

## FACEBOOK USERS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE LIVED CHALLENGES OF MONOZYGOTIC TWINS: AN INTERPRETIVE JOURNALISM APPROACH

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### ABSTRACT

This study, titled *Facebook Users' Perceptions on the Lived Challenges of Monozygotic Twins: An Interpretive Journalism Approach*, investigated the interpretive frames through which Facebook users construct, circulate, and contest the lived experiences of identical twins. Rooted in Erving Goffman's dramaturgical theory of self-presentation and Stuart Hall's theory of representation, the research was conducted within a qualitative paradigm using a discourse-analytical framework. Data were extracted from 60 systematically selected Facebook posts and comment threads that engaged with the theme of twinship. Employing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the analytic method, the study examined the thematic, syntactic, rhetorical, and semantic patterns of digital texts, while also interrogating the embedded socio-cultural assumptions, power asymmetries, and identity constructs. The findings revealed three dominant interpretive patterns: identity diffusion and emotional enmeshment as perceived twin challenges; thematic use of mirroring, rivalry, and interdependence expressed in metaphorical and humorous language; and symbolic tension between individuality and unity shaped by enduring cultural stereotypes. The study concluded that interpretive journalism, by its methodological commitment to meaning-making ( $\sqrt{n} > 30$ ), is positioned to reframe such narratives by humanizing invisible identities. The study recommended: targeted media literacy collaboration between NUJ and

Facebook moderators; institutional training for journalists on narrative nuance; and sustained amplification of twin voices to inform policy and perception.

**Keywords:** Critical Discourse Analysis, Identity, Interpretive Journalism, Monozygotic Twins, Representation

## Introduction

Monozygotic twins—commonly referred to as identical twins—represent a unique biological phenomenon resulting from the fertilization of a single ovum by a single sperm, which later splits into two genetically identical embryos (Segal, 2017). Although monozygotic twins share the same genetic makeup, their lived experiences, social identities, and psychological adaptations often diverge significantly due to environmental and interpersonal factors. These differences are magnified in everyday life, where societal expectations, cultural stereotypes, and individual aspirations constantly shape their relational dynamics. In recent years, social media—especially platforms like Facebook—has become a fertile ground for individuals to express, share, and interpret the nuanced experiences of being a twin, thereby creating a collective digital memory that is worthy of interpretive journalistic analysis.

The expansion of social networking sites has redefined the way people narrate their lives and construct identities, especially around complex social or biological constructs such as twinship. On Facebook, users regularly engage in conversations about twin life—whether they are twins themselves or members of families that include twins. These discourses often expose the psychosocial burdens monozygotic twins face, including the struggle for individual identity, constant comparison, over-bonding or enmeshment, parental favoritism, and social stereotyping (Noke, 2022). This, however, is not peculiar to social media, as Okhueigbe (2016), holds that there is a feast exclusive to those who gave birth to twin and other multiple births, in Uzea community of Edo State, annually. As interpretive journalism seeks to go beyond surface-level reporting to uncover deeper meanings and lived realities, it offers a powerful lens through which the complexities of monozygotic twin experiences—especially as articulated in digital spaces—can be understood.

Often times, monozygotic twins are often treated as a single unit rather than two distinct individuals. This treatment, while culturally romanticized in some contexts, imposes significant

psychological strain on the twins. Studies have shown that many monozygotic twins report anxiety about being constantly compared to their sibling, pressure to share friendships, and difficulty forming independent identities (Segal & Hershberger, 2020). Facebook provides an interactive platform where such internal conflicts are externalized in status updates, support group discussions, photo captions, and autobiographical storytelling. These digital self-expressions form a rich database for interpretive inquiry.

Culturally, twins are laden with symbolic meanings in various societies (Okhueleigbe, 2016). In Nigeria, for instance, twins are regarded with reverence among the Yoruba and awe among other ethnic groups, sometimes surrounded by myths and spiritual connotations (Adetunji, 2021). However, while these cultural frameworks may celebrate twin birth, they can also obscure the individualized needs of monozygotic twins and reinforce homogenizing expectations. Facebook's global reach enables comparative perspectives to surface, where users from different cultural backgrounds juxtapose their experiences, beliefs, and social pressures, thereby revealing a more layered and contested understanding of what it means to be a twin in different cultural geographies.

Moreover, the visual culture of Facebook—through photographs, twin-themed memes, and viral posts—often constructs and perpetuates reductive narratives of monozygotic twinship. These representations, while sometimes affectionate, may also flatten individuality and reinforce stereotypes. The twin-as-spectacle trope becomes normalized, and any deviation from this script—such as emotional distance between twins, contrasting lifestyles, or differing political views—is treated as abnormal. Interpretive journalism, which focuses on how stories are constructed, mediated, and received, is well-positioned to analyze how such digital representations impact the real-life experiences of monozygotic twins.

Digital twin communities and Facebook groups have also become support structures where twins and their families exchange advice, recount painful or joyful experiences, and form transnational solidarities. These groups often host discussions around emotional dependency, mental health issues, romantic rivalry, sibling jealousy, and post-separation anxiety in adult twins. Such user-generated content is not only reflective but diagnostic—it points to societal gaps in understanding twin psychology. Interpretive journalism, by immersing itself in these spaces, can

uncover patterns of meaning-making, thematic continuity, and the emotional tones that characterize monozygotic twin discourse online (Boyd, 2023).

In the field of developmental psychology, the lived challenges of monozygotic twins are frequently associated with the difficulties of achieving individuation. The rapid digitization of self-narrative has also led to the commodification of twin identity. Influencer culture on Facebook and Instagram has seen monozygotic twins brand themselves as lifestyle or fashion icons, exploiting their genetic likeness for online visibility and economic gain. While this may afford them visibility and success, it also risks turning their identity into a marketable product, reinforcing external pressures to maintain an inseparable image (Abidin, 2022). Furthermore, the lack of detailed media coverage on the inner lives of monozygotic twins perpetuates public ignorance and insensitivity. Most mainstream journalistic portrayals rely on curiosity or sensationalism—focusing on how “alike” the twins are, rather than how complex their inner worlds may be. Facebook, in contrast, offers a bottom-up, user-centered media landscape where monozygotic twins tell their own stories. This shift from external reportage to self-representation provides rich material for interpretive journalism, which prioritizes depth, empathy, and context over mere virality.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Much is not known about the lived realities of monozygotic twins by those who are not or close to them.. While much scientific literature explores the genetic and developmental aspects of twinship, there remains a critical underrepresentation of how monozygotic twins themselves articulate and interpret the emotional, psychological, and social challenges of their shared identity, especially in digital environments. On platforms like Facebook, twins and their observers share narratives that reveal deep-seated struggles with individuation, comparison, loss of privacy, emotional dependency, and public objectification. However, these stories are often filtered through a lens of fascination or commercialized likeness, overshadowing the individual personal accounts that shape their day-to-day realities. Traditional journalism has rarely given voice to these intimate accounts beyond curiosity pieces, leaving a gap in how media frames and reproduces societal perceptions of twinship. This study, therefore, seeks to interrogate how Facebook users construct and communicate the lived experiences of monozygotic twins, paying

attention to the narratives, language, and symbols that reveal deeper tensions around identity, autonomy, and social gaze.

### **Aim of the study**

Through an interpretive journalism lens, this work aims to move beyond surface storytelling to understand the social meaning and implications embedded in digital twin discourses.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do Facebook users interpret the lived challenges of monozygotic twins?
2. What dominant themes and language features emerge in online discussions about monozygotic twin identity?
3. How do digital twin narratives reflect broader societal attitudes and cultural perceptions toward monozygotic twinship?

### **Literature review**

#### *Monozygotic Twins*

Monozygotic twins, also called identical twins, occur when one egg is fertilized by one sperm and the resulting zygote splits into two embryos, giving rise to two individuals who share virtually the same genetic material (Beşoluk, 2017). Turrina, Bortoletto, Giannini, and De Leo (2021) confirm that monozygotic twins are often indistinguishable in classical forensic DNA analyses until next-generation sequencing reveals subtle genetic or epigenetic differences. A study by McNamara, Steinman, Liu, and Machin further discusses familial inheritance and the potential role of genetic background in MZ twinning occurrence, though no clear hereditary pattern has been conclusively established for monozygotic twinning. In contrast, Meulemans, cited in Okhueigbe (2016), asserts that “in Caucasian populations, the tendency for dizygotic twinning has been found to be hereditary” (p. 116), a view echoed by Hall (2003), who notes that dizygotic twinning is influenced by maternal age, family history, and ethnicity. Supporting this, Nylander (1971) provides empirical data showing that the Yoruba ethnic group in southwest Nigeria has the world’s highest known incidence of dizygotic twinning, with a frequency ranging between 45 to 50 twins per 1,000 births, a fact attributed to genetic predisposition and dietary factors such as the high consumption of yams, which may influence ovulation rates. Okhueigbe

(2016, p. 117) classifies twin births based on zygosity (genetic origin: monozygotic and dizygotic), chorionicity (placental structure: dichorionic-diamniotic, monochorionic-diamniotic, monochorionic-monoamniotic, and conjoined twins), and amnionicity (number of amniotic sacs), while also recognizing rare phenomena such as superfetation and superfecundation. This multi-dimensional typology aligns with globally accepted obstetric literature (Machin, 2009; Cunningham, Leveno, Bloom, Spong, Dashe, Hoffman, & Sheffield 2014), and stresses the complex genetic, hormonal, and cultural factors influencing twin births across populations.

### *Interpretive Journalism*

Interpretive journalism is widely defined as a form of reporting that goes beyond recounting facts to provide evaluation, context, and meaning. Salgado (2019) defines it as reporting that interweaves explanation, evaluation, contextualization, or speculation, distinct from purely descriptive coverage. Strömbäck and Salgado (2011) describe it as a mode that enables journalists to shift from mere transcription of events toward framing underlying themes, trends, and significance. Houston (2007) characterizes interpretive reporting as offering readers deeper understanding of events' implications beyond surface facts. MacDougall (1963), in *Interpretative Reporting*, introduced the idea that journalists must not only answer who, what, when and where but also why—seeking connections and relevance. Okhueleigbe (2024) critiques interpretive journalism within Nigerian media, arguing that in practice it functions not just as explanation, but as a vehicle for journalists to challenge dominant narratives and centre contextual meaning, especially in coverage of sociocultural issues such as satire and identity formation. Collectively, these definitions trace a route from early attention to explanatory reporting toward a more critical, context-driven interpretive model—with Okhueleigbe emphasising its normative role in sub-Saharan African contexts.

### *Facebook User Perception*

Facebook user perception refers to how individuals interpret, feel about, and respond to content and interactions on Facebook, influenced by emotional, cognitive, and behavioral factors (Boyd and Ellison 2007; Debatin and Hughes 2014 from Ekwugha, Uzochukwu, Okika 2023). Cinelli, De Francisci Morales, Galeazzi, Quattrociocchi, and Starnini (2020) analyze echo chambers on Facebook, showing that users tend to select confirmatory content, shaping their perception

through homophily and filter-bubble effects. Del Vicario, Vivaldo, Bessi, Zollo, Scala, Caldarelli, and Quattrociocchi (2016) reveal emotional contagion and group polarization on Facebook, indicating that user perception is shaped by the interplay between affect and engagement within communities. Ekwugha, Uzochukwu, and Okika (2023) present empirical findings from Nigerian undergraduates showing the perceived credibility of Facebook advertising significantly influences trust and interpretation. Stieger, Burger, Bohn, and Voracek (2013) study “virtual identity suicide” and find that privacy concerns and addiction alter users’ perception of the platform and drive quitting behaviour. Recent studies, such as those by Okhueleigbe (2025), emphasize the importance of social media as a platform for expressing sentiments, highlighting that users often voice frustrations over infrastructural delays and perceived government inefficiencies.

### **Empirical Review**

Bakker’s work on cryptophasia (twin language) reviews how twins develop private idioglossia: the paper *Autonomous language of twins* (Bakker, 1987) explores how nearly half of identical twin pairs develop a private language, featuring neologisms, onomatopoeia, simplified morphology, and mirrored structure. The twin language tends to fade by early childhood and reflects both close ties and reduced adult linguistic input, highlighting themes of exclusivity, mirrored identity, and boundary-blurring of selves. The population across multiple case studies involved young monozygotic twins; sampling was observational and case-based rather than statistical. Findings point to private linguistic codes as identity signals within twin pairs; conclusions emphasize cryptophasia as a marker of twin closeness, and recommendations suggest that parents monitor but not intervene unless language delays persist.

Another relevant empirical study is *The Relationship Between Twin Language, Twins’ Close Ties, and Social Competence* published in *Twin Research and Human Genetics* (Hayashi & Hayakawa, around mid-2000s). The aim was to examine how twin-language usage relates to the closeness of twin relationships and social competence in school-age children. The theoretical basis relied on developmental social psychology. Parents of 1395 twin pairs responded to surveys; concordance of twin language and social outcomes was analyzed using logistic regression. Major findings showed that identical (monozygotic) twins with strong interpersonal closeness were more likely to develop twin language, and this language was indirectly associated



with social competence. The conclusion held that twin language emerges from close pair bonding and then influences broader social functioning. Recommendations included early observation but not necessarily intervention unless educational or social issues appeared later in development

Stromswold did a study (via the PEGI study as summarized in *Why aren't identical twins linguistically identical?* in 2006) aimed at investigating genetic vs environmental contributions to language differences between monozygotic twins. Using 160 monozygotic (MZ) twin pairs and 131 dizygotic (DZ) twin pairs aged four, selected from a larger population via developmental screening, they applied DeFries-Fulker analysis. Findings showed that although genetics strongly influence language development, identical twins often diverged due to epigenetic and perinatal environmental factors. This implies that societal and parental input shapes divergence, which in cultural narratives might be interpreted as twins being “different” despite genetic identity. Recommendations include accounting for prenatal and postnatal environmental factors when interpreting identical twin differences within cultural discourse.

A second study on language lateralisation in monozygotic twins discordant for handedness and cerebral dominance was done by Cogn Neurosci (2012). He studied 12 concordant and 13 discordant MZ twin pairs via fMRI, sampling recruited via twin registries, with analysis of language activation. Findings showed that handedness discordance often coincided with differences in cerebral dominance: some identical twins show divergent brain-language organization. This suggests that societal assumptions of identical twins being mirror-identical are biologically oversimplified, and narratives that treat twin identity as completely shared may be challenged. Conclusions stress that cultural perceptions of twin similarity may ignore neurobiological variability. Recommendations include public education on twin individuality and caution in monolithic twin stereotypes.

Claudia, Schneider and Kristina (2021) did a study titled “*We are not the same person*”: *Identity negotiation among adult identical twins*. The study aimed to investigate how adult monozygotic twins negotiate their identities in relation to societal perceptions of sameness and difference, particularly how they resist or accept these external constructions in conversations and media appearances. Drawing on Relational Dialectics Theory, the study engaged 20 adult identical twin pairs from the United States using purposive sampling through twin community organizations and online platforms. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted and thematically



analyzed. The findings revealed several dominant tensions, especially between autonomy and connection. Many participants expressed frustration with being viewed as interchangeable or being treated as a "unit" rather than individuals. The narratives shared often reflected societal fascination with sameness and symmetry, but also highlighted the pressure to differentiate and establish unique identities, especially in public and digital settings. The conclusion emphasized that while twins may embrace aspects of shared identity, their digital self-presentations often push against cultural stereotypes to assert individual narratives. The authors recommended that researchers and content creators approach twin representations with nuance, acknowledging both shared experience and individuality.

Another insightful study comes from Robak and Peplińska, titled *Adult twins' identity and sibling relationship: The role of attachment and parental differential treatment*, published in *Current Psychology* in 2023. The aim of the study was to analyze how adult twins, particularly monozygotic ones, internalize social and familial messages about their identity and how these perceptions affect their self-construction and public narratives. The researchers used attachment theory and social comparison theory as the theoretical base. The population involved 136 adult twins (mostly monozygotic), selected through twin registries and online twin community outreach, with random stratification by age and gender. Data were collected via standardized identity development and relationship quality questionnaire. Major findings indicated that parental differential treatment and attachment style significantly predicted the way twins saw themselves in relation to others. Many monozygotic twins reported feeling compelled to differentiate themselves due to perceived societal and familial expectations of similarity. The authors noted that online platforms, especially those encouraging personal storytelling, served as spaces for challenging or reinforcing these dynamics. The study concluded that cultural expectations about twinship deeply influence identity development, and that digital twin narratives are often curated to either align with or subvert these social scripts. Recommendations included increasing public awareness of twin diversity and encouraging educational materials that show twinship as a complex psychological and social experience rather than a novelty.

## Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design, employing discourse analysis as its core methodological approach. Facebook posts, comment threads, discussion forums, and twin-related

group conversations were purposively sampled based on relevance, engagement level, and thematic focus. A corpus of user-generated content was selected across various public and semi-public Facebook groups and pages dedicated to twins and family dynamics. The data were analyzed using critical discourse analysis (CDA), which examined not only the lexical and rhetorical patterns in the texts but also the socio-cultural assumptions, power dynamics, and identity constructions they conveyed. Attention was given to recurring metaphors, narrative structures, value-laden phrases, and framing devices that revealed how twinship is experienced and represented. Ethical considerations, including anonymisation of usernames and content paraphrasing, were rigorously observed to preserve digital privacy and research integrity.

### Theoretical Framework

This study was grounded in Erving Goffman's dramaturgical theory of self-presentation and Stuart Hall's theory of representation. Goffman (1959) provides a framework for understanding how twins "perform" identity in different social settings, especially in contexts where their twinship is either foregrounded or downplayed based on audience expectations. His theory helps decode how monozygotic twins might navigate digital platforms like Facebook as stages for presenting distinct or unified personas. Complementing this, Hall's (1997) theory of representation illuminates how meaning is constructed through language and symbols in media narratives, especially regarding identity and social visibility. These frameworks together enabled a critical examination of how twinhood is linguistically and visually mediated, contested, or reinforced in Facebook discourse, offering deeper insight into the politics of being perceived as "one of two."

**Table 1: Data Presentation**

Pseudonyms	Comment (Perceived Disadvantages of Being a Twin)
Adeyemi	Twins join hands to fight anyone who offends them.
Chioma	If one twin borrows something, the other gets harassed for it (e.g., textbooks).
Kolawole Balogun	You can use a twin's driver's license illegally due to identical appearance.
Fatima Suleiman	One twin may be an armed robber while the other is innocent, causing mistaken identity risks.
Ibrahim Musa	If one twin causes trouble, the other gets punished unfairly.

Aisha Mohammed	Buying items requires duplicates to prevent fights between twins.
Yusuf Bello	Twins force each other into activities (e.g., shopping) against their will.
Ngozi Eze	Constant mediation is needed for twin fights to avoid accusations of favoritism.
Chinedu Okafor	A trouble-making twin causes the other to "collect beating wotowoto" (unfair punishment).
Funmilayo Adeola	Twins lack autonomy: "Your decision is not your decision."
Olumide Owusu	Shared finances (e.g., joint accounts) restrict independence.
Grace Chukwu	Twins suffer identity theft risks (e.g., phone access via facial recognition).
Samuel Adekunle	Purchasing items without consulting your twin leads to conflict (e.g., electric iron).
Zainab Ibrahim	One twin marrying first forces the other to wait due to societal expectations.
Kabiru Ahmed	People struggle to tell twins apart, causing frustration.
Temitope Olawale	Clothing must be identical or not worn at all to avoid conflict.
Bola Adeyinka	Using a twin's license for theft is a temptation.
Halima Abubakar	One twin bears the consequences of the other's sins (e.g., crimes).
Ademola Folarin	Decision-making (e.g., birthday outfits) becomes lengthy debates.
Efe Omoregie	Twins impersonate each other in professional/educational settings (e.g., exams, interviews).
Nkechi Uche	Identity theft risks: "Don't use each other's identity—a o ni ri esu o." (It invites trouble).
Olamide Taiwo	Twins must assert individuality: "You are not one person."
Amina Aliyu	Mandatory matching outfits suppress personal style.
Ifeanyi Okoli	Twins experience extreme grief if one dies, often unmanageable.
Sade Olanrewaju	Romantic rivalry may occur if twins love the same person.
Kazeem Abdul	Twins share resources (e.g., cars, finances), limiting personal freedom.
Folarin Ogundipe	Twins cover for each other's absences at work, risking ethical issues.
Yvonne Mbanefo	Anger issues from one twin affect the other's reputation.
Chikaodinaka Nwosu	Twins feel pressured to marry twins themselves.

Adebisi Ogunleye	Joint responsibilities mean thinking/sharing everything, erasing individuality.
Yetunde Akinjobi	Twins fight over gifts not meant for sharing (e.g., giving clothes to mom).
Ahmed Sani	Dating twins is exhausting due to their shared dynamics.
Precious Okon	Twins require duplicate purchases, increasing financial burden.
Oluwaseun Adebayo	One twin's academic dishonesty (e.g., writing exams for the other) risks both.
Kehinde Adeyemo	Twins struggle to separate emotionally, causing co-dependency.
Folake Adesina	Societal pressure forces twins to do everything together.
Musa Abdullahi	Twins face loan/credit risks: one borrows, the other is pursued.
Chinwe Ogbonna	Fingerprint access breaches privacy between twins.
Emeka Okafor	Mistaken identity can implicate an innocent twin in crimes.
Ayo Olumide	Traveling with a twin's passport risks legal consequences.
Fatimah Mohammed	Twins inherit each other's relationship problems (e.g., "taking each other's man").
Tunde Ojo	Buying items for one twin requires buying for both to avoid conflict.
Uchechi Nnamani	Twins feel obligated to share possessions, leaving no personal ownership.
Jamila Haruna	One twin's reckless behavior (e.g., joining a cult) traumatizes the family.
Obioma Chukwu	Representing a twin at work risks termination if discovered.
Gloria Okon	Twins battle for individuality amid constant comparisons.
Femi Aluko	Shared identity complicates legal/financial documents (e.g., joint accounts).
Hauwa Abubakar	Twins endure unwanted attention and scrutiny in public.
Chidi Okeke	One twin's anger issues create conflict for both.
Bimpe Akintola	Parents enforce uniformity, stifling personal choices.
Segun Adewale	Twins face pressure to maintain identical life paths (e.g., marriage timing).
Lola Ogunmola	Covering for a twin's absence escalates into ethical dilemmas.
Wale Adeniran	Twins risk academic/career penalties for impersonation.
Nneka Eze	Gifts must be shared or rejected to prevent jealousy.
Adeoti	One twin's reputation affects the other's social life.

Abdulrahman	Identity sharing enables fraud but also invites danger.
Joy Eze	Twins experience emotional burnout from constant togetherness.
Taiwo Olufemi	Decision fatigue arises from negotiating every choice.
Chiamaka Nwankwo	Society dismisses twins as interchangeable, not individuals.

## Data Analysis

RQ1: How do Facebook users interpret the lived challenges of monozygotic twins?

The data reveal that Facebook users predominantly perceive monozygotic twinship not as a purely celebratory biological occurrence but as a complex identity with embedded challenges in autonomy, justice, and emotional labor. Over 70% of the 60 respondents described role confusion or misdirected consequences due to their twin status. For example, Fatima Suleiman and Ibrahim Musa express how legal and social systems struggle to distinguish between twins, leading to wrongful accusation ( $\neg A \rightarrow B$  punished) where A and B are indistinguishable. Chinedu Okafor's description of receiving beatings meant for his brother (colloquially: "wotowoto") reinforces the psychosocial trauma of shared accountability. Moreover, Adeyemi and Yusuf Bello reflect a coercive dynamic in which twins "force each other into activities," pointing to peer-imposed obligations, thereby restricting personal volition ( $A \oplus B \neq A \vee B$ ). Such narratives analogically treat twinship like a "joint account" of behavior, where individual debits or credits are misallocated. Overall, these interpretations frame twinship not just as a biological mirroring but as a social entanglement with real consequences.

RQ2: What dominant themes and language features emerge in online discussions about monozygotic twin identity?

Several dominant themes emerged, including identity confusion, emotional co-dependence, and symbolic dualism, with a linguistic emphasis on metaphors, personification, and Yoruba/Igbo idiomatic expressions. For instance, Ngozi Eze uses the idea of "constant mediation" to symbolize the chronic conflict resolution burden parents and siblings bear, while Nkechi Uche cautions against identity substitution using the Yoruba phrase "a o ni ri esu o," meaning "we do not want to encounter evil," anchoring her critique in cultural morality. Meanwhile, Gloria Okon and Olamide Taiwo highlight an existential struggle for individuation, resisting the idea of twins

as "one person with two bodies." This theme is linguistically marked by resistance phrases such as "Your decision is not your decision" (Funmilayo Adeola) and "You are not one person" (Olamide Taiwo), which express perceived loss of agency through repetition and negation. In contrast, others like Bola Adeyinka and Efe Omoregie highlight strategic misuse of twin identity, turning identical appearance into a loophole for impersonation. These contrasting narratives ( $-A \rightarrow +B$ ) reflect a tension between twinship as oppression vs. opportunity, often articulated through ethical dilemmas and social satire.

RQ3: How do digital twin narratives reflect broader societal attitudes and cultural perceptions toward monozygotic twinship?

Digital narratives suggest that monozygotic twins are often positioned in society as collective units rather than individuals, reflecting cultural ideals of symmetry, harmony, and shared destiny, particularly in African contexts. For instance, Zainab Ibrahim describes delayed marriage for one twin until the other is settled, reflecting the Yoruba socio-cultural expectation of synchronized rites of passage (Marriage A  $\Leftrightarrow$  Marriage B). Chikaodinaka Nwosu's and Segun Adewale's comments on "pressure to marry twins" or "maintain identical life paths" expose the teleological framing of twinship—where twin lives are expected to unfold as mirrored scripts, not independent plots. Additionally, users like Kazeem Abdul and Femi Aluko critique how shared resources and documentation (e.g., finances, legal IDs) reduce twins to legal and financial monoliths, creating bureaucratic and relational confusion. This is amplified by Adebisi Ogunleye's claim that "joint responsibilities mean thinking/sharing everything," illustrating society's collectivist imposition on individual identity. These attitudes mirror broader African communal philosophies (e.g., Ubuntu) but, when mapped onto twins, yield unintended consequences such as loss of autonomy, emotional entanglement, and systemic misrecognition ( $A \wedge B \neq \neg C$  for either twin).

The findings reveal that Facebook users interpret monozygotic twinship as a site of double-edged identity, where biological sameness engenders social misrecognition, particularly in legal, emotional, and interpersonal domains. Drawing on Goffman's dramaturgical metaphor, users like Fatima Suleiman and Ibrahim Musa describe how twins are involuntarily cast into a shared "performance" — where one twin's backstage actions (e.g., misconduct) affect the other's front-stage treatment by society. This interpretation echoes Claudia et al. (2021), who found that adult MZ twins often struggle to escape the role of "unitary performer," frequently being

misrecognized despite their efforts at identity individuation. However, while Claudia et al. relied on structured interviews, this Facebook-based study uniquely captures unfiltered, real-time narratives, suggesting a more emotionally charged portrayal of identity entanglement (e.g., Chinedu Okafor's "wotowoto" beatings). Hall's theory of representation also becomes relevant here: these Facebook narratives reflect not only lived experience but also reinforce cultural codes that equate twins with duplicity, substitution, or shared guilt. Unlike Stromswold (2006), who attributed twin differences to neurobiological variation, this study highlights societal misreadings rather than biological sameness as the source of conflict. The divergence may stem from different epistemological orientations — lab-based observation versus user-generated cultural discourse — but together they suggest that monozygotic twinship, while genetically identical, is socially unstable.

The dominant linguistic features on Facebook include symbolic dualism, negation structures, and culturally embedded idioms, which participants use to articulate the paradoxes of sameness and difference in twin identity. Gloria Okon and Olamide Taiwo resist twin interchangeability through negation ("You are not one person"), a discursive strategy that aligns with Goffman's idea of "face-work" — the effort to maintain autonomy in the presence of audience expectations. This mirrors Claudia et al.'s (2021) findings, where twins resist media stereotypes by emphasizing differentiated narratives. However, this study expands the linguistic lens by capturing culturally specific idioms like Nkechi Uche's Yoruba phrase "a o ni ri esu o," grounding identity anxieties in moral and spiritual frameworks. In contrast, Bakker (1987) and Hayashi & Hayakawa focused on twin language (cryptophasia) as a private, child-level phenomenon of intimacy. While those studies highlight linguistic convergence, the current study captures adult linguistic divergence — deliberate language use to assert independence. This contrast suggests a developmental trajectory: twin language begins in closeness (Bakker), but later becomes a battleground for individuation (this study). In Hall's terms, the Facebook discourse illustrates a semiotic struggle, where twins re-code dominant meanings of sameness by subverting, parodying, or resisting them linguistically.

Digital narratives reflect a persistent collectivist framing of twinship, particularly in African cultural settings, where twins are often seen as symbolic doubles destined to move in sync. Zainab Ibrahim's comment about marriage delay until both twins are ready reflects not just familial planning but a ritualistic coordination of life events, echoing Nylander's (1971)



ethnographic account of Yoruba twinning customs. Similarly, Robak and Peplińska (2023) found that adult twins internalize cultural expectations, often negotiating their identities in tension with parental differential treatment. Both studies, including the present one, show that the public's scripting of twin roles contributes to identity conflict. However, Facebook users add real-time testimonial nuance, revealing micro-level frustrations (e.g., financial co-dependence, social confusion, or documentation issues). The findings also contrast with the biological determinism in fMRI studies (Cogn Neurosci, 2012), which locate difference in neuroanatomy. Rather than emphasizing biology, Facebook users frame twin challenges as representational misalignments—where social scripts don't fit lived reality. Using Goffman, twins are forced to perform synchronized roles for an audience that refuses backstage access to their individuality. Under Hall's theory, these performances expose a hegemonic representation of twins as metaphors of harmony and purity, which, while celebratory in form, are coercive in practice. The convergence lies in the shared emphasis on identity negotiation; the divergence is in method and medium — academic interviews vs. social media testimonies. Both, however, recommend greater social awareness of the nuanced, non-monolithic twin experience.

## **Conclusion**

Twin birth, once shrouded in fear and superstition across parts of Africa, is now widely embraced as a blessing, thanks to the historic intervention of reformers like Mary Slessor in the Calabar region. Today, some even pray for it—though extreme cases like that of Cameroonian Gladys Bulinya, mother of six sets of twins, reveal its daunting realities. Yet beyond the joy and marvel lies a complex, often misunderstood world known only to twins themselves. This study reveals that monozygotic twins experience a unique continuum of identity challenges, linguistic framing, and stereotyping that society often overlooks. Interpretive journalism must, therefore, rise to the task—not just reporting the facts but interpreting and humanizing their lived realities and rarity.

## **Recommendations**

I. Media literacy organizations such as the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), in collaboration with Facebook content moderation teams, should design sensitization content that educates the public on the psychological, cultural, and social challenges faced by monozygotic twins.

2. Interpretive journalists should receive training, through workshops led by academic and cultural experts, to adopt nuanced narrative techniques that highlight individuality and avoid stereotypical clichés.
3. Interpretive journalism should continue to amplify personal stories of twins confronting stereotypes, thereby shaping institutional reforms and fostering more balanced societal attitudes.
4. Families of monozygotic twins should learn to provide supportive environments that affirm individuality, allowing each twin to pursue personal interests, identities, and career paths.
5. Career counsellors and educational institutions should guide monozygotic twins toward professions where individual strengths are recognized and celebrated, reducing the risk of being perceived as a “unit” rather than as individuals.
6. Twins themselves should be empowered through mentorship and self-advocacy programmes, by media organisations, to challenge stereotypes in professional and social contexts
7. Community leaders, cultural custodians, and social institutions should foster inclusive practices that celebrate twinship without reinforcing negative stereotypes or marginalizing their individuality.

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