

Verbal Abuse as Child Discipline: Contesting Adult Power in *Mark Angel Comedy*

Ogbazi Vivian Ijeoma & Victor Elendu Frederick

Authors: (Corresponding)

Ogbazi Vivian Ijeoma & Victor Elendu Frederick, Federal University, Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria. Email: cyprainvivan6@gmail.com.

Published date: Dec 04, 2023



This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).

How to cite the article: Ogbazi Vivian Ijeoma & Victor Elendu Frederick, "Verbal Abuse as Child Discipline: Contesting Adult Power in *Mark Angel Comedy*," *Ahyu: A Journal of Language and Literature* 6 (2023): 12 – 25.

DOI: doi.org/10.56666/ahyu.v6i.159

Abstract

Although many studies have been carried out on child humor in Nigeria, especially, on Mark Angel comedy, an internet humor mode, they have often ignored the imbalance of the power structure between the adult and the child. Thus, this study argues that evident in the power structure skewed in favor of the adult is the resort to verbal abuse as a tool for disciplining the child. The essay argues that the adult construes the child's expressive observations as resistance to the adult mode of life. The ultimate result is that the child does not achieve a symphony with his/her environment which stunts his/her development, so he/she deploys a defense mechanism to protect his/her conscious thought processes from any form of antagonism the adult poses. This essay draws on the concept of adultism to highlight the disciplinary power expressed in the form of verbal abuse exercised by adults over children. It reveals how the adult assumes the dominant role, while the child's actions become secondary, leading to the suppression of the child's thoughts as a consequence of verbal abuse. The essay unearths how the power exercised causes the child to abide by the adult's will, thereby, shriveling up the child's thoughts and ideas. Examining skits that mostly exhibit the above scenario of verbal abuse as a response to child contestation of adult action, this essay concludes that an adult's abusive behavior is essentially psychologically impactful on a child's behavior, and leaves a huge stratum of the child's consciousness undeveloped.

Keywords: *Power relations, contesting power, Adult, Child, Verbal abuse, Mark Angel Comedy.*

Introduction

Since Literature does not only reflect life but in some ways deconstructs already existing societal norms, this work bares the complexities encapsulated in children's experiences in an adult-centric society. Bestowed the privilege of power by nature and by society, adults tend to manifest this power over children in

extreme fashions in the guise of discipline. It is for this reason that there is an immense projection of dramatic works like Mark Angel comedy on social media platforms that showcase the troubles of the Nigerian child.

Mark Angel is a talented Nigerian comedian, scriptwriter, and video producer. He is popular through the ample episodes of the comedy series on YouTube. Mark Angel YouTube channel was the first to reach one million subscribers (currently eight million) often

featuring his niece Emmanuella Samuel (who is a YouTube child comedian) and her cousin, Success Madubuike who collaborates with Mark Angel. Emmanuella, Success, and other children featured in Mark Angel comedy reflect Nigerian children and their subjective experiences in an adult-centric society.

Literature Review

We know little in scholarship about Mark Angel comedy. In a 2002 study, Ndifon et al examined the extent to which social values are propagated in Nigerian comedy videos. They explore the societal vices featured in Mark Angel comedy and highlight how this medium promotes societal norms. Employing the theory of Social Learning Ndifon et al opine that; “viewers of these comedies learn certain societal values and through the actors and actresses, these values could be inculcated, learned and acted upon” (Ndifon et al. 157). They further argued that through comedy, society is mirrored, and trending social vices, bad leadership, corruption, domestic violence, etc are sarcastically portrayed. The consequences of these vices are explicated thus, passing the message of the need for change that instills societal justice, ethics, and values in the viewers”. Leke and Ogunnubi in their paper (*Soft Power in the Therapeutic Comedy: Outlining Nigeria’s Creative Industry through Digital Comic Skits*), contend that the impact of Mark Angel’s comic skits is beyond the therapeutic framework and their effect on the audience. They posit that through the creative industry, Nigerian artists showcase culture, arts, and education in the form of local content which yields transnational viewership and acceptance hence, the possession and influence of soft power. This, the study says is evinced in the review of transnational comments, and interviews of global viewers on Mark

Angel comedy to demonstrate the extent of the influence of soft power embedded in the Nigerian creative industry (Leke and Ogunnubi 17). Soft power is used as a tool of foreign diplomacy to gain transnational acceptance, thus Mark Angel projects Nigeria in a positive light. “Beyond the therapeutic value, as well as its psychological and physiological benefits, one other strong point of Mark Angel comedy identified by transitional viewers is the moral lessons embedded in each skit and the cultural values that they project” (Leke and Ogunnubi 17). Thus, Mark Angel projects Nigeria in a positive light. In their findings, Leke and Ogunnubi proved that Nigeria possesses soft power through its creative arts such as Mark Angel comedy skits which serve as transnational tools to counteract the misconception and stereotypical views that creative artists of other countries have created about Nigeria.

In Ezekiel Olajimbiti’s study, the Nigerian child’s socio-cultural experiences were foregrounded in children’s humor. He analyzes selected episodes of Mark Angel comedy paying attention to the pragmatic implications of the interactions between adults and children. Employing Levison’s notion of activity types and humor theories of superiority and disparagement, Olajimbiti investigated how Nigerian children’s experiences in symmetric and asymmetric social relationships are represented in the media and its impact on children. He demonstrated children’s orientation on their social constraints in challenging adult power and how they deploy witticism to satirize adult intolerance through humor. He also captured within the context of excitement and mischief, adult hostility and offensive remarks in dissecting the Nigerian children’s socio-cultural experiences in social relationships and food-related issues. Of these previous studies, only

Olajimbiti's work addresses the asymmetric power structure in the discourse representation of Nigerian children's experiences through humor. However, it fails to extensively discuss the extent of adult power over children drawing on the psychological concept of adultism and its strand of verbal abuse. This essay therefore investigates the unequal power dynamics in the adult-child relationship by sampling evidence of adultism in Mark Angel comedy through variations of verbal abuse and children's contest of this adult power is present in their actions.

Adultism

Adultism, according to Brenda LeFrancois has been used in different senses in various fields of study but the term was first used by Jack Flasher in 1978 about children's rights (LeFrancois 1). It however gained recognition as researchers, academics, and psychologists employed it to dissect analyses on the rights of children and their psychological development (LeFrancois 1). According to John Bell in his paper (*Understanding Adultism: A Key to Developing Positive Youth-Adult Relationships*) refer to adultism as "behaviors and attitudes based on the assumption that adults are better than young people, and entitled to act upon young people without their agreement. This maltreatment is reinforced by social institutions, law, customs, and attitudes" (Bell 1). It is "understood as the oppression experienced by children and young people at the hands of adults and adult-produced /adult tailored systems. It relates to the power relations in an adult-child relationship. Adultism may include experiences of individual prejudice, discrimination, violence, and abuse as well as social control and systemic oppression. At an individual level, it is characterized

by adult authoritarianism toward children and adult-centric perspectives in interacting with children and in understanding children's experiences" (LeFrancois 1). "The essence of adultism is disrespect for the young. Our society, for the most part, considers young people to be less important than and inferior to adults" (Bell 2). There is a possible reason for this attitude. Kingston and Regoli (237) believe it is because children lack the power to resist adults due to their age, size, and lack of resources. Ultimately, this has led to adultism being ingrained in the psyche of parents, teachers, and other adult members who display it under the guise of discipline. Children's rights become violated as a result, and it eventually leads to total control of the child's emotional, physical, and mental well-being even as the child depends on adults for guidance. John Bell describes this total dependence thus; "as children, most young people are told what to eat, what to wear, when to go to bed, when they can talk, that they need to go to school, which friends are okay, and when they are to be in the house." (1).

Although many adults misuse the right to guide their children, not every act of discipline by an adult about children is adultism. The presence of parents or adult members is crucial to a child's development. However, in many cases, their acts of discipline veer into a consistent pattern of dominance and disrespect towards children leading to their encroachment of fundamental rights and self-value. Adultism may take different forms and shapes, the most common being verbal abuse, access denial, yelling, shaming, threats, neglect, and blaming. These create in the child, negative consequences such as a lack of confidence in decision-making, and unhealthy personal development.

Verbal Abuse

According to Paul Moglia, “verbal abuse is a form of interpersonal violence that is used as a means to exert power or control over victims. It triggers anguish, pain, and distress through intimidating or bullying verbal assaults meant to embarrass, harass, humiliate, insult or threaten vulnerable people” (1975). Most vulnerable individuals experience verbal abuse, but it is mostly experienced by children because of their inability to defend themselves. Verbal abuse is widely deployed by adults and parents consciously and unconsciously to reprimand the child and instill discipline. Children easily internalize the circumstances surrounding them, ranging from the environment to the variety of behaviors and experiences constantly displayed by adults. Children who experience verbal pull-downs are usually self-constrained and lack confidence in their judgment because they have been made to believe the negative expressions of adults or parents. These children as a result of consistent emotional maltreatment would resolve to repress their unique perception of the world.

This supposed disciplinary method is common and is employed by parents, caregivers, and adult members who aim to correct, hypercorrect, and dismiss children for their wrongs, mistakes, and intrinsic inquisitive nature. In research carried out by Kimo Runyan et al (*Child Maltreatment: Child Abuse and Neglect by Parents and other Caregivers*), there are signs which show that “there is evidence to suggest that shouting at children is a common response by parents across many countries” (66). According to Hutchinson and Mueller, “Parental emotional and verbal abuse, as measured by acts of rejection, condemnation, yelling, nagging, threats of violence, and slapping

significantly increases the odds that a child will become the victim of similar abuse at the hands of his/her peers, both in terms of verbal victimization and physical victimization” (25). Regrettably, “verbal abuse continues the cycle of abuse because many abused individuals become abusers themselves” (Moglia 1976). To understand the nuances of power relations and dominance in adult-child relationships, the two conceptual frameworks: adultism and verbal abuse, were adopted to analyze the selected skits for this essay. Also, doubtless to say is the fact that verbal abuse is one of the common ways child subjugations can be perpetrated, hence, the reason for the adoption of the conceptual frameworks.

Sources and Methodology

The data for this essay was collected from five episodes of Mark Angel comedy, Maths Teacher, Flog Emmanuella, Try Me, Everybody Now Know, Wicked Man Part 2. These episodes were analyzed using the concepts of adultism and verbal abuse which uncovers the manifestation of adult exertion of power over the child as a disciplinary method. For this essay, the episodes were keenly selected as they are suitable to the purpose of this paper. The work will therefore focus on the overlooked arena of child humor in analyzing the extracts beginning with the most common forms of verbal abuse; yelling, threatening, name-calling, and body shaming to the rare forms such as dismissal, shaming, and neglect. Interestingly, the evidence of both variables is recurrent in some extracts.

Excerpt 1: *Maths Teacher*

The Maths teacher recaps with the pupils over the previous topic taught on Addition and Subtraction with the class.

Teacher: Let me ask you a question from last week. If Emeka has 50 cubes of Sugar and Emeka licks 40 cubes of sugar. What will Emeka have? **Cynthia:** (Raises her hand) Uncle, I. **Teacher:** Cynthia. **Cynthia:** If Emeka licks 40 cubes of sugar, Emeka will have diabetes **Class:** Laughs **Teacher:** (To Cynthia) My friend will you sit down!!!! **Pupil:** (Raises her hand) **Teacher:** You **Pupil:** Uncle I want to use the bathroom **Teacher:** (Yells) My friend sit down! I'm just coming into the class and now you want to use the bathroom. Will you sit down!!! **Pupil:** Uncle if I don't use the bathroom now, I will wee on myself oh **Teacher:** (Yells) Yes, wee on yourself, sit down!!! **Class:** Laughs **Teacher:** Nonsense, if you like don't pay attention. (Turns to write mathematical equations on the board) **Class:** Perplexed. **Teacher:** (Ends the equation) And that is the answer. Do you all understand? **Class:** Terrified. **Teacher:** (Yells) Do you all understand? **Class:** Silent **Teacher:** I assume you all understand. **Pupil 3:** Raises hand **Teacher:** What? **Pupil 3:** (Points at the board) I don't understand from here. **Teacher:** (Yells) From where? **Pupil 3:** From the beginning. **Teacher:** (Yells) What don't you understand here? This is X. X has cancelled X and X has cancelled X. $1X$ equal to $2X$ and 1 equal to 2 . So, what don't you understand!!! **Pupil 3:** (Terrified) I understand. **Teacher:** (Yells) Sit down **Pupil 4:** (Emmanuel): Raises hand **Teacher:** (Yells) What? what? **Emmanuella:** Uncle I don't understand **Teacher:** (Yells) From where don't you understand?

From where? **Emmanuella:** (Terrified) From last term.

Verbal abuse manifests in the interaction between the teacher and the pupils above. The teacher overrides the consciousness of the pupils by yelling and shutting them up. Cynthia who gives a unique approach to the question asked by the teacher is being disrespected as he rudely disapproves of her answer of "If Emeka licks 40 cubes of sugar. Emeka will have diabetes" (Maths Teacher). Cynthia demonstrates the child's unique worldview and the internalization of the dealings in her environment. Invariably, she must have gained prior knowledge of the negative effect of excessive sugar on human health and tries to display it but is disrespected instead. When he dismisses her with "My friend will you sit down!!!!" (n. p.), the teacher infringes on the child's right to objective learning by confining her unique thoughts on knowledge acquisition. Cynthia's answer is objectively correct: hence, it is the teacher's duty to have subtly reminded her that it is an "Addition and Subtraction" class and not a "Biology" class. Another instance of an adult display of power over the child is captured in the excerpt as the teacher prevents a pupil from using the bathroom even after an attempt to convince him of the urgency of her need. This brings the authoritarian nature of adult power to light; hence, the adult's interest surpasses that of the child. This obvious power exertion is accompanied by yelling characterized by the loudness of the teacher's voice. The pupil, therefore suppresses the urge to urinate owing to her inability to challenge her teacher's instruction. The teacher's domineering disposition over the pupils is also seen in his hostile teaching technique. He solves a complex mathematical equation on the board which

he ends with; “and that is the answer. Do you all understand?” (n. p.) The loudness of his voice is intended to instill fear in the children. This is apparent as he harshly demands “What don't you understand here? This is X, X has canceled X and X has canceled X. 1X equal to 2X and 1 equal to 2. So, what don't you understand!!!” (n. p.). In response, the pupil owing to the tense atmosphere created by the teacher, quickly affirms; “I understand” (n. p.). This exchange further portrays the dominance of an adult over a child which results in the infringement on the child's right to quality education. He deploys yelling as a tactic of maintaining authority. Being aware of the tense atmosphere, Emmanuella infuriates him by asserting that she has not understood all she has been taught from the previous term. The yelling and dismissal of the pupils by the teacher causes Emmanuella to develop anxiety, hence, her assertion which portrays confusion. According to Rohini Radhakrishnan; (*Disease and Condition: Parenting. Can Yelling at a Child Be Harmful?*) “When children are yelled at, they may feel hurt, scared, and sad. If this happens frequently, it may affect the mental health of the child, causing deeper psychological issues such as depression or anxiety”.

Excerpt 2: Flog Emmanuella

Mark Angel: (Instructs Emmanuella)
Give me your hand...

Emmanuella: (Crying) Uncle, why are you flogging me?

Mark Angel: Ehhn! So, I cannot flog you again? Am I not your elder? So, I have to explain why I'm flogging you. Come on give me your hand.

Emmanuella: (Crying) They don't use to flog children again o.

Mark Angel: Ehhh... does this place look like America?

Emmanuella: (Crying) No,

Mark Angel: Come on give me your hand quick (flogs)

Emmanuella: Cries out loud.

Mark Angel: (Shows her a script)
Oya... see this script... take this script... go to that cyber cafe and tell them to correct the things I underlined in this script and then photocopy it and come back. Do you understand? Take (hands it to her) and hey! see these people there? (Points at the crew) they are waiting for us. You hear me? Now get out (He yelled). Nonsense if you waste time and come here, I will flog you again

Emmanuella: Hurriedly leaves.

Mark Angel: (Mutters) Children of nowadays will just be annoying elders.

Emmanuella returns with the script that she mischievously altered. This causes chaos in the set as a character slaps Mark Angel. To the bewilderment of the other crew members, the character swears that he only acted according to the script. Emmanuella laughs contemptuously; an indication that she is behind the chaos. (Mark Angel flogs Emmanuella).

This excerpt demonstrates the incontestable nature of adult power as displayed in the interaction above. Mark Angel showcases the totality of his control over Emmanuella whom he flogs without obvious reason. His response to her question about why he is flogging her further validates this presupposition as he asks “So, I have to explain why I'm flogging you?”. By declaring his status as an elder, he paints a picture of the authoritarian disposition of the adult, having the right to override children without a justifiable reason, thus, the child

is prohibited from questioning the adult. as a strategy deployed to sustain power. As the scene unfolds, the audience is brought to the consciousness of Mark Angel's action to instill discipline in Emmanuella to prevent her from behaving badly in the future. This future is imminent as he sends her on an errand soon after the punishment. What this means is that the pre-disciplinary act displayed by Mark Angel was aimed at forcing a particular reaction from Emmanuella which is the strict adherence to his instruction. It also aims to serve as a threat reference; “. . . Nonsense if you waste time and come here, I will flog you again” (n. p.) to further instill fear in her to accomplish his desire. Also, his use of the abusive term “Nonsense” brings to the fore, the credence of verbal abuse employed by the adult to suppress the child. The adult’s unquestionable power over children is further brought to light, as Mark Angel declares the subjective rather than the objective view. So, when he says “Children of nowadays will just be annoying elders” (n. p.), he is highlighting the expectation among many Nigerian ethnic groups where as a result of the asymmetrical power structure a child cannot take offense at anything an adult does to him/her. The consequence of the various hostile acts perpetrated against Emmanuella by Mark Angel is brought to light as she alters the script not just to rebel against him but also to get revenge. The ensuing chaos on the set demonstrates the negative effect of adult hostility against children. When Emmanuella is threatened, dismissed, and described as a "Nonsense" entity, she rebels by altering the action in the script which results in a total disruption of script delivery on set. Hence, deploying coercive power and verbal abuse to discipline a child makes

the child a rebel who consistently would want to act contrary to the set standards.

Except 3: Try Me

Teachers assemble in the principal's office all tense as one of the pupils who happens to be one of the teacher's sons is badly injured. The principal asks the mother what resulted in her son's injury. The teacher narrates the incident that happened earlier that morning in class.

Aunty: (Distributes exercise books to the pupils) I gave you a simple test which all of you did well but one idiot in this class wrote rubbish. One stupid idiot in this class wrote nonsense and failed woefully. Now open your books and check your scores (She instructs). The question was... mention any fruit or vegetable that can make you cry. Isn't it?

Class: It is (Chorus).

Aunty: (She points at a pupil) You what is your score?

Pupil 1: (Replies excitedly) 20 marks

Aunty: And what was your answer?

Pupil 1: Onions

Aunty: (Points at a pupil) You what is your score?

Pupil 2: (Smiles) 20 marks

Aunty: What was your answer?

Pupil 2: Pepper

Aunty: (Points at a pupil) You what is your score?

Pupil 3: 20 marks

Aunty: What was your answer?

Pupil 3: Onion

Aunty: Very good, you all got it correct. Clap for yourself.

Class: Claps

Aunty: (Calls on a pupil) Dominion Uche

Dominion: Yes, Aunty

Aunty: Step out

Dominion: Steps out

Aunty: (Instructs) Face the class. What is your score?

Dominion: Zero, you even drew my head here

Aunty: Now the question was "Mention any fruit or vegetable that can make you cry. And what did you write?"

Dominion: Coconut

Class: Laughs

Aunty: (To the class) Class can coconut make someone cry?

Class: No...

Aunty: She is a coconut head

Aunty gives Dominion six strokes of the cane. Dominion still insists that coconut can make someone cry; she is dismissed and was further insulted by the teacher of being a "small witch" and a "matured coconut". Dominion, in anger, awaits the teacher's son after school hours with a coconut in her hand. She violently throws the coconut at the sight of him, resulting in a head injury. When summoned to the office, she threatens to deal with the principal, school teachers, and aunty if she is not awarded 20 marks. The teacher's son is crying because a coconut was thrown at him. Dominion deserves to be awarded marks for giving the correct answer in the test question, she argued.

The interaction above clearly demonstrates the asymmetrical power indexes present in the teacher-pupil relationship in classroom settings. This is similar to what Cummins contends in his paper; (*Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Education: a mainstream issue?*), that "marginalization is "reflection of persistent patterns of coercive relations of power in the wider society." (105-114). Since the school is a subset of the society, he argues, the power skewed to the advantage of the adult will manifest. The teacher like their parents brings practical

actions of adultism vis-à-vis child discipline to bear on the pupils. The child does not only experience verbal abuse and adult overriding power only in homes but it is extended to the learning environment.

The excerpt opens with an instance of name calling; the circumstantial exploitation of the child's dignity by the teacher is enunciated by the act of public ridicule and shaming through name-calling under the guise of discipline. The vulnerable child is equated to an "idiot" and is further humiliated through unhealthy comparison by asking each pupil their scores and answers which is thus, accompanied by a 'good' remark from the teacher and a celebratory clap from the class. The teacher calls out Dominion Uche, being aware that she is the pupil who failed the test; she asks for her score and answers to the questions. This is a common practice by Nigerian teachers who believe it will inculcate effective learning and encourage the pupils to do better.

Dominion Uche's answer to the test question presupposes children's unique perception of the world. It shows how they conceive ideas, things, and circumstances in their young minds. The teacher undoubtedly expects a subjective answer to her question as given by other pupils, hence, limiting the children's freedom to explore and experiment with their uniqueness in knowledge acquisition. Uche's insistence of coconut being a "vegetable that can make someone cry" validates her confidence in the answer, the teacher failed to give her a chance to explain her perception of coconut being a vegetable and one that can make someone cry. Rather, she disapproves her unique approach to the question by flogging and dismissing her and further made a public ridicule of her by calling her a "coconut

head", "small witch" and "matured coconut" (n. p.). The vulnerable child absorbs the psychological torture as she is not socially empowered to contest her teacher's authority but displays a violent response, as a result of the verbal abuse by her teacher. Arifuddin et al. in an article, (Study of Verbal Bullying in Early Adolescence: Case Study of Pallanga 5 Junior High School and Sugguminasan3 Junior High School), highlights the effects of bullying in school; "it often happens that students who are victims of bullying tend to be shunned and isolated so that victims of bullying tend to carry out negative coping strategies such as truancy, violating school regulations (1555). By throwing a coconut at the teacher's son, Dominion Uche demonstrates a coping mechanism that causes her to justify her answer against her teacher's public ridicule. She extends this to the principal and other teachers by threatening to let out the same violence on them. She is however, unapologetic and demands for her marks owing to the fact that the teacher's son is crying as a result of the coconut she threw at him. What this means is that a child who is dismissed and prevented from exploring her views will resort to violence to portray these views.

Excerpt 4: *Everybody Now Know*

Uzzy stares at Success with disdain in the compound while facing a mattress.

Uzzy: (Yells) Success why did you wee on the bed? As old as you are you are still weeing on the bed, Success. Success why are you giving me headache in this house? Imagine this bed, I just bought this bed new. (Screams) In fact everybody come and see o... Success used to wee on the bed o **Success:** Pleads with him to keep quiet. **Uzzy:** (Yells) Don't

tell me to keep quiet, come on don't tell me to keep quiet. (Screams) Neighbours, neighbours . . .

Success: Feels embarrassed

Uzzy: (Yells) Everybody now know you wee on the bed . . . look even strangers, neighbours everybody is here . . .

Success: Moves aside

Uzzy: (Points at Success) Look at, I'm talking to her and she's just walking away. You're feeling so reluctant about it abi?

Success: Rhythmically taps her feet on the floor

Uzzy:(Yells) People now know you wee on the bed, even strangers

K Brown: Papa Success what is the problem?

Uzzy: Success wee on the bed

K Brown: But she is a kid na

Uzzy: Don't tell me she is a kid, 5 years old for heaven's sake. Don't tell me she is a kid. Every time her mother will be giving her water in the night, just... (Points at the mattress)

K Brown: Is that the reason why you are shouting?

Uzzy: Don't tell me anything I will shout, I will shout

K Brown: Look at you have now invited everybody both strangers

Uzzy: Yes, let everybody know that she used to wee on the bed, just imagine this foam that I bought. What nonsense is that one na. I'm even talking now she is feeling reluctant about it. Just imagine and you said she is a kid

Success: Starts humming

Uzzy: You're acting as if you don't care. You don't want people to know it's you I'm talking to abi? (Yells again) Success, everybody now know you wee on the bed. I know you can hear me . . .

Success: Continues humming
Uzzy: (Yells) Everybody now know you wee on the bed
Success: Daddy, people now know that I wee on the bed
Uzzy: Yes
Success: That one is small na eh. What is bothering me now is that people know something worse about me, Kai! (She exclaims)
Uzzy: What could be worse than people knowing that you wee on the bed?
Success: Daddy, people now know that you are my father.
Uzzy: (Exclaims) Eh! Feels insulted.
Success: What could be worse than being your daughter? Packaging that I'm packaging since now you have spoil it for me

[*Success walks out of the crowd as she denies her father and informs the crowd that he adopted her. (Everybody Now Knows).*]

Uzzy's authoritarian mode of discipline as demonstrated in the above excerpt brings to light the parenting style of child shaming and its negative impact on children. Robin and Macgregor (*Good Children-at what Price the Secret Cost of Shame*) opine that; "shaming operates by giving children a negative image about themselves rather than about their behavior". Uzzy's expression of anger towards Success' unintentional misbehaviour causes him to shame and yell at her. By the repetition of the phrase "as old as you are" he depicts the pressure parents mount on their children as a result of unnecessary expectations. Hence, the child grows up deprived of the natural behavioural tendencies peculiar to her development. Uzzy's quest to justify his anger causes him to call on neighbours and strangers to humiliate his daughter whose attempt to stop him from calling

the neighbours shows that she is conscious of self-respect. Through his display of adult power, Uzzy dismisses her plea by yelling and calling on the neighbours in an attempt to correct Success' unintentional habit of bedwetting.

Uzzy succeeds in his attempt to humiliate Success as neighbours and strangers gather on the scene. Success deploys a coping strategy as she rhythmically taps her feet on the ground and hums. This, however, paints a picture of a rebelliousness to her father - her attitude shows the negative effect of child shaming. According to Grille Robin and Beth Macgregor in recent research tells us that shame motivates people to withdraw from relationships, and become isolated. Moreover, "the shamed tend to feel humiliated and disapproved of by others, which can lead to hostility, even fury". Success having internalized Uzzy's repetitious shaming and yelling and responds by embarrassing him in return as she asserts that people now know that he is her father, which she terms as being worse than people knowing that she wees on the bed Success' utterance depicts that she feels unloved by her father owing to his abusive behaviour towards her. She affirms this by informing the crowd that she is an adopted child, thus showing the profundity of the negative thoughts and feelings associated with child shaming.

Excerpt 5: *Wicked Man Part 2*

[*Success and Emmanuella play in the compound but immediately stop as they see Mark Angel eating from a pot. They rush into the house to get their plates for food.*]

Mark Angel: What?

Emmanuella: Our afternoon food.

Success: (In agreement) Mmm our afternoon food.

Mark Angel: (Points at them)
Afternoon food kill both of you

Emmanuella: (Exclaims) Eh! Eh!

Success: (Exclaims) Jesus!

Mark Angel: Didn't you people eat in the morning?

Emmanuella: We only drank tea.

Mark Angel: Me, did I drink tea?

Emmanuella and Success: (Chorused)
We don't know.

Mark Angel: I didn't drink tea.

Emmanuella: How does that concern us?

Mark Angel: Keeps eating from the pot.

Emmanuella: But Uncle...

Mark Angel: Gives a threatening look.

Emmanuella: Are we not going to eat afternoon food?

Mark Angel: (Yells) Didn't you eat yesterday?

Emmanuella: We ate yesterday.

Mark Angel: Me did I eat yesterday?

Emmanuella and Success: (Chorused)
We don't know.

Mark Angel: I didn't eat yesterday...see (He points at the pot) this thing is the food that I didn't eat yesterday.

Emmanuella: But Uncle (points at the pot) Now that you are eating your yesterday food today, can we go and carry that beans that I warmed yesterday and eat?

Mark Angel: (Yells) God punish you!

Emmanuella: (Shocked) Eh! Eh!

Mark Angel: Idiot. If...if you in fact (goes into the house and brings the pot of beans) See this rice that I'm eating now is my yesterday food. This beans is my today food that I did not eat in the morning. After eating this rice now, I will eat this beans as my today's food. Oya both of you leave

Emmanuella and Success: Groans

Mark Angel: Leave, go and play. You will eat tomorrow.

Success: I think Uncle Mark when my mommy was traveling, she gave you money to take care of me.

Mark Angel: See this one oh. Call your mommy and ask her how much she gave me. The money that your mommy gave me has expired. Oya move away from here, common leave (To Success) Small rat covered with human flesh.

Emmanuella: Uncle you're very Wicked.

Mark Angel: I agree.

Emmanuella: Very Wicked

Mark Angel: (Rhythmically) I agree, I'm wicked, I agree, I agree.

Success: Wicked Uncle.

Mark Angel: (To Success) I think you, you said that when I die you will come and eat rice and chicken (laughs derisively) Oya look who is eating now? Who is eating? Oya get away, get out of here.

Mark Angel continues to eat from the pots of food as Success and Emmanuella demonstrate their anger by calling him a "wicked man" K Brown arrives on the scene and inquires why he is eating two pots of food. Mark Angel explains that they are his "yesterday" and "today" food. Emmanuella and Success counteract his explanation, K Brown, however, demands that he give them food but Mark Angel continues eating. Mark Angel finishes the food and demands that Emmanuella and Success wash the pots, he instructs them to kneel when they both refuse to wash the pots. Later, some criminals invade the scene asking for the landlord, and both girls in retaliation, point to Mark Angel as the landlord. (Wicked Man Part 2).

Mark Angel displays the unequal power relation that exists between adult and

child through his interaction with Emmanuella and Success on the issue of food which is one of the basic needs of a child. He dominates Emmanuella and Success by first deploying an abusive strategy to shut them up when they request their lunch. His violent response shocks both girls as they do not expect an abusive dismissal in place of their lunch. Mark Angel further resorts to another devious strategy of manipulating the vulnerable children to his interest to satisfy his selfish desire for food; "Me did I drink tea?", "Me did I eat yesterday?" (n. p.). His interrogative approach is intended to trick the children into believing his justification for denying them food. Emmanuella tries to downplay his manipulative scheme as she suggests they eat the leftover beans but he verbally abuses her with; "God punish you, Idiot". (n. p.). This demonstrates the extent of the manipulative power of adults over children.

Apart from the name-calling displayed by Mark Angel as one of the variations of verbal abuse; there is a depiction of neglect which runs through the excerpt as evidenced in Mark Angel's refusal to attend to the children's needs. According to The World Health Organization (1999) neglect is "the failure to provide for the development of the child in all spheres: health, education development, nutrition, shelter, and safe living conditions, in the context of resources reasonably available to the family or caretaker and causes or has a high probability of causing harm the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development" (15). Mark Angel intentionally deprives Emmanuella and Success of good nutrition by denying them of their lunch on the grounds that they already had breakfast. The evidence of the availability of resources is seen in the excerpt as there are two pots of food which should be

enough to satisfy both children. Contrastively, Mark Angel by his display of power consumes both pots of food. Another evidence of the availability of resources can be seen in Success' utterance; "I think Uncle Mark when my mommy was traveling; she gave you money to take care of me" (n. p.). This shows the availability of finances at Mark Angel's disposal which is meant to take care of Success' needs. Instead of being remorseful, he replies with "See this one oh. Call your mommy and ask her how much she gave me. The money that your mommy gave me has expired. Oya move away from here, come on leave (To Success) Small rat covered with human flesh" (n. p.). He dismisses and insults her to instill fear and further quiet her and can override the two girls as they lack the power to contest his maltreatment against them.

The detrimental effect of the abusive treatment is captured in the excerpt as Emmanuella and Success being aware of the status quo repeatedly refer to Mark Angel as a "wicked man". The sequential repetition of the phrase by both children is a pointer to show the extent of the mental repercussions of child neglect. Similarly, by suspending the socio-cultural power paradigm, Emmanuella and Success in retaliation, deny Mark Angel and sell him off to the two criminals who later invaded the compound.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated varied manifestations of adultism, especially its main strand of verbal abuse in relationships between the Nigerian child and the Nigerian adult, based on selected episodes of *Mark Angel* comedy. Different forms of verbal abuse such as; threatening, naming calling, blaming, yelling, body shaming, dismissal, neglect and blaming

accompanied by their insidious effects on the child were highlighted and examined.

Mark Angel as well as other featured adults in the selected episodes for this study have shown ample evidences of adultism in their relation with children; Emmanuella, and "Aunty" Success show the disputation of adult power in their dynamic riposte mechanisms; a form of contestation. The classroom episodes captured the power dynamics in the teacher/pupil relationship and the effects of subjecting pupils to coercive methods of teaching through verbal abuse. The home episodes underscore similar child exploitation by adults in Nigerian home-related settings where children are always expected to act in accordance to the prescribed rules by adults. This study therefore concludes that Mark Angel comedy reflects the Nigerian child's experiences, and lends credence of adultism and its strand of verbal abuse. Therefore, beyond its contribution to knowledge and filling a gap in scholarship, this study through the thread of Mark Angel comedy has demonstrated the need to reawaken the consciousness of parents, teachers, caregivers, and other adult members of the need to pay keen attention to child fundamental rights in their relationship with children to avoid raising a generation of adults with insidious psychological scars but to raise adults with healthy personal and interpersonal relationships

Video Skits

- Angel, Mark. "Maths Teacher." *YouTube*, <http://www.youtube.com/MarkAngelComedy,16> June 2017. <<https://youtu.be/IsaCk4SARPk>>.
- -. "Flog Emmanuella." *YouTube*, <http://www.youtube.com/MarkAngel>

- [Comedy](http://www.youtube.com/MarkAngelComedy), 3 Mar. 2017. <https://youtu.be/e36ts1Q2Js>.
- -. "Try Me." *YouTube*, <http://www.youtube.com/MarkAngelComedy>, 4 Oct. 2019. <https://youtu.be/7nvaJrDtZGM>
- . "Everybody Now Know." *YouTube*, <http://www.youtube.com/MarkAngelComedy>, 22 Mar. 2019. https://youtu.be/S_EQFyxBwo4.
- -. "Wicked Man Part 2." *YouTube*, <http://www.youtube.com/MarkAngelComedy>, 27 Sept. 2019. <https://youtu.be/aSOTQykpMHE>

Works Cited

- Arifuddin, Asrul Taufiq, et al. "Study of Verbal Bullying in Early Adolescence: Case Study of Pallanga 5 Junior High School and Sugguminasan3 Junior High School." *Medio-Legal Update* 21.1 (2021): 1555-1557.
- Bell, John. "Understanding Adultism: A Key to Developing Positive Youth-Adult Relationships." *Free child Project* (2003): 1-5.
- Cummins, Jim. "Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Education: A Mainstream Issue?" *Educational Review* (2006): 105-114.
- Grille, Robin and Beth Macgregor. "Good Children-at what Price the Secret Cost of Shame." (2022). 6 Jan. 2023. <https://www.naturalchild.org/articles/_grille/good_children.html>.
- Hutchinson, Lisa and David Mueller. "Sticks and Stones and Broken Bones: The Influence of Parental Verbal Abuse on Peer Related Victimization." *Western Criminology Review* 9.1 (2008): 17-31.
- LeFrancois, A Brenda. "Adultism." *Encyclopedia of Critical Psychology*, edited by Thomas Teo, Springer Reference. Online. Internet. 16 Nov. 2022.

<<http://www.springerreference.com/index/chapterdbid/304657>>.

Leke, Dare and Olusula Ogunnubi. "Soft Power in the Therapeutic Comedy: Outlining Nigeria's Creative Industry through Digital Comic Skits." *Creative Industries Journal* (2022): 17-20.

Moglia, Paul. "Verbal Abuse." Ed. Moglia, Paul. *Psychology and Behavioural Health*, 4th ed. Amenia, NY: Salem Press at Greyhouse, 2015. 1975-1977.

Ndifon, Victor Ogar, et al. "The Promotion of Societal Values in Nigerian Comedy Videos: Study of Mark Angel Comedy Skits." *Journal of Media Communication and Language* (2022): 157- 160.

Olajimbiti, Ezekiel. "Discourse Representation of Nigeria Children's Experiences and Humour in Select Comedy Shows of Emmanuella." *Red Feather Journal* 9.2 (2018). 1-18. 13 Nov. 2022.
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/3622890145_The_Promotion_Of_Societal_Values_In_Nigerian_Comedy_Videos_Study_Of_Mark_Angel_Comedy_Skits>.

Radhakrihnan, Rohini. "Disease and Condition: Parenting. Can Yelling at a Child Be Harmful?." (2021). 12 Nov. 2022.
<https://www.medicinenet.com/can_yelling_at_a_child_be_harmful/article.htm>.

Runyan, Desmond Kimo, et al. "Child Maltreatment: Child Abuse and Neglect by Parents and other Caregivers" *World Health Report on Violence and Health* (2022). 12 Nov. 2002
<<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263580018>>.

World Health Organization: *Report of the Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention WHO, Geneva:1999.*

Authors' profiles:

Ogbazi Vivian Ijeoma was one of the best graduating students of the Class of 2020 English and Literary Studies at Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria. She is currently an MA student at the University of Abuja, Nigeria, with a focus on research in children's literature, African literature, and literary theory. **Email:** <cyprainvivian6@gmail.com>.

Victor Elendu Frederick is a graduate of English and Literary Studies from Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria. He is a highly talented writer with a unique ability to blend multiple genres seamlessly. His research interest steers around cyberpragmatics, neurostylistics, creative writing, and literary theory. **Email:** <victorfedrick03@gmail.com>.