


Toward The Application of Jokes and The Use of Joke Consultants in Health, Work Places, State Leaders' Forums, And Educational Institutions in Africa

IKYER Godwin Aondofa* 
Federal University Wukari, Nigeria
aondofa@fuwukari.edu.ng

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ABSTRACT: *From the period of the 1990s onward, there has been the proliferation of jokes and joke performances in verbal, public, and media settings across Africa. This is not unconnected to the fermented democratic atmosphere and the gradual but steady entrenchment of democratic values and freedom away from the earlier dictatorial military regimes of time past. Jokes have transformed the public space of modern isolated existence and have emerged to review, even solve a horde of physical and mental problems in its enablement of laughter even in the taboo topics or disaster moments. Jokes' position to illuminate the harsh realities of contemporary existence, galvanize, and transform the vulnerable is fortified in view of the enigmatic being of liberal democracy in Africa, the existential narratives of civil strife, the state actors' poetics of abstraction, the presence of violence, crime, and the politics of exclusion that characterize modernity. This work, using Elliot Oring's model of "appropriate incongruity," interrogates the expanding relevance of jokes in multidisciplinary fields in Africa with a view to reducing physical and mental lassitude and creating an atmosphere for better wellness and more active approach to work and life generally. The work recommends the establishment of associations for applied jokes, and the formation of joke seminars, joke rooms/offices, comedy carts, and lectures in medical schools and elsewhere by governments, corporate organizations, educational and health institutions.*

KEYWORDS: Application of Jokes, Joke Consultants, Health, State Actors, Public Places, Educational Institutions, Africa.

* Auteur correspondant : IKYER Godwin Aondofa, ikyeraondofa@gmail.com

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Introduction

The chemistry of hope lies to some extent in the production of laughter, a sweet madness, that connects the physical and mental parts of the human to reduce pain, counter stress, and create ways to reduce or eliminate anger, tension, and facilitate an adjustment to the environment. It is in the functional use of jokes that the new field of psychoneuroimmunology (psycho = mind, neuro = brain, immuno = immune system) was born. Same goes for the profession of joke consultants. The seminar research of Norman Cousins and the experiments of Lee Berk, DrPH and Stanley Tan, MD in the use of jokes show that subjecting patients to funny video sessions display an increase in immune system activity, including the number of activated T-lymphocytes, the number of natural killer cells and their activity, immunoglobulin- A, -G and -M, and gamma interferon (Morreal 453). The undue hardships witnessed in African nations and the heap of mental and physical damages on the vulnerable and pauperized have created series of socio-economic, religious, health, and political incapacitation that warrants the huge deployment of jokes to counter the existing malaise in society and pave way for a better society. It is therefore appropriate that in spite of the low patronage of jokes in Africa, its relevance to contemporary challenges have spurred its value to heights of relevance better imagined. It cannot now be ignored as an insignificant material of entertainment alone. The heavy dreamlike life of today has facilitated the light solution of jokes to counteract the plague and reclaim the vestiges of humanity. The joke shop has come to stay and Africa cannot be left behind in utilizing its valuable presence for strategic living.

The joke factory, unlike corporate factories, has been used freely overtime to lighten up heaps of troubles and provides the necessary survival measure to counter pain, stress, distress, and enabling you to examine the absurdity in front of you with a lighter perspective. Jokes allow for positive thinking, self-reinventing posture, and the reclaim of self-esteem. Allowing jokes to work for health healing, for laughing and learning, for differing critical thinking, and for de-drying the dryness of state actors would help reclaim the self and resolve numerous panoramas of confrontations in contemporary society. Since jokes have “no tariffs, no cartels, no monopolies, no political appointees on the bench given to distorting the law, no funding bodies with agendas—it is the freest of all forms of spontaneous order and worth studying for this reason alone” (Davies 2). Jokes make one laugh, create a funniness or scorn of something, or elicit a deep meaning that helps to reflect on a whole lot of conditions, imbalances, and relationships to the incongruity projected. Its presence therefore is necessary in situational frame shifting, reinventing and overturning established experiences and discourses, and creating a sensitive balance between toppling antagonism and envisaging possibility. Greenbaum believes that jokes are made to “persuade audience members to adopt certain ideological positions” (Greenbaum 37). This ideological stand point could be one perspective of evaluating joke’s relevance in society. Applying joke research findings about its relevance in diverse areas such as psychotherapy, medicine, state administration, business, social welfare, workplace, and education would go a long way in curtailing stress, physical and mental pain and depression, loneliness, overwork/study, and other multitude of glitches. The joke consultant therefore could be charged with the responsibility to perpetuate jokes to sort out these malfunctions.

Methodology and Theoretical framework.

The purpose of this study is to interrogate ways jokes can be appropriately used in situational contexts of medicine, work place, state actors’ fora, and educational institutions with the aim to alleviating the myriad of problems bedeviling contemporary existence. This study employs the qualitative research method since the work is based on empirical investigation that transcends strict boundaries of human subjects. Also, there are new geographies of epistemology emerging creating both experiential and experimental paradigms in the forefront of discourse and practice. The idea is to generate an in dept understanding of the ways of jokes in multi-modal and multi-disciplinary fields of human activity. The research is also descriptive as it strives to subject jokes to contexts of performance and relevance in these fields of human engagement. For instance,

jokes that may be used for patients in hospitals or medical facilities may not be the ones employed in classroom situations or in political cycles. The styles of performance and thrusts may also differ, hence the varying contexts, settings, and atmosphere. The choice of Africa as the centre of study and evaluation is appropriate due to the researcher's interest in the happenings around his society and the need to bridge the gap in solution to challenges confronting members of the society. Africa is seen as a humanitarian ground in view of the spate of violence caused by the backsliding of democracy through bad governance, wars, diseases, and falling economic, political, and ethical standards and yet full of jokes that could resist, critique, deconstruct, and reinvent the individual and institutions that have gone awry. Christie Davies notes that "jokes are a product of conflict, hostility and aggression" (Davies 166) and it is the presence of an expected absence that jokes harp on its value. The researcher also employs observation and interview methods as well as close reading to arrive at the research findings. The idea to understand the relationship and close link between jokes and medicine, state craft, and education in a case-oriented scrutiny becomes clearer. Data analysis requires the examination of the jokes in their contextual patterns of delivery and probable reasons why one joke may suit a context but not another, the environment but not another, and the audience of one class, gender, or religion but inapplicable to another. This work takes in action the four contexts of the delivery and analysis of jokes. They are the cultural context (cultural values, knowledge, and attitudes), social context (situation and circumstances, time, setting, relationship, personnel), individual context, (individual experience, disposition, understanding), and comparative context (equivalent, comparable, interconnected). Contexts help in the appropriate delivery of a joke.

The theoretical approach for this work is Elliot Oring's version of "appropriate incongruity|" of the larger theory of Incongruity Juxtaposition Theory. The idea of this choice arises from the sensitivity of the variations in the class of persons, the environment of the institutions, and other considerations that necessitate a choice of a joke over another depending on the context. The presence of incongruity has to be appropriate to the context of delivery.

Literature Review

The research attention accorded jokes now is contributing to the expansion and diversification of joke studies and performance to different fields of human exertion. The range of phenomenon of subject matter which jokes foray into is healthy and accounts for the growing influence of jokes to resist, assuage pain, display disenchantment, generate polemics and dialectics of the goings-on in society, and several other broad spectrums of possibilities and potentialities. For Africa, the launch of jokes to the fields of psychotherapy, medicine, state elite conundrum of activities, work place, and education would display the values of jokes to the socio-economic, psychological, health, religious, and political referents in twisted contemporary society. Researchers have found out that humour and the mintage of jokes are relevant to situations of loneliness, disorientation, loss of hope, wellbeing, and can be applied to various fields of activity such as medicine, institutional and organizational establishments. It is in this wise that this paper solicits for joke consultants to be prioritized in medicine, work place, business, and educational places by governments, corporate organizations, and other institutions. John Morrell records in the West that "Joel Goodman of the Humor Project, has done presentations for over one million people worldwide" as a joke consultant (Morrell 448). Presenting the joke forward to elicit laughter and assuage pain is important, why the profession of a joke consultant is necessary in this cornered world.

Rod A. Martin opines that a "sense of humor and the ability to laugh have long been viewed as important sources of both physical and psychological health" and that "a number of physicians and philosophers have suggested that laughter has important health benefits, such as improving blood circulation, restoring energy, counteracting depression, and enhancing the functioning of various organs of the body "(Martin 479). The

need for a joke consultant could therefore be put in proper perspective, if not much, at least to provide the desperately needed 'source' for good health and proper functioning of the body.

In a similar support, a number of "correlational studies have found that individuals with higher scores on various trait measures of sense of humor tend to have lower scores on measures of depression, anxiety, and other types of mood disturbance, and higher scores on measures of psychological adjustment such as positive emotions, optimism, self-esteem, morale, quality of life, and well-being (e.g., Korotkov and Hanna 1994; Kuiper and Martin 1998; Lefcourt and Martin 1986; Porterfield 1987; Simon 1990; Thorson, Powell, Sarmany-Schuller, and Hampes 1997). The higher your positive acceptance to jokes the lower your stress, anxiety, and mood disturbance.

Humour and particularly jokes are capable of strengthening marital relationships, friendships, and other forms of relationships. Scholars suggest that the presence of humor frees one from held entanglements and makes one mentally and physically prepared to discuss, taboo, indisposed, and potentially problematic topics in a non-threatening and accepting manner, to engage in creative interpersonal problem-solving, and to enhance positive feelings of warmth, closeness, and enjoyment between partners in a relationship (e.g., Lefcourt 2001; Ziv 1984). Jokes and bliss tie relationships.

Taken that humor and/or laughter confer advantageous effects on immunity and other aspects of health, individuals who laugh more regularly and have a healthier sense of humor should be less likely to become ill over a period of time. Several researchers have examined simple parallels between trait measures of sense of humor and overall health, as measured by self-report physical symptom checklists. A few of these studies have found significant negative correlations between these variables, indicating that individuals with a greater sense of humor report fewer symptoms of illness and medical problems (e.g., P. S. Fry 1995; Ruch and Kohler 1999). Given these benefits of jokes to health, longevity, relaxation, coping strategy, and several other values, jokes should be invested in as an enterprise and joke consultants be employed in medical institutions for better functioning of the body and mind ahead of the enormous tasks and challenges in life and society. It is in these values of jokes that Sigmund Freud spoke of humor as being the "highest of the defense mechanisms" and of jokes as a "rare and precious gift" (Freud 6). For Africa, that 'gift' need not be scanted by scholars or institutional leaders if the array of systemic and human encounters is to be addressed.

It is in this regard that a growing "humor and health movement" has advanced, made up of nurses, physicians, and other health care providers, psychotherapists, educators, clowns, and entertainers, who enthusiastically promote the therapeutic benefits of humor through conferences, seminars, workshops, books, videotapes, Internet websites, and organizations such as the Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor (AATH). In recent years, the growth of the "laughter club movement," whose adherents promote laughter as a form of yogistic exercise (Kataria 2002), has further added to the repetition of claims for advantageous effects of even non-humorous laughter on physical, mental, and spiritual health, as well as its potential for resolving conflicts at both the personal, national and the international levels.

The thirsting for jokes and health relationship was ignited with the pioneering work of Norman Cousins, *Anatomy of an Illness as Perceived by the Patient: Reflections on Healing and Regeneration* (1979), in which he reveals his recovery from a life-threatening disease (ankylosing spondylitis) through regular doses of self-administered humor. Watching funny movies, Cousins laughed heartily. That brought him relief from pain, and so allowed him

much-needed sleep. Soon the inflammation was going down, and eventually he recovered (Morrell 452). Other writers before Cousins may have inspired him to project his empirical record to the world, for investigative works have come before his 'reflections.' For instance, Raymond Moody, MD, had published *Laugh after Laugh: The Healing Power of Humor*. Moody showcases the physiology, psychology, and social features of laughter, and a history of the idea that it has health reimbursements. He also argues that the medical profession needs to integrate humor into the treatment of patients. Early in the 20th century, James Sully had briefly mentioned some medical benefits of laughter in *An Essay on Laughter*. And in 1922 William McDougall, a one-time professor of psychology at Harvard, wrote "A New Theory of Laughter," an article claiming that the biological function of laughter was to help maintain psychological health. Also, William Fry, MD, in 1968, published *Sweet Madness: A Study of Humor*, taking a broad look at the psychology and physiology of laughter and humor. In 1971 he published "Laughter: Is It the Best Medicine?" in *Stanford M.D.*, and "Mirth and Oxygen Saturation of Peripheral Blood" in *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics*. Since then, he has published many more articles on humor and physical and mental health. Norman Cousins' 1989 book, *Head First: The Biology of Hope*, has a chapter on "The Laughter Connection" which summarizes the physical benefits of laughter including how laughter reduces pain, raises the threshold of discomfort, and increases salivary immunoglobulin-A, which fights off infections in the respiratory tract. Psychologically, Cousins states that the ability to beckon humor on request is interrelated with the ability to counteract stress. Cousins also reported how his *Anatomy* book had inspired hospitals to create facilities as 'Living Rooms' and 'Humor Rooms' to bring humor and entertainment to patients and their families (Morrell 452).

Elsewhere, as it should be with Africa, the medical institutions began to research the relation between laughter, emotions, and physiology, especially the immune system. Nurses too began to generate interest in the use of jokes to alleviate patients' pain. And in 1977 Vera Robinson, a professor of nursing, published *Humor and the Health Professions: The Therapeutic Use of Humor in Health Care* (2nd edition 1991). Robinson suggests ways humor can help medical staff deal with patients: by permitting them socially suitable ways to release their anger, by releasing unease and stress, and by enabling their modification to the scratchy milieu of a hospital. She also discusses ways in which humor can help in psychiatric settings, especially its ability to give patients demonstrative distance from their problems while supporting them at the same time. For nurses and doctors, themselves, she shows, humor has similar psychological benefits in allowing them to cope with the blood and guts and suffering and death in hospitals. Robinson also gives tips on how different age groups and different ethnic groups – Southwest Indians, Latinos, and African Americans – respond differently to illness and to humor. A special Nursing journal flourished through the editorship of Doug Fletcher titled *Journal of Nursing Jocularly*. Africa cannot be left behind in the search for joke ways of alleviating the barrage of tumultuous torrents of harsh living in a highly disenchanted life and environment. The employment of jokes to the service of contemporary Africa cannot be ignored since jokes have the healing power when we have the courage to laugh in the face of still life, living at the edge, geographical plagues, the demise of meaningful life, illness, and threats of death. With jokes, we would key into the 'surprise' of an aging mother whose illness of Alzheimer's disease advanced, unrelenting and was asked the question "Would you like to be buried, or cremated?" he asked, and she replied "Surprise me," she said (Klein 24). Or of the case of a woman who was paralyzed with the irrational fear that she would have a heart attack. After none of jokes' therapeutic methods worked, he called in the woman's husband and told the couple to "Go downtown and pick out a nice coffin – what color should the lining be?" The woman laughed and was cured of her fear (Frankl 12). Viktor Frankl calls the joke technique "Paradoxical Intention: A Logotherapeutic Technique" and Allen Fay, in his book, *Making Things Better by Making Them Worse*, (1978) calls it "paradoxical therapy," a technique that allows one to locate his/her problem with emotional distance and deal with it more objectively.

In these periods of economic meltdown and uncomfortable working conditions, the workplace needs to be invested with jokes to reduce boredom and improve quality and creativity. This is even more important now that the industrial period has been replaced with the information and technology period. Much of creativity, judgement, cooperation, and techniques of competition are required in the workplace to satisfy shifting demands of contemporary existence. Bearing the lack in many demands and the corollary of health challenges that go with the lack of material productions, stress and boredom replace risk-averse attitude to work, generate moral downsizing, and risk creative thinking on work schedules. The joke philosophy is the strategy needed to overcome employee disenchantment and ensure a positive corporate culture of thriving on a lighter mood than trying hard for productivity. It is through jokes that hard puzzles could be overcome, mistakes corrected, and innovative initiatives would be generated. In the United States of America in the 1990s, Eastman Kodak was operating a “humor room” at its headquarters in Rochester, New York; Hewlett-Packard, Price-Waterhouse, and dozens of other companies had similar facilities. One branch of Digital Equipment had created a “Grouch Patrol,” whose members would respond to sour faces with “bat faces.” To make a bat face, push the tip of your nose up, flick your tongue in and out quickly, and make a high-pitched “Eeeee” sound (Morreall 460). Accompanying ‘work ethics’ with ‘play ethics,’ IBM was able to sell their mid-size computers with sales up to 30% in 1996. Davies Abramis researched on jokes sampling 923 adult workers from a varied assortment of jobs. He had 678 fill out a detailed questionnaire about humor and fun at work, and 347 were interviewed at length. Those who reported that they enjoyed more positive humor at work were also more involved with their jobs, had greater job satisfaction, and higher mental health scores. They were less anxious and depressed, and more satisfied with their lives in general. According to Abramis, there are six ways in which work quality and mental health may increase where fun is encouraged. Fun relieves boredom and fatigue, fulfills human social needs, increases creativity and willingness to help coworkers, fulfills needs for mastery and control, improves communication, and breaks up conflict and tension. Jokes also attract attention, present new perspectives of looking at things, provide risky opinions, criticize self and others, create relationships and togetherness, build team spirit, build morale, announce unpleasant surprises, generate ideas in light-hearted ways, and train employee in joke connections. In times of lack of rapport, jokes can persuade, defuse anger, and help workers cope with swift change. The level of your laughter determines your level of relaxation in the face of situations which is why John Morreall asks in one of his book chapters “How’s Your Laugh Life?” obviously, jokes that are negative and offer prejudices and awry feelings such as sexy jokes, racist jokes, nasty teasing, and anti-living style jokes are discouraged. Also, irrelevant, detrimental, and abusive ones remain the challenge when they are spoken in ways that may cause disharmony, insubordination, or chaos.

Jokes, over a long period have been scanted by scholars and not consciously used by teachers and lecturers in their classrooms, other gatherings, and seminars. It has been labelled as insignificant and impractical in academic circles, when it should have been in the educational institutions that the values of jokes should have been projected. Most teachers and lecturers still suppress joke making in the classroom, not only jokes coming from them but as well from the students. This attitude is unhealthy to the development of the subject of study and the student’s potential of creative prognoses. These may be envisaged as traditional prejudices against humour and jokes, especially if they are of taboo topics. Today, there seems a gradual shift from the conventional perception of jokes bearing its burgeoning status in contemporary discourses. Now, some teachers and lecturers “agree on the central benefits of humor in the classroom, that it makes the teacher appear fully human, relaxes the students, creates an open and non-threatening atmosphere for learning, gets and holds attention, increases retention of learned material, promotes critical thinking, and promotes divergent or creative thinking. Humor is especially useful in skills-oriented classes where students need a playful way to handle false starts and mistakes” (Morreall 472-3). However, there is the dire need to develop the curricula to deliberately include teaching and exercise of jokes in many, if not all the subjects of study. The historical shifts in the perception of jokes has opened

up vistas of opportunities in identity formation, critique of judgement, inquiry, revisiting of social, economic, and political injustices, and generally reconstructing society in a lighter mood.

In the teaching space between the “a-ha” of discovery and the “ha-ha” of laughter, Alan Weber contends that assignments which use playful topics as structure or context can heighten students’ awareness of divergent ways of thinking, inspire them to associate ideas not typically connected under usual norms and codes, and equip them to write in more challenging, formal constructions later on. More specifically, the linguistic play in limericks, riddles, and puns can potentially help students to derive semantic value (Weber 563). The disciplines are all chanting in the voice of the joke and demanding for its effective deployment in all sectors of life and living.

D. Diane Davis also links laughter to instructive Foucauldian shattering of stable frameworks which promotes and proceeds Sophistical counter-traditions in discovering the “extra-logical” impulses of language, i.e., helps us to overturn neat linguistic categorizations so as to better grasp the temporality and contingency of rhetorical truths. For Davis, this disruption occurs not in learning to make the weaker side of the dialectic stronger (which is a common practice of *Dissoi logoi* “two-fold speeches”) but rather in locating alternatives to the dialectic altogether, and it occurs only in the “excesses” of incongruity, such as linguistic polysemy. With incongruity comes instability of authorial voice, of narrative history, and of rhetorical tradition in so much as authors realize they are made by the same histories they write and written by the same languages they employ (Davies 637). The English, Literary, and performance Studies have had a work-play divergence in composition, rhetoric, performance, poetry, drama, and folklore performances. It is in this respect that Bergmann says humor has the potential to subvert values of complex academic communities (“Funny Papers” 25). Analyzing some of her own students’ progress in using humor deliberately, Bergmann discusses how, on one level, a “playful manipulation of discourse” can gain students confidence in writing within, from, and about certain “codes” (28). But it is also possible (and preferable) for them not to stop at figuring out and expertly utilizing a discursive code, but rather to find and generate humor beyond the code itself. Thus, on another level, parodying the actual discourse of a class or a discipline can help student writers more closely identify what they are opposing within that discourse community and why it should be opposed, and further positions them as critics who are working through inequalities (Bergmann 29). With the jokes in the atmosphere of education students can easily take pedagogical or ideological positions different from those of their teachers, lecturers, and even the experiments, calculations, and texts under investigation. This challenge of the dominant proposition or view is healthy for the educational system as it allows for argumentative postulations on long or strongly held views, which stand dismantled with a superior argument, whether from a student is immaterial.

Jokes and Joke Consultants.

Jokes have increasingly gained epistemological interest and is very often a subject of critical discourse. A joke is a short narrative divided into the build-up, the pivot, and the punchline. The build-up constitutes the body of the joke in form of introduction and orientation, sometimes including a part of the complication; the pivot comes in as a word or phrase that creates ambiguity; and the punchline hammers on the thrust of the joke, and according to Norrick introduces a “conflicting point of view or a new scene entirely” (Norrick 119). The punchline creates the general laughter because of its appropriate ambiguity and unexpectedness. The punchline mostly is responsible for the breaking of cultural and social conventions. The joker and the joke have broken the rules of engagement in communication by using false logic or exploiting the double meanings of words, and we have entered another domain, that of humor, where different rules apply.....Jokes play with the forbidden. The fabric of the unmentionables is briefly revealed. Sometimes the jokers accept and believe in the rules regarding permitted forms of speech that are being defied, sometimes they go along with these rules as a social convention, and sometimes they see them as arbitrary

restrictions imposed by the powerful. Whichever it is, it is fun to break them. Jokes are a brief time off from the everyday inhibitions and restrictions that bind the ways we speak. Jokes mean we can indulge in ambiguity, blatant and obvious departures from reality or logic, absurdity, impropriety, and the utterly shocking (Davies 3). Koestler (1964) argued that humor involves bisociative thinking, which he defines as perceiving a situation in terms of two self-consistent but totally incompatible frames of reference.

Joke making is a swaying art because one has to be resounding to make another laugh. Jokes try to provide an appropriate response to a given circumstance and make others laugh without necessarily creating acrimony. A joke is employed as an instrument of rhetoric with oratorical effect as the “orator should defeat his opponents’ seriousness with laughter, and their laughter with seriousness” (Grant 1924, 18). This ‘appropriate incongruity’ is armed with linguistic tools that rather than threatened is threatening to odd spaces of modernity.

The joke consultant stands as the factory operator of contemporary epidemics of dull and boring life, loneliness, heaps of economic, social and political nervousness, dictatorship and pulverization. Jokes thus becomes a healthy diversion from the pangs and panoramas of negative possibilities and practices. The joke consultant must therefore steer into history and the historicity of contemporary spaces and of situational consciousness and tap into the abundance of inspired humbling and reflective tirades jokes in their “combination of friendliness and antagonism” or jokes that create “both attachment and separation, both social conjunction and social disjunction” (Radcliffe-Brown 1940: 197) with the target of “discovering similarities between dissimilars” (Freud 5) to generate ‘appropriate incongruity.’ Raskin visualize humor as the “linking of disparates” (Raskin 32–33), for Monro, as “incorporating into one situation what belongs to another” (Monro 45). For Oring, “[h]umor depends upon the discernment of an appropriate incongruity” (Oring 349). According to John Morreall, the enjoyment of incongruity is uniquely human and sets human beings apart from other animals, who process incongruities as potential threats, which is, in Morreall’s words, “cognitively limiting” (Morreall 12).

The joke consultant should dismantle the hegemony of feelings and the circumstantial evidence with a dose of jokes. The jokes would be such that create appropriate incongruity of meaning and strive, according to Mbembe and Roitman, “to exercise reprisals on ‘the signs of the thing’ that cannot be overcome otherwise. As rites of expiation, laughter and derision give way to an imaginary well-being; they allow for distance between the subject who laughs and the object of mockery. The division thus realized is precisely what permits the laughing subject to regain possession of self and to wear the mask, that is, to become a stranger to this ‘thing’ that exercises domination – and then to deride torture, murder, and all other forms of wretchedness” (Mbembe and Roitman 186). While there may be joke consultants in other climes, Africa, with its numerous health, leadership, workplace, and education eclipses is yet to be accorded a space to revert norms, get even with encounters, subvert trials, resist new feudal lords in our polity, and among others overcome conundrums of pain in a coping strategy and resurrect and transform the world of the disempowered, disenchanted, diseased, and pauperized. Ebenezer Obadare avers that jokes should be used as “an important weapon in the armoury of civil society against perceived state high-handedness,” (Obadare 243) as an extension of the notion of resistance, the culture of protest, and of sorting out the complex and fundamental issues of governance, of ideology, politics, identity gone awry, and of life and living which endorses and erodes in salvific and magical indicators.

The proper functionality of the joke matters as a joke told out of context may rather create disapproval than the approval intended. Elliot Oring reiterates that the situation, circumstance, time setting, personnel, relationship, nature of conversation, and the social context of “when, where, how, and to whom a joke is told bears significantly on how the joke functions and what the joke means” (Oring 201). There are certainly

varieties of situations, circumstances, and other socio-economic, political, and psychological requirements in Africa to be prioritized to work well as a joke consultant.

In the absence of jobs for graduates, the multi-institutional position of a joke consultant would alleviate the anxiety of the labour market. The joke consultant would reduce the overbearing work of health personnel by generating laugh medicines and atmosphere for patients and their families. Seminars, lectures, and workshops would be organized to educate people on the values of laughter in workplaces, state craft activity, and educational institutions. Also, associations of applied jokes would be established to formulate methods of operation, make statutory provisions, and engage in further research. Funny books, videotapes, and audiotapes would flourish to provide the necessary space for reinventing the human condition. Corporate organizations could recruit joke consultants to help create the enabling environment for creativity to thrive and generate customer and staff relationship that is enduring and powerful. Consultants would 'sell' the benefits of jokes to sort out a drove of problems. The joke consultants may as well be hired as motivational speakers to revive overworked or stressed up workers. The term 'joke consultants' would replace earlier lowbrow terms such as 'comedian' or 'clown' so as to up the current rating of jokes to multi-perspectival happenings. Websites could be created to build on the existing physical presentations, as joke shops for video, text, and audio communication. The joke consultants could make follow-up on the organizations they provide joke services.

Health and Jokes.

Researchers and writers have written on the relationship between jokes and health. Raymond Moody, MD's *Laugh after Laugh: the Healing Power of Humor* examines physiology, psychology, and the social aspects of laughter and advances that the medical profession integrates jokes to the business of health practice. William McDougall, before Moody, advances "A New Theory of Laughter," (1922) stating that the biological function of laughter was to help maintain psychological health. Also, William Fry's *Sweet Madness: A Study of Humor*, sees laughter as the best medicine and should be incorporated into health practice and discourse. Propelled by the "laughter connection" (Cousins,), audiotapes, videotapes, living rooms, and comedy carts were established to showcase the healing power of jokes in health challenges. The earlier inquiries of Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905), and "Humor" (1928), in using humor in psychiatry and therapy, which were frowned at by his contemporaries now gained favor in view of the enormous research and benefits accruing from the inquiry. Indeed, Dan Keller's *Humor and Therapy* sees humor as "a welcome relief from the intense doses of transference and hostility to which the therapist is inevitably exposed." (Keller 10). Several other research publications followed thereby giving jokes and humour a pride of place in the health profession. Indeed, Abramis lists six benefits of jokes to health as "relieves boredom and fatigue, fulfills human social needs, increases creativity and willingness to help coworkers, fulfills needs for mastery and control, improves communication, and breaks up conflict and tension" (Abramis 20). There could also be joke action plan in offsetting stress, stirring employees, encouraging physical and mental suppleness, diffusing conflict, developing morale, foster analytic thinking, promoting team work, preserving work and corporate cultures, and serving as social grease. Intermingling the art of jokes with work means injecting light moods into the practice of work to show the human mix of vulnerability and valuableness.

Workplace and the need for the exercise of Jokes

Joke consultants around the world are in agreement to the benefits of jokes in a workplace. Morreal avers those jokes in workplace discourages "negative emotions such as fear, anger, and depression, it helps workers keep their cool and think more clearly. Because humor is based on enjoying what is unexpected, it helps workers stay out of mental ruts and think more creatively.

That helps them adjust to new situations and thus cope with change. Because humor often involves switching perspectives, too, it increases tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty” (Morreal 470). Thus, when the physical and mental acumens are prepared for work, what to expect is hard work, commitment, team spirit, and creative thinking, all which generate efficiency and productivity. When people laugh at themselves, at the management, at policies, and at directives, the laughter is deep thinking that makes the one laughing less self-justifying and further to make better the mistakes preceding the laughter.

Morreall states further that “Humor is especially useful in situations where people might otherwise feel negative emotions towards each other. Laughing together – either about the potential source of friction or about something extraneous – brings them together, blocks negative feelings, and promotes cooperation rather than confrontation. Consider the situation

of a person collecting a debt. No matter how clear it is that the debt is owed, the natural inclination of the debtor is to feel defensive and hostile toward the person asking for payment. Indeed, many debt collection letters work by intimidation. But consider how everything changes when the debt collector gets the debtor to laugh, as in this middle paragraph from a debt collection

letter:

We appreciate your business, but, please, give us a break. Your account is overdue 10 months. That means that we’ve carried you longer than your mother did” (Morreall 470-1).

Some corporate and institutional leaders are in the habit of being omnipotent and omniscient exercising authority where it is unnecessary. This never creates rapport in the workplace unless the authoritarian habit is subdued for a playful one will work flexibility and willing productivity will flourish.

State Leader’s Dryness of jokes and the Need for Joke cushioning.

Perhaps because “‘democratic’ regimes across Africa perpetuate norms and practices that were characteristic of the previous openly authoritarian era” (Obadare 241), it is alleged that the atmosphere surrounding the exercise of power, politics, and administering the state and the state of things are dry of jokes. Is it because some African jokes are directed at the leadership of state? Or of official crudity? Is it because popular perceptions of the ‘humanity’ of political leaders, who may or may not earn a place in popular affection depending on whether or not they are seen to possess a sense of humour, and therefore are ‘nice’ people who have a feeling for the ‘common man’? (Obadare 254) In the case of Nigeria, jokes have a ‘double-assault’, of is, both ridiculing the state, and themselves, so could assuage the leaders that they were not alone in the ridicule. Perhaps the stuff of hard politics is so demanding that jokes can be made during ‘favor buying’ periods with the civil society.

Jokes have come to be a resourceful tool in leadership and governance. As there is a growing interest in the role of leaders in governance, so is the upward curiosity on the value and use of leader jokes in state craft. The sensitivity accorded state leadership actions arises from the contextual shift in civil order, itself a corollary of the “homicidal authoritarianism” of civilian leaders in Africa and elsewhere (Obadare 242). In spite of the burgeoning discourse on the perplexing moments of leadership and governance, “amid the all-pervading gloom” (Obadare 243), and in view of jokes capacity to deconstruct and reinvent leadership and society, literature on leadership jokes in Africa is fragmented thus making it difficult to review or access a coherent literature on leadership jokes. There is the need for integration of leadership jokes by identifying the known, investigating the problematic, and charting a way forward for focused guidance of documenting, analyzing, and clarifying for further research. By doing this, the envisaged inconsistencies would be eliminated and a standard method of sieving data would become insightful and future-directed.

The impact of leadership jokes on the relationship between leaders and followers is massive, stimulating better communication, performance, and enhancing a measure of creativity, innovation, and credibility. Obadare avers that “Humour is an intangible currency of exchange in the socio-political economy, affecting and shaping popular perceptions of the ‘humanity’ of political leaders, who may or may not earn a place in popular affection depending on whether or not they are seen to possess a sense of humour, and therefore are ‘nice’ people who have a feeling for the ‘common man’. In the popular imagination, a smiling leader with a capacity for jokes is sometimes regarded (often erroneously) as a caring one, while a stern-looking leader is perceived as (and expected to be) ‘harsh’” (Obadare 101). Not the effectiveness of governance but the sense of humour first captivates the civil society to a leader as Obadare states here. Regrettably, Obadare opines that in these formal spaces there is dryness in the absence of humour and therefore governance itself when he states that “humourlessness ... is believed to characterize many formal spaces” (Obadare 96). Humorousness creates drab leadership, generates traumatic experiences, and installs a postcolonial meltdown, what Mbembe calls “‘the systematic application of pain’ (Mbembe 4) Ignoring humour creates humorous spaces that aggravate to harsh exercise of policies. Humour plays a significant role in leadership and governance and should be adopted contextually by African leaders. There is the affiliative humour which condenses interpersonal tensions and facilitates relationship building and self-enhancing humour which creates self-confidence, generates advantageous self-esteem, and emotional upliftment. Humour can be a socially communicative functions, as laughter can be a lubricant in interactions with the followers by the leaders, even though many leaders have secured unqualified admirations on the use of humour.

Jokes and Educational Institutions in Africa.

The use of jokes and humour in the educational setting of neoliberal mentality is to capture popular conceptions of modern values and existence. Some students and lecturers alike are in the habit of overlooking the importance of jokes in the discourses in classroom, seminars, workshops, presentations, and other gatherings. The habit limits the ability of the joker, and indeed that of the listener, in the chance to become creative, reflective, and capable of providing a solution to existing puzzles.

In the rhetoric of composition, for instance, a study of the literary irony of Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travel* could equip students to parody the text and redirect the focus to a fresh thrust or vision that may be contemporary or entirely different. Joke paradigms in African narratives may gear the students to producing novel pieces as they alternate between the playful and the thoughtful. Also, what Bergmann (30) calls “critical play” could accelerate students’ use of social discourse, promote critical capacity to subvert one argument or point of view with another in a Bakhtinian heteroglossia “turn it upside down, inside out, peer at it from above and below ... lay it bare and expose it” (Bakhtin 23). This way there would be an educational reformation in the opportunity given to reason differently and not be derided. The ability to reflect and function in multiple layers and perspectives become assured and as such the opening up of vistas of thought and knowledge through the ‘turn it upside down, inside out, peer at it from above and below...lay it bare’ notion.

In the same joke method, academic curricula, conventions, and knowledge acquisition procedure may be exposed to experimentations using joke methods of satire, irony, and parody may help unearth implicit assumptions, discover evidences, and recover lost thoughts and procedural grounds could help question and revert epistemologies, un-critical conventions, and generate unimagined layers of thought.

The educational institutions could organize joke carnivals, ‘humour nights’, and ‘class of clowns’ sessions with topics of multidisciplinary subjects for joke narrations. Participants would be both the students, staff, and administration leaders. This may not only be a way of building a community of laughing out groups

but also of encouraging intellectual play, creating a free avenue for creativity and invention, and creating institutional assessment.

Jokes promote critical and divergent thinking, build personal and team spirit among classmates, smoothen rough patches of thought, create rapport between management, teachers, and their student, make the curriculum less troubling, create positive thinking, boost self-confidence from the 'who wants to hear clowns talk?' group. Under academic or work pressure, jokes are the survival skills and should be exploited. Jokes rely on playfulness and can be employed as a skill to overcome challenges in education. McGhee advises that you should become "more playful, surround yourself with humour, begin telling jokes and funny stories, and laugh at yourself (McGhee 32). A statement like "There are only two universities in the world, those that recognize that they're just like 'Federal University Wukari, Nigeria' and those that don't know it yet" would not only boost the self-worth of the institution but generate self-confidence for the student and staff of the institution.

Conclusion

The capacity of jokes to foray into diverse areas of human activity is burgeoning. This is not only due to the dramatic growth in violence, civil society unrest, feudal lords' machinations, and the contradictions in the messianic and the magical manifestations, but also as a result of its improving capacity to grind down the heap of tyrannical authenticity confronting mankind in contemporary modernity. Jokes therefore need to be aggressively used in all sectors of life and institutions to ransack the hoary areas and dismantle all forms of suppressive acts for better life and living.

In view of the strive for overturning harsh times, joke consultants need to be employed in all fields of human activity to fully administer the drugs of jokes necessary for human wellbeing, sustainable institutions, and life. With joke consultants handy, much of the pain in the physical and mental spheres of life would be eliminated, the dryness in leadership would be substituted with the condiments of jokes, and institutions would improve their corporate quality and productivity, and overrun the quagmire of consumerism for productivity. The joke consultants would improve the world's rating by creating avenues of joke interactions and communication such as seminars, centres and rooms for jokes, and perform jokes for distribution in audiocassettes and videocassettes. With a joke every one is healed and the task of medical personnel, corporate, and educational institutions would be reduced. Africa needs to take the challenge of training, employing, and sustaining joke consultants to ease the rites of the new varieties of odd realities.

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Author's Biography

Godwin Aondofa IKYER: is a Lecturer and Secretary of the Department Research Committee at the Department of English and Literary Studies, Federal University Wukari, Nigeria. He previously served as the Examination Officer of the department. His areas of specialization and research interests include Humour Studies, Applied Folklore, Cultural and Mimetic Codes, Media Studies, Traditional and Metaphoric Witchcraft Studies, and Performance Studies. Currently, he is conducting research on "Boko Haram Jokes and the Discourse on Disaster in Nigeria." He has published extensively in these fields in both national and international journals.