

Original Research Article

Influence of the Facebook Social Network on the Visibility of LGBTIQ Identities, in Particular Woubi People in Côte d'Ivoire

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Abstract: Social networks, particularly Facebook, are playing an increasingly important role in shaping and promoting identities, especially in societies where social norms sometimes restrict the expression of certain identities. In Côte d'Ivoire, where issues relating to sexual orientation are often taboo, social networks provide an alternative space for the expression of these identities, particularly those of the Woubis, a local term for LGBTIQ people. The aim of this study is to examine the impact of Facebook on the visibility of homosexual identities (Woubis) in Côte d'Ivoire, taking into account the socio-cultural and political particularities of this context. Qualitative in nature, the study is based on content analysis and explores publications, comments and interactions within Facebook pages, groups and profiles associated with Woubis identities in Côte d'Ivoire. To do this, surveys and interviews were conducted with Woubis Facebook users in order to better understand their experiences and perceptions. The case study approach was therefore deemed appropriate for analysing concrete examples of the successful or controversial visibility of Woubis identities on this platform. The results show that Ivorian cyberactivists question rigid categories of gender and sexuality, including the dichotomy between homosexuality and heterosexuality. They see homosexuality not as a fixed identity, but as one of many possible forms of sexual expression, embedded in a system of behaviours, representations and discriminations that favour heterosexuality, despite the existence of other sexual orientations. They also benefit from the reinforcement of strict boundaries between sexual categories. However, the Woubis adopt an interactionist approach, negotiating and amplifying their sexual identities through their social interactions. They develop ideologies in which homosexuality is seen as an identity that emerges and is consolidated through these interactions.

Keywords: Impact, Social network, Facebook, Identity, Homosexual.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The globalisation of the internet has transformed the dynamics surrounding male homosexuality, contributing to the global spread of forms of homoeroticism, both in terms of images and practices (Kuntsman and Qasimi, 2012; Pullen and Cooper, 2010; Campbell, 2004, cited by Patrick Awondo, 2016: 41). On the one hand, the web has become a key space for the circulation of representations of male sexuality, influencing the processes of homosexual identity construction as well as the way in which this orientation is expressed (Binnie, 2004; Bell and Binnie, 2000; Fox, 2012 cited by Awondo, op.cit., p.42). The internet has also led to an increased interest in

how issues of sexuality are becoming globalised (Altman, 2001; Blidon and Roux, 2011 cited by Awondo, op.cit., p.42). On the other hand, the network has emerged as a major means of encounter for men in relationships with other men (Velter, 2004; Léobon, 2010 cited by Awondo, op.cit., p.42), whether in the West or in other parts of the world (Alexander, 2002, cited by Awondo, op.cit., p.42).

In Senegal, although homosexuality has always been rejected, its more visible presence in the public arena has intensified moral discourse, which has become progressively harsher. Homosexuality is frequently condemned in mosque sermons. However, this

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disapproval is not limited to the religious sphere; it permeates society as a whole, manifesting itself in popular genres such as rap. To better understand the logic of these discourses, it is important to first clarify the Muslim vision of sexuality, in order to then analyse the meaning attributed to homosexuality (Ndèye, 2013: 100).

In Islam, the concept of the sexes is based on the idea of divine creation, where sexuality is perceived as an act of adoration towards God. In this context, 'homosexuality is seen not only as a deviance or a search for particular pleasures, but as a challenge to the divine order of the world, based on the harmony and distinction of the sexes' (Bouhdiba, 1975: 44, quoted by Ndèye, 2013: 100). This explains why, in the Islamic tradition, homosexuality is morally condemned. Abdelwahab Bouhdiba also points out that 'according to tradition, four categories of people attract God's wrath: men who cross-dress as women, women who cross-dress as men, those who practice zoophilia, and those who have relations with people of the same sex. Among them, homosexuality is the most severely condemned' (Ndèye, *op. cit.*, p. 2).

In Côte d'Ivoire, the low profile of homosexuals in the public arena, compared with heterosexuals, also reflects the scarcity and tardiness of debates on issues relating to heterosexuality. Côte d'Ivoire only gained access to the Internet for the first time in 1996, marking its entry into the global network. According to figures provided by the Agence des Télécommunications de Côte d'Ivoire (ATCI), the country had 15,354 Internet subscribers and over 70,000 Internet users at the end of 2002, i.e. around 4.3 users per 1,000 inhabitants (Loukou, 2005: 30).

With the emergence of Facebook, a real interest developed around the issue of homosexuality among Internet users and cyber-activists. Since then, the subject has found its place in discussions on this platform. Facebook has also played a crucial role in raising the profile of homosexuals and facilitating encounters between them. In addition, the recent proliferation of stories and testimonies shared by homosexuals and Ivorian influencers has helped to liberate the expression of homosexual identities, not only in digital spaces but also in Ivorian society.

With this in mind, the study by N'guessan *et al.*, (2022) revealed that the majority of Ivorians express disapproval of homosexuality, as reflected in their opinions, attitudes and stereotypes. In general, homosexuality is seen as an orientation to be rejected, as it is considered contrary to African traditions and cultural values. It is seen as a form of deviance and moral corruption. The practice is considered immoral and qualified as an abomination, likely, according to certain beliefs, to lead to perdition. It is often associated with sin, the consequence of which, according to religious texts, is

death. This behaviour is decried as 'unnatural' and considered a violation of the sanctity of sexuality.

However, Ivorian law does not punish sexual relations between consenting adults of the same sex (Journal Officiel de la République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2019, quoted by Berne-Wabern, 2023: 8).

Côte d'Ivoire has never criminalised sexual relations between consenting adults of the same sex, whether men or women, as pointed out by Amnesty International (AI) and the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) (Amnesty International, 2013, cited by the Commissariat Général aux Réfugiés et Apatrides, 2021). However, Article 360 of the Penal Code, on 'public indecency', used to include a specific penalty for 'any indecent or unnatural act committed with a person of the same sex'. This offence was punishable by six months 'to two years' imprisonment, as well as a fine ranging from 50,000 to 300,000 CFA francs (cited by the Commissariat Général aux Réfugiés et Apatrides, 2021: 7).

Although sexual orientation is not directly penalised, the Alternative Côte d'Ivoire association reports that members of the homosexual community were often forced to meet in private and discreet places in order to be able to invoke the protection of privacy if their practices became public (quoted by the Commissariat Général aux Réfugiés et Apatrides, *op. cit.*, p. 7). This provision makes homosexuality an aggravating circumstance, prompting fierce criticism during Côte d'Ivoire's latest Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in May 2019.

However, with the aim, according to the government, of repealing 'provisions that are no longer relevant due to their obsolete nature', the Penal Code was revised in 2019. The new version came into force in July of the same year. The offence of public indecency is now dealt with in article 416, and all references to same-sex relationships have been removed. Côte d'Ivoire is thus one of the few African countries not to criminalise same-sex relations.

The West Africa Sankofa Initiative (WASI) is a fund dedicated to promoting a West African movement for sexual diversity and sexual rights. According to Stéphane Simporé, ISDAO's Director of Communications and Knowledge Management, by September 2021, no one would be imprisoned in Côte d'Ivoire because of their sexual orientation.

Various annual reports on human rights in Côte d'Ivoire, published in 2020 and 2021, reported no legal action based on an individual's sexual orientation (USDOS, 2020-2021, quoted by the Commissariat Général aux Réfugiés et aux Apatrides). However, on 5 September 2024, in response to allegations of discrimination against LGBTIQ-Woubi people in Côte

d'Ivoire, ten human rights organisations issued a joint statement warning of a worrying rise in violence against them. They noted an increase in publications.

Despite initiatives to promote freedom of sexual orientation and the absence of laws explicitly prohibiting sexual acts within the LGBTIQ community, there is limited representation of the defence of LGBTIQ-Woubi practices in digital spaces, particularly on Facebook. Many influencers and users of this platform in Côte d'Ivoire highlight the marginalisation of LGBTIQ-Woubi practices in relation to dominant heterosexual behaviour. This dynamic highlights the persistent tensions between the rhetoric of freedom and the reality of social exclusion within the digital space.

Given the above findings, how do Internet users and cyber-activists in Côte d'Ivoire address the issue of homosexuality through publicity or mass e-mailings, and how does this information influence cultural perceptions? How does the Facebook social network influence the visibility of homosexual identities compared with heterogeneous sexual identities? How is acceptance of homosexuality changing among Ivorians? The main objective of this study is to analyse how Facebook influences the visibility of homosexual identities (Woubis) in Côte d'Ivoire, taking into account the cultural, social and political specificities of the Ivorian context. More specifically, the study will aim to: Examine the digital practices of the Woubis on Facebook. Analyse the discourses and representations of homosexual identity on this platform. Assess the effects of this visibility on the social relations, public perception and well-being of the Woubis.

The phenomenon of homosexuality has been the subject of a number of scientific studies that have enriched both the theoretical foundations and the results of empirical research. The interactionist approach examines how individuals interpret and negotiate their sexual identities through social interactions. As a result, the antagonism between the individual (negotiator) and society (object of negotiation) is maintained. According to this paradigm, homosexuality is assimilated to an identity that excels and is consolidated through interactions with others, and is influenced by the social context. Social construction theory is based on the idea that reality is constructed, or established, by each individual's interactions with society and culture. This theory views human development as a collaborative process. In application to this study, it presupposes that sexual identities, including homosexuality, are socially constructed. It suggests that what we observe as 'homosexual' is the product of cultural norms,

statements and practices that are distinctive or exclusive to a given society.

Queer theory also emerged within gender studies, which developed in the United States from the early 1990s onwards, through post-structuralist [¹] and deconstructivist rereadings, in the wake of the ideas of Foucault [²] and Derrida. Queer theory [³] is a sociological and philosophical theory which postulates that sexuality, and also the masculine, feminine or other gender of an individual, are not determined exclusively by his or her biological sex (male or female), but by his or her socio-cultural environment, life history and personal choices. Above all, queer theory seeks to rethink identities outside the normative framework of a society that sees sexuation as constitutive of a binary divide between human beings, a divide based on the idea of complementarity in difference and supposed to be actualised primarily by the heterosexual couple (heteronormativity).

In application, she considers gender as a constructed fact rather than as a natural fact, and is interested in the way in which gender identity can be the result of a social construction. It analyses fixed categories of gender and sexuality, including the homosexual/heterosexual antinomy. Queer theory is a field of academic study and a theoretical framework that questions and critiques traditional notions of gender, sexuality and identity. Developed from the 1990s onwards, this theory explores the way in which sexual and gender categories, often perceived as fixed (e.g. male/female, heterosexual/homosexual), are in reality fluid social constructions subject to transformation. Queer theory draws on a number of intellectual currents, including feminism, gender studies, postcolonial studies and psychoanalysis. It also has roots in the LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) rights movements and the critique of sexual and gender norms. Figures such as Judith Butler, with her book *Gender Trouble* (1990), were influential in the development of queer theory. Butler introduces the idea that gender is a performance, meaning that what we consider to be 'masculine' or 'feminine' behaviours are roles that we adopt, rather than natural or biological expressions of a fixed identity.

In contrast, sexual script theory explores how individuals follow or challenge these scripts or principles to make sense of their own sexuality, including homosexuality. From the perspective of sexual scripts, individuals learn, through their inscription in the social group and impregnation by its narratives, the particular meanings attributed to certain events and situations that constitute them as sexual, and they acquire the ability to

¹ Nicola Nagy, *La pensée foucauldienne, une pensée critique ?*, GRIN Verlag, 2016, p. 1

² Tim Dean, 'Lacan and queer theory', *Cliniques méditerranéennes*, n°73, February 2006, p. 71-78 (DOI 10.3917/cm.074.0061., read online

³From the English words 'strange' and 'bizarre'

identify sexual situations as well as to act or react sexually: 'Scripts are involved in learning the meanings of inner states, organising the succession of specific sexual acts, decoding novel situations, setting limits on sexual responses and the ability to relate meanings of non-sexual aspects of life to specific sexual experiences' (Gagnon and Simon, 2005: 17, cited by Lucas, 2016: 585).

However, social stigma theory (or 'sociostigma') is defined by proponents of social labelling theory [4] as a process that places a powerful negative label on an individual or group (Macionis, 2010). Unlike other authors who have examined the process of adopting a deviant identity, Erving Goffman explored the ways in which people manage identity and control information about it. In application, Erving Goffman examines how homosexuals whose sexuality differs from the social norm can be stigmatised by the family circle or society. The author highlights the social and individual implications of stigmatisation, as well as the coping methods and resilience strategies used by stigmatised people.

These different patterns of reflexivity make it possible to explore the Woubi phenomenon from various angles: as a product of societal models, a fluid identity, a dynamic interaction, a role in cultural scripts, or an experience marked by stigmatisation. The combination of these perspectives can offer a richer and more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon of Facebook's influence on the visibility of Woubi identities in Côte d'Ivoire.

2. Theoretical and methodological background to the study

In her book *Gender Trouble* (1990), Judith Butler introduces the notion of the 'performativity of gender'. She argues that gender is not an innate essence or a natural given, but rather a series of repetitive acts, a set of discursive and bodily practices that are performed on a daily basis. For Butler, gender is constructed through the behaviours and discourses that individuals adopt, and these performances are regulated by social norms.

The performativity of gender means that gender identities (masculine, feminine, etc.) are constantly 'reproduced' through practices and expressions, rather than being fixed or immutable categories. It is therefore through these performances that individuals affirm or challenge the norms of gender and sexuality in society.

Facebook, as a social network, offers a platform where gender and sexual identities can be performed and

reconfigured. Users construct their identities by publishing content, interacting with others and taking part in discussions. The platform enables LGBTIQ people, particularly Woubi people in Côte d'Ivoire, to shape their identities and make them visible.

The term 'Woubi' in Côte d'Ivoire refers to a gender and sexual identity specific to the local context, often associated with men who adopt traditionally feminine roles in homosexual relationships. In a society where patriarchal and heterosexual norms are dominant, Woubi people often experience marginalisation.

Facebook, as a digital space, plays an important role in the visibility and legitimisation of Woubi identities, enabling these people to connect with like-minded communities, challenge dominant norms and create new forms of identity expression.

According to performativity theory, people's everyday actions and interactions on Facebook are opportunities to perform their gender identity. These performances take the form of photo choices, statuses, 'likes', comments, and affiliations with groups or causes.

Facebook therefore enables individuals to challenge traditional gender norms by performing identities that move away from the dominant heterosexual and binary models. For Woubi people, who are subject to strong cultural pressure in Côte d'Ivoire, Facebook becomes a platform where they can create a public identity that transgresses these norms in a safer way than in physical public, because of the relative anonymity afforded by the social network.

However, the visibility offered by Facebook can have both positive and negative consequences. On the one hand, this visibility allows Woubi and other LGBTIQ identities to strengthen themselves online, create networks of support and awareness, and subvert hegemonic gender norms. On the other hand, performativity on Facebook also exposes these identities to surveillance, attacks and repression in societies where homophobia and transphobia are still very present.

In application, Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity allows us to understand how Facebook becomes a scene where gender identities, including those of Woubi people, are performed and visible. The influence of Facebook on the visibility of LGBTIQ identities in Côte d'Ivoire can be seen as an extension of the dynamics of gender performativity, where the platform offers possibilities for both reinforcing and contesting gender norms, but also risks associated with this exposure. Facebook allows Woubi people to reclaim

⁴*Social labelling theory is a theory according to which the self-concept and behaviour of individuals can be determined or influenced by the terms used to describe or classify them. It is related to the concepts of deviance,*

self-fulfilling prophecy, socio-stigmatisation and stereotyping. Social labelling, based on prejudice, is a source of social stigmatisation.

their identity in a digital space, thus creating new opportunities for existence, resistance and solidarity, while facing the challenges of a society where heteronormative norms remain very strong.

Methodologically, the study is qualitative. It was based on a content analysis reviewing publications, comments, and interactions on Facebook pages, groups, and profiles associated with Woubis identities in Côte d'Ivoire. Semi-structured surveys and interviews were organized from August 1, 2024 to August 8, 2024 inclusive with stakeholders by snowball effect to collect qualitative data from Woubis Facebook users to understand their experiences and perceptions. We also studied specific examples of successful or controversial visibility of Woubis identities on Facebook.

3. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

In the following lines, we offer an in-depth analysis of the way in which Facebook influences the visibility of the identities of the LGBT community, particularly woubis in Côte d'Ivoire, while taking into account the advantages and risks linked to this exposure.

3.1. Woubis and the quest for visibility on Facebook [5]: The difficult march towards a temporality of visibility [6]

The results of the study showed that Facebook plays a determining role in the construction of discursive spaces for Woubis offering a social field where these individuals can interact. It is therefore a social communication space where each individual can design a profile and disclose content to reintegrate categories of common interests. This gave the Woubis the opportunity to assert their sexual identity in a relatively unmistakable and welcoming space but above all offering the Woubis a space for discussion, sharing and mutual support. This argument highlights the visibility of Woubis through Facebook: « *Hello, would you agree to get together with a woman you sincerely love? No, I don't like women. I am quee, homosexual. I assume. Thank you for your interview which will probably be broadcast on social networks to promote our sexual choice as homosexuals.* » (T.M, Woubi in Facebook 2024).

This statement highlights four postulates: the "Refusal of a relationship with a woman", which translates that the author rejects the idea of engaging in a relationship with a woman, even if this woman would love him loyally. This abandonment is seen not only as

an allegation of his sexual position as a homosexual, but also as a request for his queer identity. This denotes that it asserts itself apart from normative social aspirations which value heterosexual relationships as the ideal.

By the "Declaration of identity": The fact that he defines himself as "queer and homosexual or Woubi" exemplifies a double attitude. The reference to the term "homosexual" evokes a sexual identity more or less rooted in identifiable categories. That is, a man who has sexual relations with men, while "queer" encompasses a more transparent and non-normative approach to inclinations and identities. The person excludes the social norm that could force him to examine the relationship with a woman and ensures an identity that is measured by the categorizations of inflexible sexual orientations. Indeed by the expression, "Assume one's identity": By saying "I assume", the author affirms not only his sexual orientation but also an intention to live outside the heterosexual expectations of society. This view reflects a fundamental aspect of queer theory that stimulates individuals to embrace non-normative identities and endure social oppression that seeks to isolate them and render them imperceptible. Finally, by the term "Public valorization of one's orientation": The fact of emphasizing that the interview must be widespread to "valorize our sexual choice as homosexuals" highlights another key aspect of queer theory: visibility.

In application, queer theory seeks to make visible the identities and practices of Woubis who are often ignored and stigmatized. The aim of making this exchange public is to deconstruct the norm and to show that the identities of the Woubis are legitimate choices and worth highlighting. Thus, this assertion is part of a queer perspective by affirming the legitimacy of non-heterosexual identities and by rejecting traditional social norms which could value a heterosexual relationship to the detriment of an assumed queer identity legitimacy.

For Woubis living in Ivory Coast, Facebook has allowed them to overcome or break social isolation by giving them visibility to their causes and sexual orientations and strengthening social unity. However, challenges related to mitigation and online harassment suggest that progress is essential for these spaces to remain unquestionably safe and inclusive. These statements exemplify: "You think you are harming us on social networks. On the contrary, thanks to you, human

⁵Quest for visibility on Facebook: This term refers to the desire of Woubis to make themselves known, to show themselves, and to obtain recognition or attention on the Facebook platform. This could involve using this platform to express their identity, claim rights, or simply exist in a virtual public space.

⁶Difficult walk towards a temporality of visibility: This expression is more complex. It probably indicates that the visibility of Woubis is not constant or easy to

obtain. The term "temporality" here could refer to the duration or persistence of this visibility over time. In other words, the visibility of Woubis on Facebook is something fragile, ephemeral, or difficult to maintain over time. This could also allude to the challenges that Woubis face in being visible in the long term on this platform, due to various forms of marginalization, censorship, or discrimination.

rights NGOs and white people will depend on our sexual freedom in a difficult context. I think I will make myself understood" (D. L, Facebook 2024); "Wow thing, if I don't put my mouth in it, maybe you'll think that I'm a woubi too. Otherwise, by talking about the Woubis, we are giving them visibility. What I see. If not, I have a question to ask you or them. Who fucks "mougou [7]" the Woubis? Aha!!! Can't you answer? » (E.D, in Facebook 2024).

These assertions reflect the way a woubi (homosexuals) reacts to hostility or stigmatization on social networks. The interviewee presents an absurdity: "although some think they are harming the families of homosexuals, particularly woubis in Côte d'Ivoire, by conveying malicious hatred or segregation, this in reality has the opposite effect. The author mentions individuals and social categories who promulgate homophobic information online on Facebook, hoping that they are harming the family of homosexuals and particularly the visibility of Woubis in Côte d'Ivoire.

The investigation indicates a reversal of the situation. These publications of discrimination conversely fascinate a broader deference. The analysis of the statements of the respondents online highlights that the reaction to the attacks on social networks against the Woubis leads human rights organizations to rally to preserve the advantages of the Woubis (homosexuals). Through the term "whites", is explained as a model to international allies, particularly in socio-cultural contexts where the freedoms of sexual minorities are legal in Western countries in opposition to environments where these freedoms are more strangled or repressed.

Clearly, the comments of the respondents show that homophobic attacks are counterproductive, because they stimulate the defense of human freedoms and sexual orientation. However, these arguments explain a phenomenon where harmful actions such as stigmatization on Facebook generate a positive response, engaging the protectors of human freedoms and intensifying the fight for freedom of sexual orientation in difficult socio-cultural contexts.

⁷"Mougou" is a pejorative concept of having had sexual relations with someone, whether in a homosexual or heterosexual couple. Generally, the concept of "mougou" refers to vaginal penetration with the human penis. Here, this concept is used to designate the anal penetration of a woubi (homosexual) man using a human penis.

⁸**Construction of social reality:** Social reality refers to the way in which individuals perceive and understand the world around them, particularly through social interactions. It is formed through communication, education, the media, but also through experiences lived

3.2. From online visibility towards the construction of the social reality [8] of Woubis

The advent of Facebook has created networks of support and unity between Woubis. However, many Woubis continue to live in social isolation, particularly in categories where they cannot easily produce and share their experiences with other individuals. This break between online life and real life can sometimes accentuate or intensify a feeling of disconnection.

The survey showed that Facebook digital spaces do not advocate for the freedom of sexual orientations of Woubis, who have not yet found a popular audience with Facebook. In reality, Woubis publications are confronted with antagonistic forces. Consequently, we observe structural discrimination in access to employment and frequentation of public consumption and food spaces but also offensives against the Woubis, particularly in the form of vindictive or malicious comments add vehemence or impetuosity of a physical nature. These words illustrate: "Dirty Woubi there, Response from the Woubi: It's with your dad, I was rehearsing woubiya, female dog, bitch" (M.A in Facebook 2024); "If you are a friend of a woubi, you are cursed. If a woubi is your friend, you are cursed. If you subscribe to woubi's page, you are cursed. If you say hello to woubi, you are cursed. Woubi gives you a gift, you take it, you are cursed. You eat with woubi, woubi eats with you, you are cursed" (M.D. in Facebook, 2024); "If your grandfather had gone up behind your father, were you going to be born? What has the African also lost? Have we also fallen that low? Are we that miserable? Kill the lapé-lapé [9]. What God gave you, you witch, you, cursed woman, daughter of the devil. Is your aunt or your grandmother, little beast. Did your grandmother lap down your mother so that you were born? You savage. Hallelujah!!! It would not be worth all this nonsense, the waste, this rottenness that people watch on TV to be deported to Africa, to Ivory Coast here. Yes, I have to die for that. But, death is God who decides. It's not because others have done that that we have to do that" (G.T, Facebook 2024).

It emerges from these allegations by the use of offensive terms, such as "female dog" or "slut", are attributes commonly reserved for the category of women or for feminine practices considered asocial. This link between homosexuality and devalued femininity intensifies the stigmatization of non-heterosexual

in community. In this context, the construction of social reality refers to the way in which the online visibility of Woubis contributes to the acceptance, recognition and definition of their place in society. This can influence their social status, how they are perceived by others, and even how they perceive themselves as individuals and as a group.

⁹ **Lapé-lapé** is a derogatory expression to designate lesbians in popular language in Côte d'Ivoire.

identities by assimilating them to forms of gender and sexuality distinguished as dependent or demeaning. Furthermore, the second allegation comes from a person who conflates homosexuality with a curse or something unproductive. This type of statement is rooted in conformist religious and cultural beliefs that delegitimize Woubism (homosexuality) and view it as a gap between social norms.

Drawing on the theory of gender performativity, we highlight from the aforementioned statements the way in which these vituperations or invectives function as mechanisms of social regulation that reaffirm and legitimize heterosexual and gender norms. They aim to educate or discipline individuals who do not conform to these social norms, by merging them with sexualized practices qualified as shameful, while accentuating the break between what is discerned as traditional or asocial.

3.3. Stigma and discrimination online create repercussions in the real lives of Woubis

Woubis visible on Facebook are the target of discriminatory comments and online harassment (cyber harassment), particularly from heterosexual individuals. Being visible on Facebook exposes Woubis to this risk, especially if their sexual orientation is not yet known in their social or professional circle. This obviously has repercussions, including stigmatization and family breakdowns. Which is at the origin of the weakening of social bonds. This allegation clarifies: *“It’s a delicate subject. I was with a young man. He is well muscled and made love to me very well. He was my boyfriend. Whereas, she’s another man’s girlfriend. He had sex with me. And, he was also sleeping with another man. I found out on the day of the Ramadan festival. He told me he was going to visit his friends. So, the next day, very early, I went to his house. I started to caress him. He didn’t react. He told me he was tired. That he should rest. By insisting while caressing him, I was able to put my finger in his anus. And I found out he was a faggot (homosexual). He asked me to leave his house. I came home. I didn’t like writing. He’s queer. So he asked me to have a child for him. Look at me, him there. You’re queer and I’m going to be a child for you? I couldn’t have a child with a fag”* (Q.A. Facebook 2024); *“I had a relationship with Woubis for three months without realizing that he’s a Woubi. You have to see me giving kisses to Morgor there at midnight. It’s my blood brother that I’m giving kisses like that without realizing. The morgor has transformed into a woman. The opportunity has now presented itself to denounce these practices of Woubis, me, to sit back and say nothing? »* (Loeil Du Showbiz in Facebook, Côte d’Ivoire, 2024).

This statement reflects that the man is being labeled as a "faggot" (an excessively demeaning or derogatory term for a homosexual individual), which indicates the stigmatization of homosexuality in this particular context. The use of this term reflects a

rejection and devaluation of the individual based exclusively on their sexual orientation. According to Ervin Goffman, the stigma associated with homosexuality in certain societies leads to dehumanization and a degeneration of social status.

The woman (author) perceives homosexuality as deviant, asocial behavior, and discordant or incompatible with her own relational convenience, particularly regarding the idea of starting a family "having a child". This captures the way the Ivorian defines gender and sexuality norms, labeling those who do not conform to them as deviant. The man is expelled from the possibility of building a heterosexual relationship normal to the woman's expectations because of his bisexuality or his "Woubist" (homosexuality) practices.

The discovery of the partner's homosexual practices produced a reaction of systematic rejection, where the woman not only declines any form of future relationship, but indiscriminately declines the idea of having a child with him. This rejection is the product of stigma, where the stigma: homosexuality, becomes an insurmountable obstacle for any marital type interaction in the future.

This process of rejection is understood as a mechanism for the woman to dissociate herself from the stigma and to avoid distinguished social transmission. The attitude of the man, who asks the woman to leave and stops talking to her in order to negotiate her sexual identity, is the consequence of the stigma. Knowing that his sexual orientation has caused rejection, he favors deconstructing the bonds rather than facing reprimands.

The second declaration notifies that a man maintained a fervent relationship for three months with an individual, whom he calls "morgor", an Ivorian customary concept that can qualify an individual in a familiar or demeaning way without understanding that this individual was a man. That is to say a "Woubi". He reveals himself as being deceived about the gender identity of the individual with whom he was in a relationship. The author shows his shock by remembering that he had a secret relationship with a "Woubi" without being aware of it. He uses vigorous words to symbolize and signify his error, just as he embraced his "blood brother" without realizing it. This highlights the contrast between the initial perception (that of a heterosexual relationship) and the reality (a homosexual relationship) is revealed as treachery. Through this incident, the author seizes an opportunity to point out what he distinguishes as perfidious or unfair practices of the "Woubis".

He insists on the fact that he cannot continue to be calm in the face of what he describes as a breach of his confidence or a cheating on the identity of his sexual partner. This allegation is possibly linked to the

stigmatization and rejection of sexual minorities in certain cultures. The author expresses anxiety and rejection of homosexuality, using demeaning terms and symbols to convey his disgust.

In summary, the author feels abused and betrayed and uses this story to express a protest against the "Woubis", perceived as having been misled. This discourse is representative of the social tensions around questions of gender and sexuality in certain societies, where the acceptance of non-appropriate or conforming sexual identities still remains a challenge.

In this regard, Ervin Goffman has shown that stigmatized individuals most of the time develop avoidance strategies through exposure to or limitation of contact with those who are not stigmatized. The dialectic of the woman (author) sheds light on the dynamics of the stigmatization of the individual perceived as "deviant" because of their sexual position which is categorized and devalued. The woman's attitude refers to an orientation of sexuality which does not admit forms that do not conform to dominant social norms.

Clearly, the theory of stigma made it possible to understand how Woubilism (homosexuality) is constructed as a "dishonorable or shameful" and demeaning identity, leading to rejection and exclusion.

3.4. Facebook as a resilience tool for woubis

By focusing on the processes by which the individual manages to acquire this capacity for resilience, certain authors have come to consider resilience itself as a process, a dynamic, modular concept, evolving over time and according to events. Thus, for Manciaux (2001 cited by Michallet, 2009: 12), to cancel means to pick oneself up, to bounce back, to move forward after an illness, a trauma, a stress. It is overcoming the trials and crises of existence, that is to say resisting them, then overcoming them to continue living as best as possible (Michallet, *op cit.*, p.12). Egeland, Carlson and Sroufe (1993 cited by Michallet, *op cit.*, p.12), Jourdan-Ionescu (2001 cited by Michallet, *op cit.*, p.12), Werner and Johnson (1999 cited by Michallet, *op cit.*, p.12) define resilience as a dynamic and complex process resulting from the interaction of protective factors and risk factors located on the personal, family and environmental levels. These constitutional and environmental factors would make the individual resilient, that is to say capable of recovering from difficult situations. According to Richardson (2002 cited by Michallet, *op cit.*, p.12), resilience is a process of adaptation to stressors, adversity, change and opportunities, which results in the identification, reinforcement and enrichment of protective factors, whether personal or environmental (Michallet, 2009: 12).

In this context, Facebook helps to strengthen the resilience of Woubis to share their experiences and

exchange with other people living similar experiences. This helps Woubis break social isolation, especially in a sociocultural context where homosexuality is vilified. Facebook serves as a platform to disseminate essential information on the freedom of Woubis, access to health and frequenting consumption spaces in complete peace of mind. The resilience of Woubis is made possible thanks to the structuring of their personalities, through constructive experiences with individuals of their sexual orientation. This assertion clarifies: *"Listen to me, General Macossi-Macahar, you want a visa to come to France, ok. Know one thing. If you set foot on French soil, I will file a complaint against you for inciting hatred and inciting murder against hobbies. Hear me out, I'm going to file a complaint and I don't want to be the only one. Are you waiting for that? You fake pastor there. You are inciting murders against the LGBT community. We won't let you do it. There are enough weirdos like that in France. There are enough homophobes in France. We don't need one more"* (C.S, in Facebook 2024).

In the cited text, several elements have been analyzed through the prism of the theory of resilience: from the confrontation and resistance to verbal aggression, the author shows a reaction of resistance against what he perceives as an aggression coming from "Macossi-Macahar", in this case incitement to hatred and murders against the LGBT community. Saying, "I'm filing a complaint against you" is a form of defense mechanism against a perceived threat. It is a way of setting limits and responding to an attack which, without this reaction, could be destructive.

By raising the specter of resorting to the judicial institution, the author shows that he has chosen a constructive method to manage aggression against sexual minorities (Woubis). He does not turn to violence, but uses legal institutions as a means of defense. This illustrates a crucial aspect of resilience: choosing response methods that allow you to protect and safeguard your integrity while reaffirming yourself. The author's statement evokes the LGBT family, which has traditionally been the target of discrimination and violence. The resilience of this LGBT family, through their biography, was expressed through activism, the construction of support networks and the commitment to individual freedoms. The author acts as an agent for this LGBT family by firmly opposing what he perceives as a stimulation of antipathy.

One of the strategies or methods of collective resilience is solidarity. The author not only certifies that he will file a complaint, but hopes not to be the only one to do so, thus calling for a collective response. This replicates the idea that social resilience is strengthened by coordinated community actions.

The author has shown in particular an intention to protect French society against what he perceives as an importation of homophobia. He says: "There are enough

homophobes in France. We don't need one more." This is seen as a test of maintaining social cohesion and warning of new crises in French society. In view of the above, resilience requires a reaffirmation of democratic values and human freedoms, predominant elements to overcome incursions against sexual minorities.

By preserving these values, the author contributes to the defense of an inclusive society, where each individual can rebuild their identity after social or personal attacks. The use of a complaint, a legal process or request, illustrates confidence in justice institutions to protect rights and assert freedoms against hatred and violence. This highlights the role of institutional systems in the resilience, not only of individuals but also of social groups.

Resilience, in this context, is not limited to the capacity to recover individually from trauma, but it also includes resistance to allegations of hostility and violence that challenge the integrity of a social category in its context together. The author's argument showed how resilience can externalize or express itself through collective actions, preservation of freedoms and organized resistance, relying on legal institutions of justice to prevent the perpetuation of the shock or social trauma.

3.5. Potential impact of new regulations on freedom of expression and the protection of homosexuals "Woubis" online: The difficult equation ^[10] of the contrast between the initial perception "that of a heterosexual relationship" and the reality "a homosexual relationship".

Far from the erroneous belief that the Internet is a sort of no man's land where everything is permitted, the constant evolution of information and communication techniques and the diversification of digital exchanges have led to an evolution of laws. In fact, not only do the main principles of classic law apply online, but a growing number of laws include specific rules adapted to the digital framework (CRIPS Sud, 2017: 18).

Freedom of expression, guaranteed by the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen,

¹⁰ The tension between the initial perception of a heterosexual relationship and the reality of a homosexual relationship highlights several complex issues, which relate as much to individual psychology as to society as a whole. **This difficult equation** relies on cultural, emotional and identity factors, each playing a role in how a relationship is perceived and experienced. The gap between perception and reality: The contrast between initial perception (a heterosexual relationship) and reality (a homosexual relationship) can cause cognitive shock for certain individuals. This surprise may be due to prejudice, personal expectations or simply a lack of understanding of different sexual orientations. This can lead to varied reactions: curiosity, confusion, and

obviously applies online but it is affected, in the same way as in real life, by numerous limits:

- Not infringe on the privacy and image rights of others;
- Not to incite racial, ethnic or religious hatred, not to advocate war crimes or terrorism and not to make discriminatory remarks based on sexual orientation or disability, for example;
- Not make defamatory remarks (defamation can be racist, sexist, homophobic, etc.);
- Not make offensive remarks (CRIPS Sud, op.cit., P.18).

Concerning the right to image, article 9 of the Civil Code recalls that "everyone has the right to respect for their private life" and article 226-1 of the Penal Code specifies that it is punishable by one year of imprisonment. and a fine of 45,000 euros for the act, by means of any process whatsoever, of fixing, recording or transmitting, without the consent of the person, the image of a person found in a private place (CRIPS Sud, op.cit., P.18).

It is in this vein of idea that this remark illustrates: *"You, I don't know what general broke there, stop using my image to get views on social networks here. I never told you I was wow. You don't have proof that I am Woubi. You don't know me. I don't know you. So stop using my image to incite people to hate me. I hope I made myself understood clearly. I hope what I'm telling you is very clear. Yesterday you saw my photo. I wrote to you, you didn't answer me. You made another video again. So you think you're too uptight. You think you've come too far. I'm not going to get into that with you. I don't have time to talk about this kind of nonsense. I never told you that I am Woubi. You don't have proof that I am Woubis. You have made comments to defame me. I go out and look for my money. Or is it because I cook? Have you ever seen men who cook? You say I wear makeup, I wear wigs. It's normal, I'm in the field of aesthetics and hairdressing. I'm in fashion. What gives me money, I can't let go of that"* (M.K, blogger, Facebook, 2024).

discomfort, even rejection, especially among those who are unfamiliar or comfortable with the idea of sexual diversity. This discrepancy also highlights the question of coming out. For a homosexual person, it can be difficult to correct the initial perception without creating misunderstandings or being confronted with prejudice. The pressure of having to reveal one's true orientation and the need to clarify the nature of the relationship can generate emotional tension, especially if this revelation is made in a context where heterosexuality is presumed. The risk of discrimination or stigmatization can also reinforce this pressure.

The analysis of the author's speech highlights the following key postulates: firstly, the claim for integrity and identity explaining the accusation of the outrageous and disproportionate use of one's identity to gain visibility or incite ill will against one's person on Facebook. The author rejects any pejorative term "woubi".

Secondly, the interviewee's assertion highlights the defensive nature against defamation and accusations. To this end, the author perceives the assertions and actions of his disapprover as a form of slander or denigration. The author seems to be caricatured by the fact that his life options; the fact of cooking, wearing wigs and working in aesthetics and fashion are assimilated to a sexual orientation. The use of the term "defame" intensifies the idea that he considers these accusations as offensives aimed at compromising his celebrity by deconstructing his identity to weaken his network of social ties or lead his social capital to stigmatize him.

Third, the reference to masculinity and gender norms; The author advocates defending her freedom to exercise activities that are considered feminine, such as cooking or hairdressing, emphasizing that there is nothing unusual for the category male to develop in these activities. It refutes gender clichés or stereotypes that exclusively link these social practices to sexual identity or orientation. The author emphasizes that he carries out these social activities because they generate income. Indeed, he does not intend to throw in the towel on what allows him to assume social responsibility. These aforementioned findings highlight a critique of the social circle which limits social roles and practices to scripts or rigid gender norms.

In addition, the author's remarks highlight the dimension of social conflict and by the presence on social networks; the remarks also reveal the conflicts that emerge on social networks, particularly on Facebook, where social categories are the target of persecution and defamation. Furthermore, the author explains how the dynamics of social networks (Facebook) intensifies or amplifies gender conflicts and spreads gossip and unjustified accusations. Which led the author to revolt to protect his identity.

However, the social dimension expresses a social position of freedom and non-lucidity. The author feels the need to elucidate his social position with regard to what he considers to be an alteration of his identity or his sexual orientation.

Finally, the dimension of asserting one's identity and rejecting conflict. Here, the author takes a position of avoiding all meaningless controversies which

would cause gratuitous conflicts to emerge. Indeed, the author leans towards the construction of his social trajectory by ignoring what public opinion says about his sexual orientation.

In turn, an Internet user reacts in these terms by presenting the different categories of Woubis with regard to their variant sexual positions: *"There are three categories of 'Woubis': there is an active 'Woubi', he is always the boy. 'Alèlobè Tchèyé', he is always the man, the husband. And then, there is passive 'Woubi', he is always the woman. The latter, he will never play the role of a boy. And then, there is active and passive 'Woubi', the one who can be a boy at times and then often, he is a woman. But, in this environment, the active or passive 'Woubi', they have women at home, married in good shape and in good shape. And, they have boys-women outside. They are someone else's wife out there. 'Abetami'? Where are we going? Our authorities must take clear action. They just have to tell us which side they are on? I reiterate my confidence in them."* (A.K.T, Facebook, 2024).

Through the deciphering of the author's remarks, we underline that in the environment, certain individuals, although playing distinct roles in their sexual or social relationship, are in marital relationships with legitimate (legal marriage) or traditional connotations. However, they have sexual relations with partners or "wives" of other men in other fields of social interactions. The author summarizes with a reflection on the usefulness for the Ivorian political class to clarify their position regarding this phenomenon of Woubi in Côte d'Ivoire. By using the term "Abètami", the author seems to express apprehension or pessimism about the trajectory that Ivorian society is taking. This statement illustrates: "You yourself were born from sexual relations between a man and a woman and you find that it is not good. »(G.T, Abidjan 2024).

It is with this in mind that an Internet user launches this appeal through these expressions: *"Ivorian girls, Ivorian mothers, you must stand up as one man to say no to this. Woubis affair is gaining momentum in that country. It's your children's home that's at stake. The boys who were supposed to marry your sisters are getting married there. So, the fight, when, I speak every day, people say that I hate it. I don't hate it. We must say no to woubilism. But it's a fight. As long as you don't fight woubilism, you're going to have women aged 35 and 40 who don't have husbands. We are Burkinabé, we will support you"* (T.J. Facebook 2024).

This assertion questions the sociocultural aspects and analyzes the issues through the spectrum of feminist theory [11] and research on fertility. The author's speech refers to traditional patriarchal conceptions on the

¹¹ **Feminist theory:** Gender norms and the role of women: Feminist theory critiques traditional gender

roles that assign women predefined functions in society, including those of mother and wife. In this declaration, it

function of the feminine category in society, while evoking the question of sexuality, in particular "woubism", in a context where it is understood as a pressure for established family structures.

Indeed, the rallying of women to go on the offensive against "woubilism" is seen as a strategy aimed at perpetuating patriarchal inspection of bodies, particularly those of women. Well expected, patriarchal structures sometimes seek to control the sexuality and reproduction of women to preserve the sustainability or immortalization of the traditional social character. This is why the author calls on women to play an ardent role in this control, by opposing the relationships of the Woubis in Côte d'Ivoire and by safeguarding heterosexual marriage as the only acceptable bond of union. This radicalizes a conception where women are custodians of morality and reproduction, a role usually prescribed by patriarchy.

Furthermore, the use of women whose class varies between 35 and 40 years old highlights the significance of marriage for this female category, particularly in relation to reproduction. For the author of the aforementioned quote, this position is associated with the idea of fertility, which is commonly used to control women's bodies. The idea according to which women must enter into a relationship young and have children before the age of menopause to avoid remaining single and infertile is a strategy of social pressure which forces women to adapt to the aspirations of their mother society regarding reproduction. This constraint or coercion related to age and entry into marriage is a model of how the sociocultural environment plans female fertility, associating a woman's worth with her ability to reproduce within a framework marital.

In application to feminist theory; Feminists argue that these spirits or norms reduce women to reproductive instruments and ignore other angles of their personality and their potential as free and autonomous individuals. In view of these findings, it is possible to disapprove of this perception which limits women to the roles of mothers and wives, while stigmatizing men who orient themselves towards distinct sexes. Mentioning the issue of fertility raises concern about seeing single women and highlights the societal pressure exerted on them to conform to a life model focused on marriage and reproduction. Clearly in the context of this study,

is explicitly said that the future of "Ivorian girls" and "mothers" depends on marriage and motherhood. The idea that women must "stand as one" to defend access to heterosexual marriage reveals a form of societal pressure on women to fulfill specific reproductive roles. Feminists often highlight the way society values women primarily based on their ability to marry and have children, thereby limiting their autonomy and personal development. The fight against this patriarchal vision of the role of women is at the heart of many feminist struggles. In this context,

feminist analysis has called into question the rigidity of gender and sexuality norms that are imposed on women and men in this allegation.

CONCLUSION

The visibility of the Woubis on Facebook is not limited to a mere passive existence. It profoundly shapes the collective perception within their social circle. By denouncing their identity and sexual orientation on this platform, the Woubis are actively participating in the redefinition of their identity bifurcation and their social reality in the public space. This process has various repercussions on their ongoing visibility on social networks, particularly Facebook. It contributes to the rationality of their identity by providing a frame of reference that enables Woubis to navigate between dominant socio-cultural norms and their own lived experiences. This process of rationalisation enables them to develop a more nuanced understanding of their place in society, fostering resilience in the face of discrimination and an affirmation of their identity.

Moreover, by making themselves visible on these platforms, the Woubis identify with each other, support each other and construct a dynamic collective identity, thereby reinforcing their own identity. At the same time, the tensions and negotiations associated with their visibility give rise to a variety of reactions, ranging from positive attitudes to forms of stigmatisation emanating from the dominant social sphere. The resulting controversies also play a crucial role in the construction of their identity and the negotiation of their place in society.

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