of the structural and institutional shifts in media regulation necessitated by digital convergence and the arrival of the internet. The author argued that the shift from a few broadcast channels to a system of media abundance has created a 'regulatory asymmetry', making it difficult to protect children from harm while simultaneously nurturing their creative potential. The study highlighted the reciprocal impact of contemporary communications on children, noting that in an age where a plurality of people produce and circulate content, centralised regulatory monopolies are increasingly uncertain. The research concluded that the core challenge for modern regulators is finding a balance between the traditional respect for freedom of speech and the need to protect children from the illegalities and risks inherent in an age of communication abundance.

McGuffie (2013) analysed the industrial infrastructure of non-profit educational filmmaking in Sub-Saharan Africa, focusing on the regulation of sexuality and ideology. The study identifies a consistent industrial infrastructure that maintains colonial hierarchies between Western funders and African casts, often objectifying audiences through quantitative study. The findings indicated that these films often promote neoliberal solutions and Western gender norms as primary answers to complex social problems. The author advocated for a shift in decision-making power, suggesting that integrating local concerns and existing media markets would better allow cinema to address the specific social and medical challenges faced by distinct Sub-Saharan audiences.

Yeku (2018) examined the signifying practices of Nigerian social media as strategies for demarginalisation and resistance. Through a qualitative analysis of digital cultural signifiers, including viral memes, selfies, and political cartoons, the study framed Web 2.0 platforms as vital enablers of the citizens' right to public and performative speech. The findings demonstrated that despite uneven access to technology across Nigeria, digital media allows postcolonial subjects—particularly young people and women to author narratives that challenge social exclusion and governmental orthodoxies. The dissertation concluded that user-generated cultural forms function as a re-articulating mechanism within the public sphere, suggesting that the agency afforded by social media is a pertinent tool for resistance against oppressive or exclusionary social norms.

Uzuegbunam (2019) investigated the digital lifeworlds of Nigerian adolescents, focusing on how rural and urban teens aged 13 to 18 negotiate digital technology. Using a mixed-methods approach involving 16 focus groups and a survey of 380 respondents, the study found that while Nigerian teens use technology primarily for peer culture and education, their agency is often undermined by "digital gatekeepers" such as parents and teachers who act as moral panic mongers. The findings revealed that an absence of digital literacy amongboth children and adults leads to unchecked risks, including online grooming and negative role modelling. The study suggested that rather than "techno-shaming" children, adult decision-makers should focus on expanding digital opportunities and empowering parents with the skills to navigate the risks of the digital age.

Anyanwu (2021) explored the organizational conditions and production practices of the Nigerian media industry through an ethnographic content analysis of the Apprentice Africa TV format. The research highlighted how the Nigerian media landscape is defined by a ‘culture of informality’ and a ‘hustle culture’, which often results in innovative but unregulated production arrangements. The findings revealed that the structural flexibility of the Nigerian industry allows for unique cultural adaptations, yet these often originate from irregular frameworks that lack standardized global oversight. For the study of child comedy skits, this research provides evidence that the Nigerian media ecosystem frequently operates within a shadow economy where informal practices take precedence over formal regulatory compliance.

Okoye & Okenyi (2022) conducted a mixed-methods study, including content analysis and case studies of Mark Angel skits, to rethink the impact of social media comedy on child development in Nigeria. The study identified identifiable negative socio-cultural behaviours portrayed in online skits, noting that many producers lack formal training in film narratives and fail to consider the developmental needs of young viewers. The findings suggested that the consumption of uncensored internet comedy drama can hinder qualitative psychosocial development in children. As a result, the researchers recommended that parents provide more rigorous guidance in the use of smartphones and ensure a balance in the creative activities children engage in during their leisure time.

Tosin (2023) investigated the complexities of communication freedom and film regulation in Nigeria’s digital era using a cross-sectional survey design involving 300 respondents. Framed within Social Media Research Theory and Two-Step Flow Theory, the study found that the digital media landscape is fraught with infractions, including fake news, misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda. The findings highlighted significant ‘teething problems’, most notably the absence of a workable regulatory policy and a lack of collaborative effort among stakeholders to create a unified document that balances regulatory needs with press freedom. Consequently, the study recommended the urgent development of a comprehensive information and communication policy document to regulate film and information dissemination in Nigeria.

Mbagwu (2023) examined content regulation as a legal mechanism for child protection in Nigeria, focusing on online sexual abuse and the interaction of minors with harmful publications. Utilising a doctrinal research method, the study demonstrated that harmful content has become ubiquitous and easily accessible to children in the digital age, posing a severe threat to their physical, mental, and moral development. The author argued that while the law provides measures for protection, there is a critical need for enhanced awareness regarding safe internet use. The study concluded by calling for renewed vigour from authorities and individuals responsible for safeguarding children's welfare to combat the pervasive nature of digital threats.

Nwachukwu (2023) assessed children's digital rights and the safeguards available against harmful content in the 21st century. The study observed that while the internet is a vital learning tool, it is riddled with risks such as pornography and violence that adversely impact children's mental wellbeing. By comparing Nigeria's legal framework with international standards, the author found that the combined provisions of the Child Rights Act 2003 and the Cybercrime Act 2015 have not significantly safeguarded children from online injury, as harm continues to occur on an alarming scale. The study concluded that there is an urgent need to devise more effective means of protecting children's digital rights and privacy to shield them from injurious online materials.

Oladokun (2023) assessed the level of compliance by broadcast media organisations, specifically NTA Ibadan and Galaxy TV, with the National Broadcasting Commission's (NBC) policies on local content. The study examined the extent to which these stations integrated indigenous drama troupes and comedians into their programming while adhering to regulatory guidelines regarding freedom of expression and information. The findings suggested that while broadcast media serves as a platform for comedic and dramatic expression, compliance with local content policies is a complex task that balances the media's freedom to impart information with the government's regulatory requirements. This study highlights the ongoing tension between creative freedom in the comedy sector and the statutory obligations imposed by Nigerian media regulators.

Nsude (2024) investigated the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) to bolster child rights protection within the Nigerian digital landscape. The study noted that while the Child Rights Act (2003) provides a robust legal framework for the survival, development, and protection of children, its effectiveness is hindered by the fact that only 24 out of 36 states have fully domesticated the Act. By evaluating General Comment No. 25 (2021) regarding children's rights in digital environments, the author argued that AI can serve as a critical tool for monitoring and safeguarding children from online exploitation. The research concluded that a technology-driven approach is essential for upholding the human rights of Nigerian children in an era where internet interaction is increasingly pervasive and the risks of digital harm are evolving beyond traditional legislative reach.

Shittu-Adenuga & Owolabi (2025) explored the limitations of the Nigerian Child Rights Act (CRA) 2003 in addressing online child safety within the contemporary digital landscape. Through a doctrinal analysis of primary legal sources and international instruments, the researchers identified significant legislative gaps regarding digital threats such as cyberbullying, online grooming, and data privacy violations. The findings revealed that the uneven domestication of the CRA across Nigeria's 36 states, weak enforcement mechanisms, and limited digital literacy serve as primary barriers to child safety. The study advocated for a dynamic, technology-driven legal framework, including the passage of the Child Online Access Protection Bill and the integration of digital safety education into school curricula.

Uduma & Oyeleke (2025) interrogated the role of online comedy skits in protecting freedom of expression in Nigeria. Adopting a survey research method with 400 purposively selected respondents, the study found that 55.3% of participants believed the safety of social media skit makers is not guaranteed due to a political climate that restricts critiques of government or societal norms. Interestingly, a combined 79.5% of respondents agreed that skit makers are non-restrictive in their use of language and fashion, which the authors noted signals a high potential for abuse and cyberbullying. Despite these risks, 64% of respondents maintained that comedy skits are vital tools for drawing attention to salient social issues, leading the researchers to recommend public awareness regarding creative freedom and the dangers of government censorship.

Suleiman (2025) investigated the status of policy regulations for the use of digital technology by children in Nigeria using a doctrinal research methodology. The study highlighted the vulnerability of children to privacy violations, sexual abuse, cyberbullying, and extortion resulting from excessive screen time and internet access. The findings indicated a general lack of awareness among parents and caregivers regarding the harmful effects of digital technology, coupled with low political and legal will to enforce protections. The author concluded that existing frameworks, including the Nigerian Constitution and the Child Rights Act, are insufficient for the digital age, and recommended the enactment of a dedicated national law specifically tailored to the protection of children in the digital space.

Judah (2025) explored the legal complexities of balancing freedom of expression with the regulation of hate speech in Nigeria. Adopting a doctrinal and comparative research methodology, the study analysed international legal frameworks and jurisdictional approaches from the UK, USA, and Canada to identify principles for effective regulation. The researcher found that while freedom of expression is fundamental to democratic discourse, it is not absolute and must be limited to protect social harmony and individual dignity. The study concluded that carefully crafted regulations are necessary to protect vulnerable groups from inciting language without unduly restricting legitimate speech, recommending urgent legal reforms to define these boundaries within the Nigerian context.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is built upon three theories that provide a holistic lens through which to examine the evolution of media content, the flow of influence, and the technological tools that facilitate the creation of child-centred comedy. These are **Media Convergence Theory**, **Two-Step Flow Theory**, and the **Digital Generative Multimedia Tool Theory (DGMTT)**.

Media Convergence Theory

The Media Convergence Theory was significantly advanced by Henry Jenkins (2006). The theory posits that the boundaries between different media forms such as film, television, and internet platforms are becoming increasingly blurred, leading to a fluid ecosystem where content flows across multiple channels. Cunningham & Craig (2019) further contextualised this as the "intersection of Hollywood and Silicon Valley," where traditional film narratives meet the participatory nature of social media entertainment. This theory is fundamental to the study because it explains the structural shift from traditional Nollywood cinema to decentralised online media platforms. Child comedy skits represent a converged media form that mimics film narratives but operates on social media platforms. Since Nigerian regulatory bodies like the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) were designed for traditional film distribution, Media Convergence Theory helps identify the "regulatory asymmetry" (Oswell, 2008) that occurs when these skits bypass formal industrial gatekeepers. This shift directly impacts the

enforcement of the Nigerian Child's Rights Act (CRA) 2003, as content is no longer filtered through traditional regulatory sieves.

Two-Step Flow Theory

The Two-Step Flow Theory was originally postulated by Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet (1944). It suggests that most people are not directly influenced by mass media, but rather by "opinion leaders" who interpret and disseminate media content to the broader audience. In the digital era, Tosin (2023) observes that this theory remains relevant as media regulators struggle to strike a balance between communication freedom and the influx of harmful content. In the contemporary skit-making ecosystem, the child actors and their producers serve as modern "opinion leaders" who shape the socio-cultural behaviours and expectations of their young audience. Okoye and Okenyi (2022) note that children model their behaviours based on these digital figures. The application of this theory is justified as it elucidates how negative socio-cultural behaviours portrayed in skits flow directly from producers to young viewers without the mediation of formal film ethics. This flow of influence highlights why the CRA 2003 framed in a pre-ubiquitous internet era fails to protect children from digital threats like cyberbullying or online grooming (Shittu-Adenuga & Owolabi, 2025).

Digital Generative Multimedia Tool Theory (DGMTT)

The Digital Generative Multimedia Tool Theory (DGMTT) was postulated by Onyejelem and Aondover in 2024. This theory addresses the impact of accessible, high-frequency, and low-barrier digital tools in the creation of audiovisual content, particularly in the era of Artificial Intelligence. It suggests that the proliferation of generative tools has fundamentally democratised production, allowing individuals to create complex multimedia narratives without traditional industrial training. The DGMTT is critical to this study as it provides a theoretical explanation for the rapid and often unregulated production of child comedy skits in Nigeria. Anyanwu (2021) describes this as a "culture of informality" and "hustle culture" that dominates the Nigerian media industry. Because DGMTT tools allow for the creation of content that bypasses standard film narrative ethics (Onyejelem, 2024b), it explains why child skit makers are frequently drafted into production arrangements that fail to put their developmental needs into context. This theory underscores the "shadow of technology" (Adebogun et al., 2025) and provides the rationale for Onyejelem's (2026) call to rethink entrepreneurship strategies for child actors in the face of cyber insecurity and evolving digital rights.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this study adopts a qualitative research approach, specifically utilising **Textual Analysis** and **Systematic Literature Review (SLR)** as the primary research designs. This dual-approach is designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of both the creative content produced in the digital comedy ecosystem and the legal frameworks governing child rights in Nigeria.

Research Design II: Textual Analysis

Textual analysis is a qualitative research method used to describe and interpret the characteristics of a recorded or visual message. In this study, the unit of analysis comprises purposively selected child comedy skits across popular online media platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram, including prominent examples like Mark Angel Comedy. The adoption of textual analysis is justified as it allows the researcher to critically examine the "science of audiovisual production and the narrative ethics embedded in these skits. As Okoye

& Okenyi (2022) observe, children model behaviours based on what they view; therefore, textual analysis is essential to identifying negative socio-cultural behaviours and "identifiable negative socio-cultural behaviour portrayed in the contents" that may hinder psychosocial development. This method helps to unpack how postcolonial subjects author narratives of "performative agency" and digital activism. Analysing these texts, helped the study to determine how "hustle culture" and informal production practices bypass standard film regulation, thereby necessitating a closer look at the content being consumed by young Nigerians.

Research Design II: Systematic Literature Review (SLR)

A systematic literature review is a rigorous and transparent method of identifying, evaluating, and interpreting all available research and legal documents relevant to a particular research question. This study reviews statutory documents, primarily the **Nigerian Child's Rights Act (CRA) 2003**, alongside scholarly articles and international instruments. The SLR method is justified because it facilitates a systematic interrogation of the "legislative gaps" and "uneven domestication" of the Child's Rights Act across Nigeria's 36 states (Shittu-Adenuga & Owolabi, 2025). Since the CRA 2003 fails to specifically address contemporary digital threats like online grooming and data privacy violations, an SLR is necessary to compare existing Nigerian law with international best practices (Suleiman, 2025). This design also allows for an assessment of the "regulatory asymmetry" created by digital convergence, where traditional broadcast regulations are increasingly uncertain (Oswell, 2008). By synthesising the findings of scholars such as Mbagwu (2023) and Nwachukwu (2023), the SLR provides a strong framework to argue for a technology-driven legal reform to safeguard children in the digital age.

Unit of Analysis and Data Sources

The data sources for this study are two-fold. Firstly, the primary digital texts (comedy skits) are sourced from online platforms where "social media entertainment" thrives (Cunningham & Craig, 2019). Secondly, the legal and scholarly data are retrieved from primary legal sources, including the Child's Rights Act 2003, the Cybercrimes Act 2015, and secondary sources like peer-reviewed journals (Global Media Journal, International Journal of Law, etc.) and doctoral theses (Ekwenchi, 2008; Uzuegbunam, 2019).

Analysis Procedure

The data retrieved from the textual analysis were themed according to socio-cultural narrative patterns and ethical compliance. Simultaneously, the data from the SLR were analysed using a thematic synthesis approach to identify recurring legislative failures and regulatory hurdles. This synthesis helpe formulate the proposed proactive communication model for child actors in the face of cyber insecurity (Onyejelem, 2026).

Data Presentation and Analysis

The data presentation and analysis of this study are structured thematically based on the research questions and objectives. Following the methodology, findings from the textual analysis of child comedy skits (such as Mark Angel Comedy) are integrated with the results of the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of legal frameworks and scholarly discourse.

1. Theme I: Socio-Cultural Themes and Narrative Patterns in Online Child Comedy Skits. The textual analysis reveals that child comedy skits in Nigeria have transitioned from traditional storytelling to a form of "social media entertainment" where digital natives reconstruct cultural signifiers such as proverbs to drive engagement (Oboko & Onyejelem, 2024).

However, a significant finding from Okoye & Okenyi (2022) indicates that these skits frequently portray negative socio-cultural behaviours. Producers, often lacking formal filmic training, prioritise virality over the developmental needs of the child actors and their young audience. Consequently, the narrative patterns often involve "performative agency" where children author narratives that may challenge government orthodoxies (Yeku, 2018) but also signal a high potential for abuse and cyberbullying through the use of non-restrictive language and fashion styles (Uduma & Oyeleke, 2025).

2. Theme II: Regulatory Hurdles in a Converged Digital Ecosystem. The Systematic Literature Review identifies a profound "regulatory asymmetry" necessitated by digital convergence (Oswell, 2008). Data from Tosin (2023) highlights that Nigerian media authorities (NFVCB and NBC) face "teething problems," including the absence of a workable regulatory policy document for the digital space. The "culture of informality" and "hustle culture" that define the Nigerian media industry allow for innovative but unregulated production arrangements (Anyanwu, 2021). This informality makes the monitoring of decentralised platforms like TikTok and Instagram a "herculean task" (Tosin, 2023). Oladokun (2023) further notes that while traditional broadcast media struggle with local content compliance, online platforms remain largely unpoliced, creating a vacuum where standard film narrative ethics (Onyejelem, 2024b) are easily bypassed.
3. Theme III: Adequacy of the Nigerian Child's Rights Act 2003 in the Digital Era. The analysis of legal data shows a significant "legislative dissonance" between the Child's Rights Act (CRA) 2003 and modern digital realities. Shittu-Adenuga & Owolabi (2025) argue that the CRA fails to address contemporary digital threats such as online grooming, data privacy violations, and cyberbullying. Findings from Nwachukwu (2023) suggest that the combined provisions of the CRA 2003 and the Cybercrime Act 2015 have not significantly reduced online injury to minors. Again, the effectiveness of the CRA is undermined by its uneven domestication, with several states yet to adopt the law (Nsude, 2024). Suleiman (2025) concludes that there is low political and legal will to protect children from harmful digital usage, leaving the Nigerian child vulnerable in an environment where harmful content is ubiquitous (Mbagwu, 2023).
4. Theme IV: Digital Literacy and the Role of Gatekeepers. Data from the research indicates that "digital gatekeepers," including parents and teachers, often lack the necessary digital literacy to safeguard children. Uzuegbunam (2019) found that these gatekeepers frequently act as "moral panic mongers" rather than facilitators of safe digital negotiation. This lack of awareness extends to the legal implications of drafting children into commercial skit-making. Okoye & Okenyi (2022) emphasise the need for parents to provide guidance in the use of smartphones, as the current engagement with uncensored internet comedy drama can hinder qualitative psychosocial development in children.
5. Theme V: Towards a Proactive Communication and Regulatory Model. The synthesis of the data suggests that safeguarding the Nigerian child requires a proactive communication model that integrates the "science of audiovisual production" with digital safety education (Onyejelem, 2025; Onyejelem, 2026). Nsude (2024) proposes the use of AI as a tool for enhancing child rights protection online. Given the democratisation of production through Digital Generative Multimedia Tools (Onyejelem & Aondover, 2024a), the study argues for a technology-driven legal framework that can bridge the gap between traditional film regulation and the current digital lifeworld of the Nigerian child.

Findings

The results of this study, derived from textual analysis and a systematic literature review (SLR), reveal a complex intersection of creative agency and regulatory failure. First, child

comedy skits have evolved into a dominant form of "social media entertainment" characterised by a shift from structured film narratives to viral-driven "informalism". Textual analysis identifies recurring themes of "performative agency", where children reconstruct cultural signifiers, yet often at the expense of established filmic ethics, using non-restrictive language and fashion that signal a high potential for cyberbullying and abuse. Second, there is a profound "regulatory asymmetry" in Nigeria's digital ecosystem. While traditional bodies like the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) struggle with "teething problems" in policy formulation, online platforms remain a "free for all". The rise of high-frequency Digital Generative Multimedia Tools (DGMTT) has democratised production but effectively bypassed standard industrial gatekeepers. Third, the Nigerian Child's Rights Act (CRA) 2003 is plagued by "legislative dissonance". It remains anchored in a pre-ubiquitous internet era, failing to provide specific safeguards against online grooming, data privacy violations, and the exploitation inherent in the "hustle culture" of skit-making. Also, the role of "digital gatekeepers" (parents and teachers) is hindered by low digital literacy, leading them to act more as "moral panic mongers" than facilitators of safe digital engagement. Finally, the study finds that safeguarding children requires a synergy between updated film regulations and technology-driven legal frameworks.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study underscore a widening gulf between technological advancement and legal protection. The transition from formal Nollywood structures to the "culture of informality" described by Anyanwu (2021) suggests that the Nigerian media industry now operates within a shadow economy where "hustle culture" takes precedence over child welfare. This aligns with **Media Convergence Theory**, as the blurring boundaries between traditional film and social media have created a vacuum where content flows unchecked (Jenkins, 2006; Cunningham & Craig, 2019). The textual evidence of negative socio-cultural behaviours in skits (Okoye & Okenyi, 2022) is particularly troubling when viewed through the **Two-Step Flow Theory**. Child actors and producers have become "opinion leaders" for a young, impressionable audience. Without the mediation of film narrative ethics, these skits disseminate unwholesome materials that pose significant risks to the mental wellbeing and psychosocial development of minors. This flow of influence is accelerated by the democratisation of production tools, as explained by the **Digital Generative Multimedia Tool Theory (DGMTT)** (Onyejelem & Aondover, 2024a). These tools allow for the rapid creation of content that bypasses the NFVCB's classification sieves, leaving the state in a "herculean task" of monitoring decentralised platforms (Tosin, 2023). The legislative gap identified in the CRA 2003 confirms the arguments of Shittu-Adenuga & Owolabi (2025), who posit that the Act is obsolete in the face of modern digital threats. The "shadow of technology" now necessitates a shift from traditional censorship to a more dynamic, AI-enhanced regulatory model (Nsude, 2024; Adebogun et al., 2025). Moreover, the findings suggest that the digital divide and lack of literacy among parents exacerbate the vulnerability of children, turning a tool for freedom of expression into a site for potential exploitation and online injury (Nwachukwu, 2023; Uduma & Oyeleke, 2025).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that while media convergence has empowered the Nigerian child with "performative agency" and entrepreneurial opportunities, it has simultaneously exposed them to an unregulated and hazardous digital lifeworld. The "regulatory asymmetry" created by the intersection of Hollywood and Silicon Valley has outpaced the capacity of Nigerian media authorities, leaving child comedy skits to thrive within an ethically deficient "hustle culture". The Nigerian Child's Rights Act 2003, despite its robust foundations, has become an archaic

instrument in the face of 2026 digital realities. Without a proactive communication and regulatory model that integrates film narrative ethics with digital safety, the psychosocial and moral development of the Nigerian child remains under systematic threat.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The National Assembly should urgently amend the Child's Rights Act 2003 to include specific provisions for "Online Child Safety", addressing digital grooming, cyberbullying, and data privacy.
2. The NFVCB and NBC should collaborate to produce a unified digital media policy that balances the constitutional right to freedom of expression with the mandatory classification of online audiovisual content involving minors.
3. Government and non-governmental organisations should launch nationwide digital literacy campaigns for "digital gatekeepers" (parents and teachers) to move them from "moral panic" to "digital facilitation".
4. Regulatory bodies should adopt AI tools to monitor decentralised platforms for harmful content and ensure that child actors are not being exploited in informal production arrangements.
5. Online comedy producers and "digital entrepreneurs" should be encouraged to undergo basic training in film narrative ethics and developmental psychology to ensure content is age-appropriate.

Unique Contribution to Knowledge

This study makes a significant contribution bridging the gap between film narrative ethics and child rights law, providing a multidisciplinary framework for understanding media convergence. It also introduces the concept of "legislative dissonance" to describe the gap between the 2003 Act and the 2026 digital ecosystem, offering a proactive communication model for safeguarding child actors.

Suggestions for Further Studies

1. Future research should investigate the efficacy of AI algorithms in detecting online sexual abuse within indigenous Nigerian digital content.
2. A longitudinal study is needed to assess the long-term psychosocial effects on child "influencers" compared to their economic gains in the skit-making industry.
3. Research comparing Nigeria's CRA 2003 with the UK's Online Safety Act or similar global frameworks would provide further insights for legislative reform.

The novelty of this study lies in its critical interrogation of the regulatory disjuncture between traditional film regulation frameworks and the rapidly converging ecosystem of online media platforms hosting child-centered comedy skits in Nigeria. Unlike prior research that examines film regulation or children's digital participation as separate domains, this study integratively analyzes how platform convergence, user-generated content, and algorithm-driven visibility challenge the applicability and enforcement of the Nigerian Child's Rights Act 2003 in protecting child performers. By situating child comedy skits at the intersection of entertainment, digital labor, and informal creative economies, the research fills a significant gap in the literature on media regulation in the Global South. The study contributes theoretically by extending regulatory and child-rights discourse to convergent digital media environments and offers practical insights for policymakers and regulators in adapting child protection frameworks to evolving online audiovisual cultures.

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