

# COVID-19 and Gender Portrayal in Television Jingles: A Comparative Evaluation of Selected Jingles in Cameroon and Nigeria



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## Abstract

This study investigates how gender was portrayed in four selected COVID-19 jingles, from Cameroon and Nigeria. Obtained between May 1<sup>st</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup> 2020, the jingles were analysed qualitatively based on the research questions. The study, anchored on the gender studies theory found out that males were featured more, allotted more time and presented in a dominant position than their female counterparts. This kind of representation reinforces stereotypes about men's dominant position over women. The study recommends that in the production of jingles, media organisations and government bodies should ensure that both genders are equally involved.

**Keywords:** *Gender, COVID-19, Jingle, Potrayal, Cameroon, Nigeria*

## Introduction

Gender issues cannot be extricated from television media including in advertisements, jingles, programmes, news, sports, and drama amongst several other television genres (Luyt, 2011). Several studies (Fejes, 1992; Hanke, 1992; Furnham *et al.*, 2000; Uray & Burnaz, 2003) have examined how race and gender have become stereotypical categories in television media. Such stereotypes are so portrayed that they seem to justify social categories and inequality in society (Mannila, 2017). The debates from gender-based debates have also centred on issues of gender roles and relations of power between men and women (Shefer *et al.* 2008; Mannila, 2017). Such studies have hinged their investigation on codes or factors such as actors, age, narrator, products, race and setting with consistent research conclusions that "media construct and represent gender in a fashion that maintains hierarchical gender relations." (Luyt, 2011).

Some studies (Furnham & Mak, 1999; Eisend, 2010; Furnham & Paltzer, 2010; Collins, 2011) have established nine hypotheses that become the basis of testing studies in gender portrayals in television. The hypotheses include: (1) males will be represented as primary visual actors significantly more frequently than females (2) males will be represented as primary narrators significantly more frequently than females (3) males will be represented significantly more frequently in settings away from home, and less frequently in home settings, than females (4) male adults will be represented less

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frequently as alone with children than female adults (5) males will be associated significantly more frequently with masculine products such as vehicles, and less frequently with feminine products such as domestic goods, than females (6) males will be represented significantly more frequently within older adult age groups, and less frequently within younger adult age groups, than females (7) males will be represented significantly more frequently as of higher social class status, and less frequently as of lower social class, than females (8) males will be represented significantly more frequently as members of the white population group, and less frequently as members of the black population group, than females (9) males will be portrayed significantly more positively and less negatively than females.

Media can be an important factor in gender discourse and the representation of women and men in society (Kangas *et al.*, 2014). Studies by Kangas *et al.* (2014) show that while women are often portrayed solely as homemakers, carers of the family, dependent on men and objects of male attention, men are typically characterised as powerful and dominant and demean men in caring or domestic roles. However, some studies portray women as professionals and ambitious workers, not always confined at home, flanked and driven by men while men are depicted at home, in the role of father or as a sexual object (Panarese, 2014). Such portrayals by the media can influence perceptions of what society may expect from men and women, thus promoting an unbalanced vision of the roles of women and men in society (Kangas *et al.*, 2014).

Jingles are short, simple tunes, often with words, which are used to advertise a product or programme on radio or television." (Collins Dictionary, 2010). Jingles are short musical advertisements of products or services that can be used in non-advertising contexts to share public service messages and are often employed by public health organizations to alert the public about the spread of diseases (Ephraim, 2020). Thus, jingles are advertisements. In Jingles, advertisers show the position of men and women in relation to the product as a simple and easily recognizable image. They thus "show not the way men and women behave, but how audience think they should behave." (Panarese, 2014, p.100). These portrayals, in turn, help to build the social representation of gender and create a so-called *gendered native* (Panarese, 2014).

Such a gendered native is a result of symbolic modelling of stereotypes. As a result, viewers may adopt potentially stereotypical information about appropriate and socially desirable behaviour of men and women which may, in turn, affect how individuals think about gender roles, and in the process stimulate and perpetuate discriminatory perceptions and behaviours (Gauntlett, 2009 cited in Panarese, 2014).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, several countries rolled out jingles to educate their citizens on the appropriate behaviour to curtail the spread of the disease. Many countries also used the jingles to counter disinformation and misinformation on COVID-19 that were prevalent during the pandemic. There are no known statistics of COVID-19 jingles globally. However, in Nigeria, there were over ten jingles that were aired by the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), the organ of the Federal government that is responsible for the management of infectious diseases such as the COVID-19. Also, some religious organisations and NGOs produced informative jingles to combat COVID-19. Similarly, in Cameroon, there were more than five jingles produced by the central government for use by different television media.

Since there is no known scientific study carried out on gender portrayal in the COVID-19 jingles neither Nigeria nor Cameroon, this study is a pioneer one to interrogate gender portrayals in eight selected jingles from both countries.

### **Research Objectives**

The objectives of the study are to find out:

1. The percentage of males and females that was featured in the Jingle?
2. The percentage of time that was allotted to males and females in the jingles.
3. The size of pictures that were used for males and females in the jingles.
4. The roles that were given to males and females in the jingles.
5. The types of dressing of the males and females in the jingles
6. The percentage of the narrator's voice that was dominant in the jingles

### **Research Questions**

Given the above, the formulated research questions for the study are as follows:

1. What is the percentage of males and females that was featured in the Jingle?
2. What is the percentage of time that was allotted to males and females in the jingles?
3. What is the size of pictures that were used for males and females in the jingles?
4. What were the roles that were given to males and females in the jingles?
5. What are the types of dressing of the males and females in the jingles?
6. What is the percentage of the narrator's voice that was dominant in the jingles?

### **Literature review**

#### **Gender Portrayal in Television Jingles**

There is a distinction between gender and sex and between sex roles and gender roles of people. Sex refers to the biological aspects of an individual as determined by their anatomy assigned at birth, which is produced by their chromosomes, hormones and their interactions. Sex is generally male or female. Gender, on the other hand, is constructed socially and identifies the relationship between men and women in the context of power relations. Gender is generally based on labels of masculinity and femininity. Gender is not natural or God-given but is usually created by society through socialisation and inculturation, using institutions such as the family, religion, education, and state laws. Thus, gender relations can be changed by the very society that created them (Jule, 2014; Tolland & Evans, 2019; Pretorius, n.d).

Several studies have examined gender portrayals in advertisements in general and in jingles in particular. Several studies have posited that women are underrepresented in the media and that when they are represented, they are more often than not represented in stereotypical roles (Daalmans *et al.*, 2017). Indeed, Rattan *et al.* (2019) establish that "women are far less likely than men to be seen in the media and that women make up a mere 19% of experts featured in news stories and 37% of reporters telling stories globally." Ahmad (2014) found out that in India, "75% of women in television are commoditized in advertisements where she plays a glamorous, skimpily dressed, sexual objects, sexy dolls, etc whereas men are shown for advertising cars, business, jobs, laptops companies."(p.4) Daalmans *et al.* (2017) in a content analysis of 115 programs in the Netherlands found out that women were underrepresented on men's channels, while gender distribution on women's channels was more equal. Also,

males were represented in more contra-stereotypical ways (e.g., performing household tasks) on women's channels. This study is similar to that of Ahlstrand (2007) carried out in 129 Austrian advertisements gathered analysed in May 2005 and established that women were underrepresented on Austrian televisions while men were playing dominant roles and promoting masculine products.

In a study of 815 unique Italian advertisements that were collected between February and April 2011, the findings of the qualitative analysis showed that females were the more numerous among the protagonists and portrayed with mainly traditional roles such as parental or housekeeping role and also dominated in a domestic setting, while males were more dominant in public spaces, business contexts and workplaces (Panarese, 2014).

In another study, Luyt (2011) in an analysis of 5, 803 advertisements in South Africa carried out in 2003 found out that males were represented as dominant, they were of primary focus, they appeared most frequently within the socially valued public-work arena, were represented as occupying positions of greater social authority while females were represented as subordinates, of secondary focus, appeared most frequently within the socially undervalued private-domestic arena; and were most often represented as occupying positions of social subordination. These confirm the position of Palmer (2019) who argues that the television and film industry is notoriously male-dominated fields and that women are represented as thin and beautiful, soft-spoken, sexualized, mother or wife, emotional and passive on television.

### **Theoretical Framework: Theory of Gender Studies**

Gender studies, in general, began with the feminist or women's liberation movement in the United States with the publication of Betty Friedan's 1963 work, "The Feminine Mystique, the sociological critique of Freud's view of women's natural inferiority". The movement began to explain sex roles and sexual stratification. With more development in such movement, terms such as gender, gender roles and gender relations gained circulation and replaced them. The movement had as its goal "to discover the ways and means to facilitate the achievement of gender equality" and tried to explain the possibility of equal status for women and men in society including all the forms and causes of women's inferior status in different societies and different historical periods (Smith, n.da).

The gender movement set the stage for gender theory. Gender theory developed in the higher institutions in the US and Europe in the 1970s and 1980s as a set of ideas that guided historical and other scholarship in the West. The gender theory essentially proposes looking at masculinity and femininity assets of mutually created characteristics shaping the lives of men and women. It challenges society's ideas of masculinity and femininity and men and women determined based on biological characteristics. In a sense, the theory made the study of men and women subjects of a gendered history (Smith, n.db).

Jule (2014) defines gender theory as "the study of what is understood as masculine and/or feminine and/or queer behaviour in any given context, community, society, or field of study (including, but not limited to, literature, history, sociology, education, applied linguistics, religion, health sciences, philosophy, cultural studies)" (p.1).

In Africa, scholars have argued that the culture is *genderlised* and disproportionately disadvantages women in favour of men (Williams, 2019; Egielewa, 2020). Thus,

patriarchy remains a dominant culture that does not seem to go away several years of the end of colonisation and the introduction of democracy. Williams (2019) puts succinctly, thus: "female subordination in Africa takes intricate forms grounded in patriarchal tradition and culture. Though education is accessible to women in Nigeria, culture still subordinates women." This patriarchy is found in class structure that makes women's voice passive in social contexts such as inheritance process, traditional marriage rites, unpaid labour, passive sex and over-bearing reproduction posture that makes the woman mainly responsible for children upbringing (Parpart, 1995; Williams, 2019; Egielewa, 2020).

This theory is adopted for this study because it interrogates gender portrayal in selected COVID-19 awareness jingles in Cameroon and Nigeria.

### **Methodology**

The study used a descriptive research design and employed the qualitative method. The qualitative method analyses subjective and personalized opinions of participants from broad questions based on key terms and concepts (Fischler, n.d). While qualitative research may include open-ended questions designed to obtain answers from participants through interviews, it can also be applied by observing participants or sites of research, gathering documents from a private or public source and the analysis of such qualitative data (word or text or images) typically follows the path of aggregating the words or images into categories of information and presenting the diversity of ideas gathered during data collection (Kaur, 2015).

The Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) produced over 20 jingles from February 2020 when the first case of COVID-19 was discovered. In Cameroon, there were ten jingles produced by the Government. In addition, many media and religious bodies also produced jingles to educate the public.

Two jingles each from Nigeria and Cameroon have been randomly selected from jingles uploaded on Youtube and analysed. The jingles were obtained between May 1<sup>st</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup> 2020. They were analysed qualitatively based on the research questions and hypothesis.

Cameroon Jingle 1(CRTV 1)

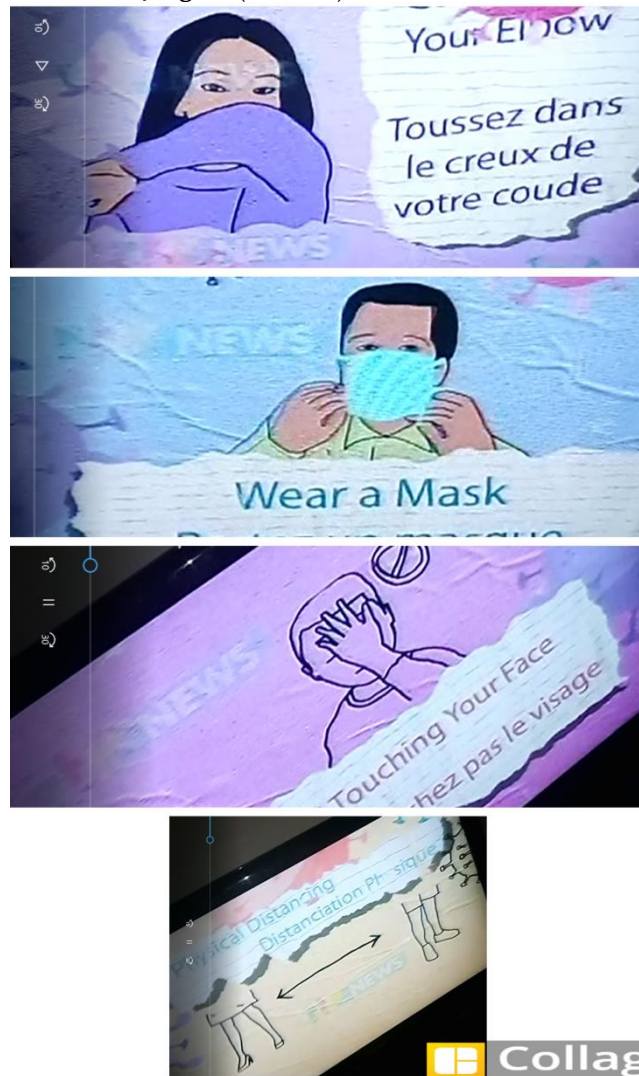


Figure 1: Collage of scenes of Cameroonian COVID-19 jingle of CRTV 1.

This is a 28 seconds jingle that has the following four characters:

1. A female, wearing formal wear demonstrates the wearing of a facemask without saying a word that lasted for 1 second.
2. A male, wearing a formal dress, demonstrates the wearing of a facemask without saying a word that lasted for 3 seconds.
3. A graphic, that looks more manly and lasted for 3 seconds.
4. An image of male and female legs lasted for 10 seconds (approximately 5 seconds for each sex).
5. A hand with a body physique that is manly putting on a suit and showing the TV icon for 5 seconds.

### Cameroon Jingle 2 (CRTV 2)



**Figure 2:** Collage of scenes of Cameroonian COVID-19 jingle of CRTV 2

This is a 26 seconds jingle that has the following five characters:

1. The president of Cameroon, Mr Paul Biya, making a 7-second speech with the words "the wearing of facemasks in public places will be mandatory until further notice".
2. A male, wearing a casual wear demonstrates the wearing of a facemask and a headgear without saying a word that lasted for 2 seconds.
3. A female, wearing a formal dress with a head scarf, also demonstrates the wearing of a facemask without saying a word that lasted for 3 seconds.
4. A male, wearing a traditional Cameroonian attire, also demonstrates the wearing of a facemask without saying a word that lasted for 3 seconds.
5. A hand with a body physique that is manly putting on a suit and showing the TV icon for 5 seconds.

### Nigerian Jingle 1 (TVC News)

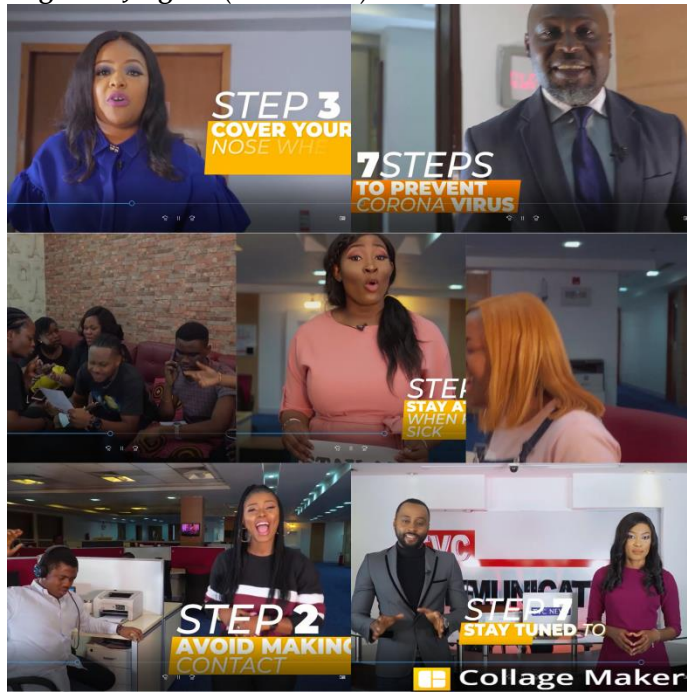


Figure 3: Collage of scenes of Nigerian COVID-19 jingle of TVC News.

This is a 78 seconds jingle that has the following sixteen characters:

1. A man, formally dressed in a suit speaks for 3 seconds thus “there are seven steps to preventing coronavirus”.
2. A woman, in a casual wear, speaks for 7 seconds thus “wash your hand thoroughly and frequently with running water and soap for at least 30 seconds”.
3. A male, formally dressed and a female in casual wear at the scene but only the female speaks for 4 seconds, thus “avoid contact with people’s hands and hard surfaces”.
4. A female, wearing a formal wear is seen coughing without saying a word and lasted for 3 seconds.
5. A female, wearing a formal wear speaks for 8 seconds thus, “Number three, always sneeze into a piece of tissue and cover your cough with your elbow, like this”.
6. A scene with 6 persons, 4 females and 2 males, 5 formally dressed but only one male, casually dressed, speaks for 5 seconds thus “step four, avoid crowded places”
7. A woman, in a casual wear speaks for 8 seconds thus “step five, stay home if you feel unwell, even with a slight fever and cough.”
8. A woman, in a casual wear speaks for 8 seconds thus “step six, if you have a fever, cough or difficulty in breathing, seek medical help early.”
9. A male and female both formally dressed appear in this scene but only the male speaks for 10 seconds, thus “and while maintaining social distancing, step seven and the final step, is staying tuned to this channel to receive more updates on the coronavirus”.

Nigerian Jingle 2 (ChannelsTV)

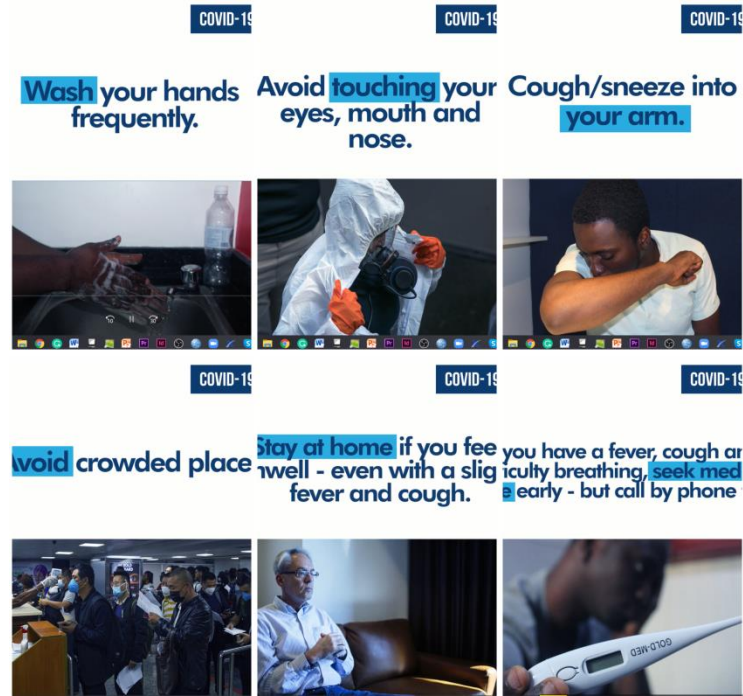


Figure 4: Collage of scenes of Nigerian COVID-19 jingle of Channels TV.

This is a 39 seconds jingle that has the following nineteen major characters, all in still pictures:

1. A male hand, washing hands with soap and water with the inscription "wash your hand frequently." and lasted for 5 seconds.
2. A person of unknown sex wearing a protective bodysuit and gear with the inscription "avoid touching your eyes, mouth and nose" and lasted for 5 seconds.
3. A male, in casual wear, demonstrates coughing into the elbow with the inscription "cough-sneeze into your arm" and lasted for 5 seconds.
4. A crowded place with several people and their body temperature being taken 12 males and 2 females are distinguishable with the inscription "avoid crowded places" and lasted for 6 seconds.
5. A male, in a formal wear, sits on a couch and doing nothing specifically with the inscription "stay at home if you feel unwell, even with a slight fever and cough." and lasted for 5 seconds.
6. A scene showing a temperature reading equipment but with an obvious male in the background with the inscription "if you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical care early but call by phone first." and lasted for 6 seconds.

**Presentation of Results**

Country	Name of Media	Type of Media (public or private)	Length of entire Jingle (in seconds)	Producer of Jingle	No of Males/Females in the jingles		Time allotted to Males/Females in the jingles (in seconds)		Sizes of Males/Females in the jingles		Roles of Males/Females in the jingles		Dressing of Males/Females in the jingles	
					Males	Females	Males	Females	Large	Small	Dominant	Passive	Formal/Corporate	Casual
Cameroon	CRTV News 1	Public	28	Govt	4	2	16	6	1 male, 2 females	1 male, 1 females	3 males	2 females	1 male, 1 females	0 male, 0 females
	CRTV News 2	Public	26	Govt	4	1	17	3	4 male, 1 females	0 male, 0 females	4 males	1 female	2 male, 1 females	1 male, 0 females
Nigeria	IVC	private	78	Private	5	11	18	38	4 male, 5 females	1 male, 4 females	6 females	3 males	3 male, 8 females	1 male, 3 females
	ChannelsTV	private	39	Private	16	2	27	0	6 male, 0 females	0 male, 2 females	4 males	2 females	4 male, 0 females	2 male, 0 females
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>				<b>29</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>15 male, 8 females</b>	<b>2 male, 7 females</b>	<b>11 male, 6 females</b>	<b>3 male, 5 females</b>	<b>10 male, 10 females</b>	<b>4 male, 3 females</b>

**Table 1:** Data from analysis of four Cameroonian and Nigerian COVID-19 jingles

**RQ1: What is the percentage of males and females that was featured in the Jingle?**

This was based on the statistics of how many males and females can be counted featuring in all the scenes in the jingle.

The findings show that both Nigerian and Cameroonian COVID-19 jingles featured more males than females. In the case of Cameroon jingles for every ten jingle characters, seven were males (8 out of 11=72%), while for Nigerian jingles, for every ten jingle characters, six were males (21 out of 34=62%). The results show that in both Cameroon and Nigeria, females are disproportionately featured in COVID-19 jingles compared to their male counterparts in a ratio of 3 females to 7 males.

**RQ2: What is the percentage of time that was allotted to males and females in the jingles?**

This was based on the number of seconds in which a gender speaks in all the scenes in the jingle.

In terms of time allotted to the male and females in COVID-19 jingles, results show that males were generally allotted more times (in seconds) than female characters in a ratio of three to two. In Nigeria, female characters spent a total of 54 seconds compared to their female counterparts that spent 46 seconds in the two examined Nigerian jingles. This implies that the allotted time spent on the jingles were not significantly different (54% for males and 46% for females). However, in the Cameroonian case, males spent a total of 33 seconds compared to the females that spent a total of only nine seconds. This indicates that males spent a total of 79% of the time allotted to characters sin the jingles with only 21% spent by the female counterparts. This means that for every ten seconds spent by characters in any jingle in Cameroon, males will take eight seconds and leave the remaining two seconds for the females.

**RQ3: What is the size of pictures that were used for males and females in the jingles?**

Sizes refer to which gender was given a bigger frame image compared to the other. This was measured as large and small. It is big if the frame covers more than fifty per cent of the frame and small if it is less than fifty per cent of the frame.

Based on the analysis of the frame of the characters in the different scenes, there were ten scenes in the Cameroonian jingles, 6 frames for males and 4 frames for the females. Of the six male frames, 5 were large and one was small, implying that male large frames represented 50% of all the frames compared to 30% of large frames for females. This implies for every ten large frames used for COVID-19 jingles in Nigeria, three will be those of males and the other two for females. For the Nigerian jingles, 22 frames are identified. Of these 22 frames, male frames are 46% compared to female large frames that are 23%. This indicates that for every ten large frames, 7 will be male while three will be female. These data show that in both Cameroon and Nigeria 65% of all large frames are males and only 35% are females.

**RQ4: What were the roles that were given to males and females in the jingles?**

This was based on the kind of roles that the gender was assigned in the jingle. This was either dominant or passive. It is dominant if the male is demonstrating and shown for a longer time compared to the other gender. It is passive if the gender was only featured without doing a significant action.

The data above show that in Cameroon, men characters were in dominant positions in the jingles compared to their female counterparts. Of all the 7 characters that were in dominant positions, all 7 characters (100%) were males, with females occupying no dominant positions (0%). In the case of Nigeria, of all the 10 jingles in dominant positions, 6 were females (60%) while 4 were males (40%). This implies that while males occupy dominant positions in COVID-19 jingles in Cameroon, it was females who occupied such dominant positions in Nigerian jingles. In both Cameroon and Nigeria, in every 10 characters in dominant positions, 6 will be males and 4 females.

**RQ5: What are the types of dressing of the males and females in the jingles?**

This was based on whether the gender dressed in a formal way (official appearance) or casual way (homely appearance)

The data above shows that both males and females dressed in a formal and casual wears in the jingles. While in Cameroonian jingles, males (60%) dressed more formally in the jingles than their female counterparts (40%), in the Nigerian jingles, females (53%) dressed more formally than their male counterparts (47%). In both countries, males (50%) and females (50%) both dressed equally formally than casual in the jingles.

**RQ6: What is the percentage of the narrator's voice that was dominant in the jingles?**

This was based on whose gender voice was used for the narration (or voice-over) in the jingle.

In the Cameroon Jingles, there are fewer narrations. Only in CRTV 1 did a male speak for seven seconds and that was the president of Cameroon, Mr Paul Biya, speaking thus: "the wearing of facemasks in public places will be mandatory until further notice". The other scenes in the Cameroonian jingles were mainly graphic and motion pictures with sounds without narrations. In the case of Nigerian jingles, there were narrations. Females voices in narrations amounted to 35 (66%) seconds compared to only 18 (34%)

seconds for male narrations. This means that in Cameroon, female voices are not used for narrations, in Nigerian in every voice narration, 7 will be females and 3 males.

### **Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations**

The findings which show that males disproportionately feature in COVID-19 jingles in Cameroon and Nigeria compared to their female counterparts in a ratio of 7 to 3 and which show that males are allotted more time in jingles and advertisement confirm studies by Ahmad (2014), Daalmans *et al.*, 2017, Rattan *et al.* (2019) which all show that women are underrepresented in television jingles.

In terms of which gender is presented from a dominant position, males were found to be overwhelmingly presented as dominant compared to females. Luyt (2011) and Palmer (2019), in their studies, confirm this finding that males occupy dominating positions over females in jingles. However, in terms of which gender voice was used more for narration or voice over, females were used more.

In terms of dressing, males and females were equally presented as dressing appropriately in the jingles, whether formal or casual. This finding negates studies Panarese (2014) which presented males more in business contexts and workplaces (which formal dresses represent), than the females.

These findings justify the gender studies theory in which gender is culturally based. These findings prove what scholars (Parpart, 1995; Williams, 2019; Egielewa, 2020) have argued that Africa is patriarchal and thus disproportionately disadvantage women as these findings in this study show.

In conclusion, COVID-19 jingles in Cameroon and Nigeria (Africa) were male-dominated and females were generally relegated to passive roles following the patriarchal context of Africa.

This study recommends thus,

1. In the production of jingles, media organisations and government bodies should ensure that both genders are equally involved.
2. Times allotted to the gender in jingles should not disproportionately disadvantage one gender.
3. Voice narrations should not only be female but males should also be used for such roles.

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