

Symbolic power in caricature of Nigerian academia in selected videos of *Sagacious Prof*

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Abstract - Caricature, often visual, involves exaggerations for satirical, critical, or comic effect. Scholarly probes on caricature have focused on political and legal contexts with less attention to academia. Particularly, there is a dearth of symbolic power studies detailing the power relations between participants in Nigerian academia. The present study, therefore, explores how Facebook content creator, *Sagacious Prof*, depicts systemic issues in academia, with reference to the Nigerian context, examining how academics deploy linguistic choices to negotiate unethical goals in student-lecturer interactions. Adopting a qualitative approach, the study analysed ten purposively sampled videos of *Sagacious Prof*, whose content primarily depicts activities within the Nigerian academic context. The data analysis is guided by Norman Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis. The findings showcased two negative systemic issues in Nigerian academia: transactional grading and transactional sex. By implication, Nigerian academics are largely constructed as being unethical in their engagements with students in the skits of *Sagacious Prof*.

Keywords: symbolic power, caricature, Nigerian, academia, *Sagacious Prof*

1. Introduction

A caricature typically involves the deliberate distortion or exaggeration of features, employed as rhetorical devices for humour, critique, or satire. Sani (2014) denotes that a caricature is "how visual metaphors such as exaggeration are used in political cartoons to achieve satire, echoing the notion of caricature as a metaphorical device employed for commentary." There are a couple of studies on symbolic power in caricature in the global and Nigerian contexts, focusing on the political and legal spheres. These include Lee (2003), Kuipers (2011), Makombe (2018), and Ahmed (2024). These studies have treated how political cartoons and caricatures serve as critiquing tools of legal corruption, authority figures, and power structures using exaggeration, satire, and symbols. They identify the roles of these literary devices in critiquing justice and exposing systemic failures. The studies on symbolic power in Nigerian literature as Sani (2014), Nwachukwu, Waheed, Ahmad, and Hasan (2019), Oamen (2019), Ejabena and Akpati (2023), and Adeagbo and Oyindamola (2024) among others have handled how Nigerian political cartoons deploy satire, visual and verbal metaphors, and semiotic strategies to appraise corruption, power dynamics, gender issues, political failure, and socio-economic concerns. The studies showcase the function of cartoons as tools for social commentary.

However, there is a paucity of studies on symbolic power in caricature in Nigeria's academia, which is the gap the current research aims to fill. It analyses the societal issue of power



abuse as evident in lecturer-student interactions, especially in the Nigerian context, exploring how *Sagacious Prof*, a popular content creator in Nigeria whose content primarily revolves around activities within the Nigerian academic space, depicts the sector and its systemic failures. Nigerian rapper Eedris Abdulkareem addressed the issue of female students' harassment by male lecturers in his 2003 hit song, *Mr. Lecturer*. The British Broadcasting Corporation, BBC Africa Eye in collaboration with investigative journalist, Nkiru Mordi, aka Kiki Mordi also details the unethical acts of male lecturers towards female students centring on sexual harassments and sex for grades in an exposé on university lecturers at the University of Lagos and University of Ghana (BBC Africa Eye, 2019). The satirical videos of *Sagacious Prof* mirror the unethical acts of academic staff in Nigerian universities, focusing on how they leverage their institutional powers to achieve unethical goals, such as sex for grade and bribery to grade among others, towards students in higher institutions.

The study is anchored on Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) analytical approach. CDA operates on the assumption that, outside of being an instrument of communication, discourse is a type of social practice that shapes and echoes ideologies, social realities, and power relations. The study, therefore, benefits from the approach due to its ability to unpack the symbolic power ingrained in *Sagacious Prof's* satirical videos about the Nigerian academic system. The current study adopts a qualitative research method and a purposive sampling method. *Sagacious Prof's* content videos, satirising the Nigerian academic sphere, were purposively sampled for the study. The rationale for selecting the content videos rests on their portrayal of the Nigerian academic sphere, depicting its systemic failures and power play between academic staff and students. The subject of the study, *Sagacious Prof*, is a Nigerian content creator, renowned for his fascinating comic skits and educational satire on Facebook, boasting over 19,000 followers with close to 7,000 likes. He employs humour to depict the everyday Nigerian life, particularly the peculiarities of academia. His skits frequently feature interactions between a professor and students, such as class representatives negotiating grades and meetings with project and carry-over students.

The study is predicated on caricature in the Nigerian academic sphere, focusing on symbolic power in the content posts of *Sagacious Prof*, depicting the systemic failures of the Nigerian academic sector. Caricature is not just a tool of pictorial hyperbole, but a powerful vehicle of symbolic power. Following Pierre Bourdieu's (1991) concept, it can undermine or reinforce social hierarchies through insidiously legitimizing certain worldviews by frequently imperceptible mechanisms of meaning production. It functions as a cultural site where significant ideologies are contested or strengthened. Institutional and political caricatures, specifically, capture this dynamic. Using distortion, humour, and satire, caricature enables audiences and artists to contest authority while disclosing the hidden structures of symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Passeron 1990). Chute (2016), for instance, contends that graphic narratives, including caricature, exert "soft power" by visually negotiating complex social relations and ideologies.

Lefebvre (2015) notes that symbolic power in caricatures in academic settings in Canadian high schools, student publications, and yearbooks historically offer insights into the symbolic hierarchies within university life. The study demonstrates that such caricatures are cultural texts that reflect and reproduce institutional power dynamics beyond being acts of humour. It notes that it marginalises some identities while elevating others. Using a semiotic viewpoint, Sidabutar (2025) emphasizes caricature's strength in distilling multilayered criticism into condensed symbolic gestures remembering Barthes' appreciation of signs of dense connotation condensing complicated commentary. While playful, its exaggerated forms often contribute to deeper ideological work, making it a central genre for studying symbolic power in public discourse.

Within the scope of symbolic power in caricature, the current research probes the satire of Nigerian academia through the lens of *Sagacious Prof's* posts on the social media platform, Facebook, investigating how he depicts systemic failures in the academic sector as demonstrated



through lecturer-student interactions. It focuses on how lecturers negotiate their goals, such as requesting payment to alter students' grades through the asymmetrical power distribution between them and their students.

This section reviews the current studies on symbolic power in caricature in global and Nigerian contexts. Studies exploring symbolic power and caricature in academia are few and far between. The study, therefore, reviews studies on symbolic power and caricature in spheres such as legal and politics in both global and Nigerian contexts, highlighting the paucity of studies on symbolic power and caricature in academia to foreground the necessity of the present study. The review is divided into two sections; the first includes studies on symbolic power in caricature in global literature, while the second treats studies in the Nigerian context. The review explores the studies' scope, methodology, findings, and limitations. The studies on symbolic power in caricature in legal and political spheres in a global context are Lee (2003), Kuipers (2011), Makombe (2018), and Ahmed (2024). These studies handle how political cartoons and caricatures serve as critiquing tools of legal corruption, authority figures, and power structures using exaggeration, satire, and symbols. They pinpoint the roles of these literary devices in critiquing justice and exposing systemic failures.

Lee (2003) showcases how political cartoons deploy verbal and visual components to convey meanings around social and political issues. It depicts legal practices and their surrounding power structures. The analysis employs a semiotic approach to disambiguate political cartoons, concentrating on the signs and symbols used in the images to educate about power, authority, and legal institutions. The paper demonstrates that political cartoons are a critical tool for critiquing and deconstructing power, using symbolic representations to unveil issues such as corruption, legal malfeasance, and justice manipulation. Kuipers (2011) examines the role of political caricatures in the public domain, principally in how they contest authority, legal systems, and social norms. The research fuses content and discourse analyses of political cartoons that have attracted arguments over legal and political legitimacy. It focuses on both the visual and textual components of cartoons. The study notes that political cartoons often act as a transgressive tool that reveals the moral and legality of people in power. The study, however, has a drawback in its scope. It focuses only on using cartoons that depict public scandals and transnational events. This does not represent the full range of political cartooning acts in every community.

Makombe (2018) acknowledges South African cartoonist Zapiro's depiction of Lady Justice, precisely his critique of legal and political corruption during Jacob Zuma's presidency. The study uses critical discourse analysis (CDA) to explore Zapiro's cartoons, focusing on the visual and symbolic components that represent legal and justice corruption. The study illustrates that Zapiro's representation of Lady Justice is a powerful symbol of law corruption, her exaggerated, powerless, and violated figure underscoring the deep defectiveness and failures of the justice system. Ahmed (2024) uses caricature to assess arbitrary power within legal and political systems. The study emphasises how caricatured representations of legal figures can disclose authoritarian inclinations and unveil the symbolic power structures underlining legal practices through a conceptual analysis of legal caricatures. The paper's analysis reveals that caricatures serve as an efficient critique tool by symbolically disempowering political and legal figures using exaggeration and distortion to expose legal structures' inconsistencies and integral flaws. Ahmed's (2024) paper is limited due to its primary focus on conceptual and theoretical analysis; it restricts the empirical study of public reactions to caricatures or their impact on legal practices in real-life events.

This section of the review focuses on symbolic power in caricature in the Nigerian context. Studies such as Sani (2014), Nwachukwu, Waheed, Ahmad, and Hasan (2019), Oamen (2019), Ejabena and Akpati (2023), and Adeagbo and Oyindamola (2024) among others handle how Nigerian political cartoons deploy satire, visual and verbal metaphors, and semiotic strategies to appraise corruption, power dynamics, gender issues, political failure, and socio-



economic concerns. The studies highlight the function of cartoons as tools for social commentary. Sani (2014) addresses how Nigerian political cartoons deploy visual and verbal metaphors to generate satirical commentary, particularly regarding legal, political, and corruption. The study employs the cognitive theory of metaphor and semiotic analysis to unpack how cartoon metaphors illustrate power dynamics and legal bribery.

The paper notes that metaphors and visuals are compelling tools for satirising legal and political figures, showcasing them in a way that reveals their power and authority while making incomprehensible legal concepts understandable for the audience. The study is, however, limited because it does not detail the selection process and the number of cartoons examined. The limitation can influence the generalisability of the findings. Ogbo and Nuhu (2016) treat political cartoons in national dailies, probing how satire expresses political issues such as corruption and malfeasance. Adopting a survey technique to select relevant cartoons, the research deploys Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to expound the satirical content and its implications. The study reveals that cartoons principally handle political failure, corruption, and brutality themes. The cartoons frequently target both current and former government officials through satirical imagery. However, the study's downside is that it does not note the number of cartoons examined and the selection criteria. These variables are vital because they may influence the comprehension and systematicity of the findings.

Nwachukwu et al. (2019) use satire to treat how Nigerian political cartoons symbolise social and political concerns. The study reviews and analyses extant studies to portray issues in Nigerian society through cartoons. The study discloses the crucial knowledge of background information for readers to understand the satire in cartoons. Oamen (2019) addresses how Nigerian newspaper cartoons portray gender power dynamics. The study relates Critical Discourse Analysis and social semiotic theory to selected cartoons. It discloses how semiotic resources are utilised to comment on gender-related issues in Nigeria's socio-political sphere. Onwuka and Udoye (2021) acknowledge how meaning is constructed in online Nigerian political cartoons. Adopting Visual Social Semiotic theory, the paper examines cartoons from Business Day's Instagram account. The study's findings reveal that representational, compositional, and interactive meanings are communicated to critique political failures.

Ejabena and Akpati (2023) explore ten editorial cartoons from Vanguard Online News; the study concentrates on how semiotic materials illustrate themes of systemic corruption in Nigeria's socio-cultural context. Deploying Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar and Mey's Pragmatic Acts, the study carries out a multimodal discourse analysis to explicate visual and textual components in the cartoons. The study's findings showcase that editorial cartoons deploy shared cultural knowledge semiotic modes to critique government institutions, depicting the role of cartoons as a channel for socio-political satire. However, the study has a significant drawback; it is limited to one news platform, with a small sample size. It does not reflect the entire scope of editorial cartooning in Nigeria. Adeagbo and Oyindamola (2024) investigate the visual and linguistic strategies deployed in Nigerian political cartoons to handle socio-political concerns and their impact on public discourse. Using Roland Barthes' Semiotic Theory and Kress and van Leeuwen's Grammar of Visual Design, the study explores political cartoons to determine multimodal discourse features. The study's findings show that Nigerian political cartoons effectively utilise linguistic and visual strategies to pinpoint economic hardship, corruption, and political neglect, thus engaging and challenging public views. The study's limitation is its limited sample size, which does not capture the diversity of Nigeria's political cartoons. With the studies reviewed in this section, this study intends to examine the satirical illustration of the Nigerian academic system, using the *Sagacious Prof* as the subject of the analysis.

The study is premised on the operational guidelines of Norman Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The primary supposition of Fairclough's CDA is that, outside of being an instrument of communication, discourse is a type of social practice that shapes and echoes ideologies, social realities, and power relations. The method fuses well with the study's



goal due to its ability to unpack the symbolic power entrenched in the caricatures of the Nigerian academic system portrayed by *Sagacious Prof*. It is especially imperative to the study because caricature fuses irony, satire, and exaggeration to critique powerful institutions. It, thus, unveils how Nigerian academic system caricatures act as tools of questioning and resisting legal authorities, ideological contestation, and exposing their systemic corruption and limitations. It pinpoints bribery, corruption, abuse of power, and failure to protect witnesses.

The central idea of Fairclough's (1995) CDA is that it scrutinises the nexus between language, power, and society. Fairclough (1995) acknowledges that language is a form of social practice that shapes and is shaped by social contexts. The method notes that discourse reflects, reinforces, and contests power relations. The method notes that discourse is not neutral but is vital in creating social reality and power relations. Fairclough (1995) hypothesises that there are three dimensions in examining discourse. These are discourse practice, text, and social practice. Text is the linguistic qualities of discourse, discursive practice is the procedure of production and interpretation, and social practice is the broader social context. These fundamental ideas are related to the study because textual analysis is useful in examining the caricature's linguistic and visual components, and discursive practice take care of the production, distribution, and interpretation of the caricature. Social practice, conversely, includes situating discourse within a broader socio-political and institutional context. CDA broadly underscores the nexus of texts, intertextuality, and ideology. It focuses on how discourse promotes and echoes a worldview.

Fairclough's (1995) method to CDA also challenges and exposes unseen power structures, providing tools for examining texts in various contexts such as education, media, and politics. The method was established to unpack language's role in challenging and maintaining social inequalities. Fairclough (1995) provides a vital scope in understanding and challenging the role of language in shaping society. The provision of the theory to investigate power structures and the role of language in shaping society enabled the study to explore symbolic power depicted in the Facebook videos of *Sagacious Prof* on the Nigerian academic sector. The study's findings emphasise systemic abuse of power in lecturer-lecturer interactions. The issues touched on include transactional grade and transactional sex.

2. Method

2.1 Data and analytical procedure

Ten videos of *Sagacious Prof* from the social networking platform, Facebook, constitute the data for the study. The analysis was conducted employing the qualitative research approach and purposive sampling method. Denzin and Lincoln (2018) submit that qualitative research is "a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self." Tongco (2007) notes that "purposive sampling is instrumental when the researcher needs to reach a targeted sample quickly and where sampling for proportionality is not the primary concern" (p. 147). *Sagacious Prof's* content videos, satirising the Nigerian academic sphere, were purposively sampled for the study. The rationale for selecting the content videos rests on their portrayal of the Nigerian academic sphere, depicting its systemic failures and power play between academic staff and students.

The study's data were elicited on Facebook, and their links were copied and downloaded using a video downloader application, Vidmate. The downloaded videos enabled the researchers to watch the videos on multiple occasions, to comprehend and highlight how power is being negotiated between academic staff and students in *Sagacious Prof's* satirical videos. The video's contents were subsequently transcribed from the media player of a laptop for critical-pragmatic analysis, bound by the principles of Fairclough's (1995) CDA. The study's data were collected from January to May 2025. Fairclough's (1995) CDA operates on the assumption that, outside of being an instrument of communication, discourse is a type of social practice that shapes and



echoes ideologies, social realities, and power relations. The study, therefore, benefits from the approach due to its ability to unpack the symbolic power ingrained in *Sagacious Prof's* satirical videos about the Nigerian academic system. It highlights issues such as transactional grade and transactional sex. For spatial reasons, the data presented in each excerpt, contains sections of the transcribed data pivotal to the analysis.

2.2 Data analysis

The data analysis in this section includes topics such as bribery and sex for grades. The Nigerian academic sector has a long-standing reputation for transactional grading and male academic staff soliciting sex for grades from female students (Okafor et al. 2022). *Sagacious Prof* illustrates these phenomena in his satirical videos, showcasing how male academic staff use the asymmetrical power distribution between them and their students to achieve their goals, centring on unethical practices.

2.3 Transactional grading

Transactional grade is prevalent in Nigerian tertiary institutions, undermining Nigeria's academic merit and standard. Egwunyenga (2009) showcases the role of systemic tolerance, which enables students to offer gifts or money to academic staff for better grades. Ogunidiya (2009) traces the transactional grade to social corruption, reflecting the educational failure. Serap (2018) notes that Nigeria's academic institutions are complicit in concealing systemic failure in the sector, such as malpractice, making it a norm in Nigerian universities. The subject of the current study, *Sagacious Prof*, portrays transactional grade in Nigerian tertiary institutions in this section, detailing how academic staff use their institutional power to negotiate financial gains from students to upgrade their grades.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

Excerpt 1:

1. Student: Good morning, sir, sir excuse me sir, Prof. Sir, Prof. Sir, Good morning, sir.
2. Lecturer: What is it?
3. Student: Sir, I want to submit my project
4. Lecturer: By this time?
5. Student: Yes sir
6. Lecturer: You are a joker o, shey you know that you don't have sense?
7. Student: Sir, I'm sorry sir
8. Lecturer: Can't you see I am going home?
9. Student: Sir, I saw you going sir
10. Lecturer: Let me see the nonsense you have
11. Student: Thank you, sir,
12. Lecturer: What's this?
13. Student: Sir, It's the project sir, the topic you gave me
14. Lecturer: Ah, ah, ah, that ehnnn... power and authority?
15. Student: Yes sir
16. Lecturer: No, no, no, this is nonsense na, this is nonsense
17. Student: Sir, nonsense??
18. Lecturer: How can you say the effect of power and authority in late Nigeria political system? This is nonsense, this is nonsense
19. Student: But sir, I did proper research on this topic sir
20. Lecturer: Oga, go and re-do it
21. Student: Yes sir, I brought something for you sir
22. Lecturer: Envelope?
23. Student: Yes sir
24. Lecturer: So, you know what to do?
25. Student: Yes sir
26. Lecturer: And you are wasting my time?



27. Student: Yes sir
28. Lecturer: Ehn, you actually know how to draw my attention
29. Student: Yes sir, I have heard about you sir
30. Lecturer: You've heard about me? who told you?
31. Student: It's some of the students sir
32. Lecturer: Anyway, power and authority, I like it. You know with the power and authority; you can actually get to know a lot of things regards to Nigeria political system.
33. Student: Ehn, that's correct sir.
34. Lecturer: It's a nice one

This excerpt explains the meeting/interaction between a Nigerian lecturer and a final-year student from an unspecified institution and department. The meeting is centered on discussing the student's final-year long essay, which is a requirement for graduation in many departments of various tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The section demonstrates how a lecturer condemns the student's research topic and write-up material because the student failed to offer a bribe. In this scene, *Sagacious Prof* emulates the urgency of transactional grading in Nigerian universities, showing how some academic staff unwittingly anticipate cash incentives to award high marks. He suggests that grades of students hinge on neither hard work nor lecturers claimed commitment but on underground cash bribes offered to lecturers. Ukata and Okeke (2023) corroborate this, further asserting that corruption is prevalent in tertiary institutions in Anambra and Rivers States.

The interaction begins with the student visiting his supervisor beyond official working hours (lines 1 to 5). This action infuriates the lecturer, who calls the student a "joker" in line 6 and poses a rhetorical question implying that the student is crazy. The lecturer's reference to his supervisee using the word joker is significant. A joker, Oxford Languages states, is "a person who enjoys making jokes," and may be called a comedian. The fact that the word is being applied in this context implies the student is not to be taken seriously. This action shows Fairclough's (1995) assertion that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) involves unequal power relations among participants in discourse. Here, the lecturer employs his institutional power to mock the student for a perceived faux pas.

In line 10, *Sagacious Prof*, assuming the role of an academic, calls for the submission of the write-up for immediate assessment and immediately dismisses it as "nonsense." In line 12, the lecturer tells the student to explain what he has written. The student responds in line 13 and asserts that the write-up is the project topic given by the lecturer himself. The lecturer denies what has been written, disputing the project topic in lines 14 and 16 and once more calling it "nonsense." In line 18, *Sagacious Prof* asserts that the topic is unsearchable, i.e., that it lacks academic viability. The student resists in line 19 by reminding the lecturer that he had given him the topic. The 'conflict' reaches its climax in line 20 when the lecturer tells the student to start over. However, the student attempts to diffuse the tension by offering money under the guise of saying, "I brought something for you." This phrase implies that he is willing to buy the lecturer's favour for better grades. The offer of the bribe causes the lecturer, in line 26, to ask himself why the student had squandered his time. By this, *Sagacious Prof*, the lecturer, shows that certain Nigerian lecturers have less concern for students' research's scholarly value or feasibility than they have for monetary reward. In line 26, the lecturer himself describes the first attempt at the project as a "waste of time," more clearly demonstrating his disinterest in actual scholarship.

In line 28, the lecturer describes the financial offer to "draw his attention." This is a sign that without financial incentive, academic help would not be offered—a point which is in line with Fairclough's (1995) contention that CDA may be used in the identification of institutional satire and systemic corruption. Finally, in line 32, after being granted the monetary incentive, the lecturer praises the research student whom he had already turned down. The position of the lecturer serves a subtle humorous effect on the viewers to use humour pass the message from



Sagacious Prof to the viewers. He then asserts abruptly that he loves it and compliments on the numerous discoveries it would yield.

Excerpt 2:

1. Student: Excuse me sir, excuse me sir
2. Lecturer: Yes, who are you?
3. Student: Good morning, sir
4. Lecturer: Yes, good morning
5. Student: Sir, are you Dr. Philemon sir?
6. Lecturer: Yes, I am
7. Student: Sir, I was asked to come and meet you sir
8. Lecturer: Regarding what?
9. Student: Regarding last semester exams sir. Sir, I missed all the exams sir, I didn't write anyone sir.
10. Lecturer: Ehn, you write it next year na when your mates are writing it na. So, how is it my business?
11. Student: Sir, please, I was not around when they were taking the exams sir
12. Lecturer: It is expected. Anyway, ermm... all these boys here, I don't know, you even came and you came empty handed ehn. Anyway, go and meet *Prof. Sagacious*. Do you know him?
13. Student: Yes sir
14. Lecturer: He is the one close to that car
15. Student: Excuse me sir, Prof. sir
16. Second Lecturer: Yes, what is it?
17. Student: Dr. Philemon asked me to come and meet you sir
18. Second Lecturer: Regarding what?
19. Student: Regarding my last semester exams sir, I missed all the exams sir
20. Second Lecturer: Ehn, wait for next year na. Why are you here?
21. Student: Sir, Please I don't want to rewrite the exams sir.
22. Second Lecturer: You don't want to rewrite the exams?
23. Student: I was not around sir, I travelled to Italy sir
24. Second Lecturer: You went to Italy?
25. Student: Yes, sir so you can help me out sir
26. Second Lecturer: Okay since you came from Europe, you will bring Euro for me
27. Student: No problem, sir
28. Second Lecturer: 1000 Euro
29. Student: The money is not issue sir
30. Second Lecturer: Meet me tomorrow
31. Student: Alright sir

In this excerpt, *Sagacious Prof*, assuming the role of a Nigerian academic, illustrates the example of transactional grading on a failed course within the Nigerian education sector. He employs caricature and humour as social commentary to criticize systemic flaws in the education system, thus agreeing with Morris's (1993) contention that caricature is a tool for social or political commentary on institutions.

In Nigeria's tertiary institutions, automatic course failure normally results from failing to sit for an exam. But in this excerpt, *Sagacious Prof* gives a scenario where a student who did not attend classes and examinations for an entire semester reports to a lecturer, Dr. Philemon, to lament missing out (lines 1-10). Dr. Philemon answers brusquely in line 10, informing the student that he would have to redo the courses and re-sit the exam the following session, which is standard academic practice. Dr. Philemon then observes in line 12 that the student had been "empty-handed," indicating that the student would have been treated differently if he had come with some form of financial proposition and incentive. Dr. Philemon then refers the student to *Sagacious Prof*. In lines 15, 17, and 19, the student meets *Sagacious Prof* and tells him that he had not sat for the examinations the previous semester. *Sagacious Prof* initially parrots Dr. Philemon's position, telling the student that he would have to do the course in the next academic semester.



But in lines 21 and 22, the student continues pleading, telling him that he had travelled overseas – to Italy. It is of interest to *Sagacious Prof* in line 24, and by line 26, he already demands a financial reward. The student agrees to the request in line 27, and *Sagacious Prof* requests for one thousand Euros from the student. The student obeys in line 29, informing *Sagacious Prof* that "money is not the issue." *Sagacious Prof* requests the student to come to his office the following day.

This scenario in the excerpt above underscores the extent of unethical behaviours in the Nigerian education sector, where corruption may become greater than academic integrity. It validates Fairclough's (1995) assertion that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) can be used to interrogate institutional corruption. In this excerpt, CDA identifies how Nigerian lecturers demand and receive bribe either to increase students' grades or manufacture grades for students who were unable to sit for examinations. Studies have shown that Nigerian university lecturers engage in academic bribery – money is extorted or sex is forced from students in return for grades or academic services. Poor governance, power imbalance, and accountability are rampant root causes, which worsen erosion of institutional integrity and educational quality (Ngwoke et al., 2017; Ellah & Obuzor, 2024).

Excerpt 3:

1. Student: Prof. sir, Prof. sir, good afternoon, sir.
2. Lecturer: Good afternoon
3. Student: Prof. sir, good afternoon, sir.
4. Lecturer: Good afternoon
5. Student: Sir, I have been calling you since
6. Lecturer: You are calling me?
7. Student: Yes sir
8. Lecturer: Ahn, ahn, you want to attack me or what?
9. Student: No sir, I don't want to attack you sir
10. Lecturer: So, why are you calling me na?
11. Student: No, I heard that you did your birthday last two weeks and I was not in school
12. Lecturer: Yes, I did my birthday two weeks ago
13. Student: I have a gift for you, that's why I came sir
14. Lecturer: But your mates were contributing gifts for my birthday na, why didn't you accompany them for it
15. Student: No sir, no sir, I wanted to come and appreciate you separately for all the good you have been doing for all students in this school sir.
16. Lecturer: I am doing good for students?
17. Student: Yes sir
18. Lecturer: Or na mark you dey find?
19. Student: Ah! No sir o
20. Lecturer: Which good have I done for students? Ehn
21. Student: You've been giving us good marks; you've not been stingy with. you've been giving us advice on how to become good students in this school sir.
22. Lecturer: You are the type that take opportunities
23. Student: Yes sir
24. Lecturer: You decide when not to come with the crowd, you want to come alone
25. Student: Yes sir
26. Lecturer: Like Nicodemus
27. Student: Yes sir
28. Lecturer: Okay, what do you have for me?
29. Student: I have something for you sir
30. Lecturer: This girl?
31. Student: Yes sir
32. Lecturer: Anyway
33. Student: Here is my little token sir
34. Lecturer: Hope you are not bribing me o, I cannot collect bribe o
35. Student: No sir, I am not bribing you. I am a good citizen of Nigeria



36. Lecturer: Ehn, ehn, good citizen
37. Student: I don't bribe; I don't bribe sir.
38. Lecturer: Anyway, ah, omo, this is a nice one o, I am seeing rolex here
39. Student: Yes sir

This excerpt is a case of transactional grading within the Nigerian higher education system. *Sagacious Prof* narrates how some lecturers in Nigeria receive money and presents from students hoping to earn good grades for payback. In this case, a student visits to present *Sagacious Prof* with a birthday present. The excerpt reveals that the lecturer had previously received a group gift from the students' peers and classmates with the exclusion of this very student, a young lady. Thus, she goes to him individually to present a personal gift – suggestively as an exchange for a higher mark compared to her peers.

The student places the gift giving in line 15 as a token of appreciation of *Sagacious Prof's* devotion to his students. In lines 16 and 18, *Sagacious Prof* challenges her intentions, asking whether she has arrived to praise him or to win academic favour. The student insists in line 19 that she has come solely as a token of appreciation for the lecturer's largesse and 'kind gestures'. In line 20, *Sagacious Prof* questions what he has done for students, and the student responds in line 21, citing "good grades" and advice on how to be a good student. Her response suggests that *Sagacious Prof* gives good grades for material or monetary incentives.

In line 22, *Sagacious Prof* notes that the student "loves grabbing opportunities," demonstrating his awareness that her present is a strategic bid for exceptional favour in marking. The statement serves a comic effect on the viewers from *Sagacious Prof* to the viewers to increase the acceptability of the phenomenon described. Knowing the motive of the student, the lecturer broaches a biblical allusion in lines 24 to 26 to the story of Nicodemus – a Jewish academic and Pharisee who goes to visit Jesus Christ by night, as recorded in John chapter 3, to get a clearer grasp of his teachings. This biblical quotation refers to the intentional act of the student to arrange for a private meeting with the lecturer to receive special treatment compared to her colleagues. *Sagacious Prof* utilizes this conversation to hint that grades at Nigerian universities are often "up for grabs," subverting the merit system of education. In line 34, understanding that the student has offered him a gift, he insists that he does not accept bribes and that it is a birthday gift. This assertion is given so that he can claim plausible deniability in case the event becomes known to the public. Although *Sagacious Prof* tries to frame the event as innocent, he understands that the act is unethical as well as corrupt.

In response, the student attests in lines 35 and 37, "I am a good citizen of Nigeria," meaning that she does not give bribes. This is proof that both know that bribery is illegal in Nigeria. Still, in line 38, *Sagacious Prof* accepts the gift – determined to be a Rolex wristwatch – and describes it as a "nice gift." A Rolex, produced by Swiss luxury watch manufacturer Rolex SA in Geneva, Switzerland, is generally regarded to be one of the most prestigious and expensive watch brands in the world.

Sagacious Prof's behaviour in this excerpt replicates the notion foregrounded in the work of Chioke and Agbodike (2021), which highlights how Nigeria's educational system enables grade favouritism through transactional grading. Satire is applied by *Sagacious Prof* to bring the issue into the spotlight, with Fairclough's (1995) model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) applied to provide social commentary about unethical scholarly practices.

Transactional sex

One of the systemic failures of the Nigerian academic sector, particularly tertiary institutions, is transactional sex usually instituted by the male academic staff towards female students. Nigerian rapper Eedris Abdulkareem brought the societal issue to the forefront in his 2003 hit song, *Mr. Lecturer*. Sequence to the continuance of the problem, the British Broadcasting Corporation, BBC Africa Eye in collaboration with investigative journalist, Nkiru Mordi, aka Kiki Mordi also details the unethical acts of male lecturers towards female students centring on sexual harassments and



sex for grades in an exposé on university lecturers at the University of Lagos and University of Ghana (BBC Africa Eye, 2019). *Sagacious Prof* displays transactional sex in his satirical videos in this section.

Excerpt 4:

1. Student: Prof. Sir, Prof. Sir
2. Lecturer: Ah! Na you?
3. Student: Good afternoon, sir, yes o
4. Lecturer: Ahn, ahn, how are you?
5. Student: I've come to your office before
6. Lecturer: My office?
7. Student: yes sir
8. Lecturer: I went to see VC
9. Student: Sir...
10. Lecturer: He don tey o, you don forget me
11. Student: Sir, there is one small challenge o
12. Lecturer: Which challenge?
13. Student: Sir, they gave me Professor Agbado as my project supervisor
14. Lecturer: "Ewei", Professor Agbado!
15. Student: I've been crying since yesterday
16. Lecturer: I know, I know, that one is a.....
17. Student: You know I'm your baby o, I don't know if you can turn things around na
18. Lecturer: Turn things around?
19. Student: Just turn things around na (turning her buttocks)
20. Lecturer: No problem, I'm the HOD of this department, I can do and undo
21. Student: Okay
22. Lecturer: I'm the alpha and the omega of them
23. Student: What you cannot do does not exist
24. Lecturer: At all, cannot exist
25. Student: Prof., Prof.
26. Lecturer: Anyway, you with this your bakassi, let me even ask you a question, are you from Bakassi?
27. Student: No, I'm not from Bakassi
28. Lecturer: Not Bakassi! But this your back they make me see. Turn na, let me see na, are you not seeing it?
29. Student: Is your wife not around?
30. Lecturer: No, she is not around, she is not around
31. Student: Okay, I will just spend three days
32. Lecturer: You can even spend one-week sef
33. Student: You will use that opportunity to give me money for my cream na, you know you promised me to buy cream for me

Sagacious Prof, through satire in line with Fairclough's (1995) CDA principle, highlights the menace of transactional sex for grades and requests between male academic staff and female students in this excerpt. The excerpt commences with a female student going to meet *Sagacious Prof* in lines 1 to 14 to inform him that the project supervisor assigned to her is *Professor Agbado*, who is reputed to be difficult to work with. The student, therefore, meets *Sagacious Prof*, a lecturer she is allegedly having sexual relationship with to negotiate reassignment of project supervisor. To fulfil her request, *Sagacious Prof* demands for a *quid pro quo* arrangement; *quid pro quo* is Latin for something for something. In line 18, he demands that the lady, a curvy woman to turn her buttocks for him to which the female student obliges in line 19. Afterwards, *Sagacious Prof* in line 20 promises to reassign her to another supervisor, although the name of the supervisor is not specified. One would presume that he would reassign the project supervision role to himself to attend to her demands. The student's willingness to please *Sagacious Prof* leads to the assertion that he is the most powerful man in the department as the Head of Department in line 22. The



video comically introduces the popular line used by a popular Nigerian Christian pastor, Jerry Eze; *what God cannot do does not exist* in line 23 to comically display the abuse of power by *Sagacious Prof* in making changes to the supervision allocation for sexual benefit.

The student enquires from *Sagacious Prof* in line 29 about his wife, attempting to find out how whether they could meet at his house. He responds that his wife is away in line 30. Consequently, she proposes to spend three days at his place in line 31 while *Sagacious Prof's* counter offers a week in line 31. Both of them engage in negotiation about the number of days she will spend to satisfy *Sagacious Prof* before her project supervisor could be changed. The student also negotiates for monetary reward to settle essential personal effect such as body lotion through the scheduled sexual intercourse meant to take place at *Sagacious Prof's* house for three days. Findings from this excerpt are like what Aluede, Imonikhe, and Aluede's (2006) work reports. The study documents that some male academic staff in Nigerian tertiary institutions note that some female students initiate sexual advances towards male staff to achieve their goal. This excerpt portrays both characters negotiating on transactional sex to achieve their goal. Thus, transactional sex can be a two-way practice in tertiary institutions in Nigeria in which male academic staff demand for it while female students seduce them as a means to an end.

4. Conclusion

This study has delved into the discursive analysis of symbolic power in caricature of Nigerian academia in selected videos of *Sagacious Prof*, exploring how he depicts academic staff in Nigerian universities, concentrating on how they influence their institutional powers to accomplish their goals, such as transactional grading and transactional sex, towards students in higher institutions. There are a couple of studies on symbolic power in caricature in global and Nigerian contexts, particularly in political and legal spheres in a global context, such as Lee (2003), Kuipers (2011), Makombe (2018), and Ahmed (2024). These studies treat how political cartoons and caricatures function as critiquing tools of legal corruption, authority figures, and power structures using symbols, exaggeration, and satire. They identify the roles of these literary devices in critiquing justice and exposing systemic failures. The studies on symbolic power in Nigerian literature as Sani (2014), Nwachukwu, Waheed, Ahmad, and Hasan (2019), Oamen (2019), Ejabena and Akpati (2023), and Adeagbo and Oyindamola (2024) among others handle how Nigerian political cartoons deploy satire, visual and verbal metaphors, and semiotic strategies to appraise corruption, power dynamics, gender issues, political failure, and socio-economic concerns. The studies showcase the function of cartoons as tools for social commentary.

The study was premised on Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) theoretical approach. CDA operates on the assumption that, outside of being an instrument of communication, discourse is a type of social practice that shapes and echoes ideologies, social realities, and power relations. The study benefited from the approach due to its ability to unpack the symbolic power ingrained in *Sagacious Prof's* satirical videos about the Nigerian academic system. The study also employed a qualitative research method, and *Sagacious Prof's* content videos, satirising the Nigerian academic sphere, were purposively sampled for the study. The study's findings note that *Sagacious Prof* depicts transactional grading from students to upgrade their poor scores to a higher grade and transactional sex from female students before they can pass some of their courses. The depiction of transactional grade aligns with Egwunyenga (2009), which denotes that transactional grade is entrenched in the Nigerian academic system's tolerance for the practice. It also correlates with Ogundiya (2009), who notes that transactional grade is the product of social corruption, reflecting systemic education failure. Transactional sex, illustrated in the study's findings, is supported by BBC Africa Eye's (2019) exposé on transactional sex solicited by male academic lecturers towards female students in Nigerian higher institutions. It details how academic staff use their institutional power and asymmetrical power relations between them and their students to solicit sex in response to good grades for female students.



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