



Nonverbal Regulators as Gender Signals in Hausa

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Abstract

This study examined nonverbal regulators as gender signals in Hausa culture. It was guided by the understanding that conversation is an organized and structured activity governed by both verbal and nonverbal cues. Within the framework of Conversational Analysis, regulators such as gaze, head movements, pauses, and hand gestures were understood as cues that controlled the rhythm and flow of talk, functioning much like traffic signals. Drawing on video recordings of naturally occurring face-to-face interactions among Hausa speakers, the research investigated how gender influenced the use and interpretation of these regulators. The findings revealed that some nonverbal regulators were distinctly male-specific, reflecting authority, assertiveness, and social dominance; others were female-specific, often associated with modesty, politeness, and deference. Additionally, a category of neuter regulators emerged, used across gender lines to maintain conversational balance. The study concluded that gender in Hausa communication was not only encoded in language choice but also vividly performed through nonverbal regulation, reflecting deeper sociocultural expectations and values.

Introduction

In Hausa society, gender plays a crucial role in determining not only the type of nonverbal signals used in communication but also how and when they are employed, depending on the conversational partner. This paper focuses on exploring the relationship between gender and communication, with particular attention to the nonverbal dimension. Nonverbal

communication refers to the transmission and interpretation of messages without the use of words. It encompasses gestures, facial expressions, posture, gaze, and other bodily cues that convey meaning beyond spoken language. These forms of expression are influenced by several sociocultural factors such as age, gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity.

Within the Hausa communicative context, nonverbal signals often reflect underlying social hierarchies and cultural expectations tied to gender. Men and women are not only socialized differently but are also expected to display distinct communicative behaviors that align with traditional norms of respect, modesty, and authority. This research therefore seeks to analyze the use of nonverbal signals as gender-specific modes of regulating interaction among Hausa speakers. The study adopts Conversational Analysis (CA) as its theoretical framework, given its focus on the sequential organization of talk and the subtle mechanisms that can be both verbal and nonverbal used by the interlocutors to manage conversational flow and social meaning.

Methodology

The study investigates the role of gender in the use of nonverbal regulators during face-to-face interactions in Hausa culture. A qualitative approach grounded in Conversational Analysis (CA) is employed to analyze naturally occurring conversations. CA focuses on examining the organization of spoken interactions, including the role of nonverbal regulators in structuring conversations. The data for the research is gathered mainly through video recording of natural occurring face-to-face interactions from multiple settings such as schools, street corner chat and wedding ceremonies. The video recording is therefore transcribed for analysis. Video recordings are complemented with detailed field notes, being aware of contextual factors such as setting, participant relationships, and cultural nuances. Interviews were also conducted with the participants to understand how and why they exhibit certain behaviours. The symbols used for transcription are the following:

↑ rise in pitch

↓ fall in pitch

word underlining signal salient stress

word: a colon renders a noticeable sound stretch

°° softer utterance

(xxxxx) unclear utterance

(.) a short pause

(word) description of nonverbal conduct is placed in parenthesis

Nonverbal Regulators and the Organization of Conversation

Human interaction goes far beyond words. In every social encounter, people communicate not only through what they say but also through how they move, look, and respond. These nonverbal cues perform several functions. They may complement, substitute, emphasize, repeat, contradict, or regulate verbal messages. Duncan (1972) views conversation as an organized and cooperative activity that requires participants to coordinate their turns and avoid verbal collisions. To achieve this, individuals rely on behavioral cues that signal when to speak, pause, or yield the floor.

Nonverbal behaviors used to manage the flow of talk are referred to as regulators. They include subtle actions such as nodding, leaning forward, raising the eyebrows, or extending a hand to indicate continuation or completion of speech. Regulators function like conversational traffic signals, helping speakers and listeners negotiate turns, maintain rhythm, and ensure smooth interaction. For example, a speaker may raise a hand slightly to discourage interruption, while a listener might lean forward or adjust posture to signal readiness to speak.

The regulation of conversation is therefore a shared responsibility between speaker and listener. The speaker may use gestures, posture, or variations in tone to clarify meaning, while the listener provides feedback through nods, gaze, or facial expressions. Together, these nonverbal exchanges sustain coherence and mutual understanding in conversation.

In Hausa communicative culture, the use of regulators is deeply influenced by social and gender norms (Adamu 2020). The society's strong sense of propriety and hierarchy shapes how men and women perform these cues. Male speakers often display assertive gestures and open postures that convey authority, while female speakers typically employ controlled and modest gestures consistent with *kunya* (modesty) and respect. Thus, regulating conversation in Hausa goes beyond managing turn-taking. It embodies social expectations, gender identity, and cultural values.

Nonverbal Regulators as Gender Signals

It is evident that there is gender difference in nonverbal means of regulation of interaction which is prevalent in Hausa culture. Fast (1977:19) defines gender signals as “masculine and feminine body movements”. These are gestures used exclusively and recognized by the society as belonging to a particular gender. In Hausa society, children are taught and made to use gestures and body postures relevant to their gender. For instance, if a girl sits inappropriately she will instantly be cautioned. Gestures regulate the flow of interaction. This is evident in both the same and mixed gender interactions. However, regulators are used differently by the two genders. Some are used strictly by males or females while others are used by both males and females. Hausa nonverbal regulators can be broadly categorized into three namely: Male specific, Female Specific Regulators and Neuter Regulators.

Female-Specific Regulators

These are some regulators that are regarded as strictly feminine by Hausa society therefore any male who tries to use them is rejected. The use of such regulators based on body parts are discussed under three sub-headings, namely: facial expressions, eye signals and hand gestures.

Facial Expressions

The most effective form of nonverbal communication is facial expression. It constitutes movements of parts of the face such as the mouth, the chin and the nose. In Hausa, facial expressions provide a clue about a person's emotional state *Labarinzuciya a tambayifuska* meaning: The face gives an insight of the mind. This perhaps explains why the face has enormous ability in making limitless array of nonverbal expressions. It is used to measure how effective an interaction will be, since it indicates a person's willingness to participate in an interaction. Moreover, the face serves as an opener of any social interaction. A proverb in Hausa

says this: *Shimfiɗarfuska ta fi shimfiɗartabarma* which literary translates to: A welcoming face is better than spreading a mat, meaning from the facial expression of a host, the guest may understand whether he/she is welcome or not. Facial gestures that are female specific are: *gàatsinée* (sneering), *múrgùḍà-bàakii* (mouth twisting), *zúmḍurà-bàakii* (lip pouting) and *táa bɛ̀-bàakii* (mouth disfiguration that may indicate contempt or disapproval). The excerpt as illustrated below shows how *zúmḍurà-bàakii* (lip-pouting gesture) is used as a nonverbal regulator.

- 1 Rabi'a: (....Bintaba ki da mutunci ko ki yi mana wayawaiba mu yijarrabawaba.
We missed our exams because you didn't call to inform us that the exam time has been rescheduled
- 2 Hadiza: (xxxxx)
- 3 Binta: (opens her mouth)
- 4 Binta: aka cekunyi (as she widens her pupils) =
- 5 Hadiza: = aka cekunyi
I heard you did the exam
- 6 Binta (tilted her head)
- 7 Hadiza: Ummii aka ce a jirasai 11 za mu shiga, kuma a ka ce Rabia ta yi
We were asked to wait till 11 and I was told Rabi'a has written the exam.
- 8 Binta: Rabi'a (she lowered her face, frowned and pointed to a place with her hand) nikuma a cikin nan nagan ki
But I saw you there
- 9 Rabi'a: (ahhhhhh)
- 10 Binta: (opens her mouth)
- 11 Hadiza: (pouts and turns her head sideways)

Above excerpt is an instance of female specific facial regulators: *zúmḍurà-bàakii* (lip-pouting gesture) by Hadiza. The gesture was made in response to a statement made by Rabi'a that she has missed her exam! *Zúmḍurà-bàakii* (lip-pouting) indicates condemnation. It is used to replace speech, it indicates anger, disagreement, condemnation or disregard or just pretending to be ill tempered. It is sometimes accompanied by *káwárdàkâi* (gazing away) and can also be preceded by another gesture *kállónbáanzáa* (contemptuous gaze) especially when the interactants are peers as in this instance.

Eye Signals

Eye signals refer to the use of gaze, eye contact, movement, or pupil dilation to communicate meaning. In Hausa culture, eye behavior performs multiple functions, one of which is the regulation of interaction. Through the eyes, speakers and listeners manage attention, convey emotion, and negotiate conversational turns without necessarily relying on speech. Among Hausa women in particular, eye signals are rich in expressive and regulatory meaning. Common examples include *fàrɪi* (flickering eyelashes), *kállón-wútsiyàr-ìdò* (sideways glance), *kállón-kállóo* (steady gaze), and *kállón-hádìrìn-kàaj?i* (contemptuous look), among others.

The gesture *fàrìi* (flickering eyelashes) is especially noteworthy in mixed-gender interactions, where it serves both communicative and regulatory purposes. An excerpt illustrating this behavior in a mixed-gender encounter is presented below.¹² Ahmad (smiles at Binta)

13 Binta (smiles at Ahmad)

14 Ahmad ()

15 Binta: (looks at Ahmad and performs *fàrìi*)

16 Binta (leaves)

The above interaction is between two students Binta and Ahmad . Binta performs *fàrìi* (flickering eye lashes) to signal to Ahmad in an intimate manner the termination of their short conversation . *Fàrìi* is a flirting gesture used by Hausa women as they are expected to be meticulous, hence not allowed to express their feelings verbally. They therefore sometimes express their feelings with gestures such as *fàrìi* . In courtship (zance) *fàrìi* is used by females to show their affection, it could also be a nonverbal answer to a suitor who inquires in Hausa *Ina son ki, ke faì* meaning: I am interested in you, what do you think? The Hausa prostitutes perform it discretely to select males who troop to them all the time.

Therefore, since *fàrìi* is a flirting signal the expectation would be that it is only practiced in a mixed gender interaction and not among in same-sex partners. However, in this instance it was performed in a same gender interaction at a wedding event. Habiba displayed her goods and while she was trying to persuade the other women to buy the goods, she used *fàrìi* to call their attention the more. This shows that *fàrìi* can be used in same gender exchange to emphasize a point and even to hold the floor. In addition, *fàrìi* is accompanied in this scenario with *gìrgìzàkài* (shaking the head) and *bùgà-cínyàa* (patting the thigh). The use of these gestures would more or less capture the attention of the interactants and allow her to maintain the turn. This is shown in the excerpt:

17 Maryam: Habiba inakayan ne?

Habiba where are the goods?

18 Habiba : (xxxx)

19 Habiba: (flickers her eye lashes, shakes her head)

20 Aisha: ita ma ta yi advertising dīn nata ba!

Yes she should advertise hers also.

21 Habiba: bikinki fa yaha 6a mutane (she points to the side)

Your wedding is blessed with so many people.

22 Habiba: nan dukbamembobiba ne (spreads her hands as she simultaneously shakes her head)

All these people are non-members.

Similarly, gaze duration and intensity is also determined by the interactional partner. Direct eye contact occurs mostly in an all-female encounter. Though, gaze is vital in any face-to-face interaction as it signifies interest and yields continuous flow of conversation. However, direct eye contact is discouraged in mixed gender and intergenerational interactions lest the female interactant be labeled as not being bashful (*kunya*) .

Hand Gestures

Hand gestures constitute another vital nonverbal means of regulating interaction. Among the Hausa, hand movements are used to perform various regulatory functions such as, holding the floor, drawing attention, or emphasizing a particular point. Hence, hand gesturing is regarded as largely, if not entirely, a speaker-oriented phenomenon (Yang, 2010). The way the hand is maneuvered, particularly in relation to the face and other parts of the body plays a crucial role in structuring interaction and often reflects gender-based differences in communicative behavior.

In Hausa culture, several hand gestures are specifically associated with women, reflecting broader sociocultural expectations of femininity, modesty, and expressiveness. These include *máarîncínyàa* (patting the thigh), *yárfè-hánnúu* (finger shaking), *sállàllámí* (clapping the hands repeatedly while invoking the name of God), *múrzà-yáatsúu* (finger snapping), and *túuróođánkwalígàbá* (pushing the headscarf forward). Another distinct example of a female-specific regulator is *wáarè-yáatsúu* (finger spreading), as illustrated in the excerpt below.

23 Adama: akwai elective a cikingidan Hausa

There are elective courses to be offered in Hausa Department

24 Binta: nawa ne a can (pointing at her back)

How many

25 Adama: ashirin da biyar ne

Twenty five

26 Binta: ai kosis ?in sha takwas ne

There are 18 courses

27 Adama: aa (raised her hand up and spread her four fingers while staring)

28 Adama: (xxxx)

The excerpt above illustrates the use of the hand gesture *wáarè-yáatsúu* (finger spreading). In this instance, Adama employed the gesture to both hold the floor and emphasize a point. As she spoke, she spread her fingers and maintained the posture for a few seconds to reinforce her statement that the courses carried twenty-five credit loads, emphasizing her insistence. When she concluded, she gently lowered her hand to her lap, signaling her readiness to relinquish the turn to the next speaker. Interestingly, although Adama was discussing numbers, her use of *wáarè-yáatsúu* was not a counting gesture. She raised four fingers while saying “twenty-five,” suggesting that the gesture was more about emphasis and conversational control than numerical representation.

While *wáarè-yáatsúu* can be used by both men and women, the manner in which Adama performed it reflects feminine communicative style. Her hand remained close to her body, with a soft, contained move mentraising it only slightly to make her fingers visible without appearing assertive. The orientation of the palm also contributes to the meaning: when the palm faces upward, it may indicate 'give me,' 'begging,' or 'praying,' whereas a palm facing forward or backward with fingers fully extended may be interpreted as abusive or confrontational in Hausa culture. Thus, Adama's restrained and inwardly positioned gesture aligns with culturally expected norms of feminine modesty and decorum, illustrating how even subtle bodily movements are shaped by gendered expectations in Hausa interaction.

Male Specific Gestures

Like the female specific gestures, the male specific gestures represent the body movement and posture unequivocally used by Hausa males when interacting in either same or mixed gender interactions. They include posture, hand gestures and facial expressions.

Posture

Posture as a means of communication is relevant as far as social interaction is concerned. Although posture is not as expressive as the face or eyes, it however communicates a lot about a person's emotional state, self image and identity. Posture is one of the nonverbal devices used to regulate interaction. The way a person sits or stand determines his attentiveness in an interaction. Furthermore, one's posture may signal to the other interactants to take a turn. There are many instances of postural regulators that are male specific such as *karkacewaa* (tilting), *káðà- báfàa* (leg shaking), *sábùlè- ðàafáxàa* (shoulder shrug), *gyàrà-zámáa* (taking a more comfortable posture), *góoyà-hánnúu-à-báayà* (hand behind the back), *kárkáðá báfàa* (leg shaking), *hánnúu-à-àljihúu* (hand in pocket). Below is an example of male postural regulator known as *kàrkáceewàa* (tilting).

29 Anas: kana can kana barci

30 Bala: (tilted his body backward? a bit and held put his right hand on his waist while looking and listening attentively at Anas) me yafaru?)

31 Anas: (stroked his beard)

32 Anas: (.....)

33 Anas: yanzu akwai wani za mu ba ka

34 Anas: (removed his hand from his face and pointed to the right)

35 Bala: (released his waist and stood straight)

In Hausa culture, tilting the body backward while standing is categorically a masculine gesture. In this instance, Bala's backward tilt served as listener feedback, indicating attentiveness and a lack of immediate intention to take a turn. Once he was ready to speak, however, his posture changed, he straightened his body and released his hand from his waist. This shift in bodily orientation signaled a transition from passive listening to active participation. Notably, the tilting gesture is also common among younger men, often employed as a subtle act of flirtation or self-display, particularly when engaging with women in informal settings.

In the excerpt (line 30), Bala also performed *káamà-qúugùu* (one-hand akimbo) as a listener response. The fact that he used only one hand, coupled with his steady gaze at the speaker, suggests that he was engaged in the conversation and prepared to yield the floor when necessary. However, when he intended to claim a turn, he released his waist and stood upright. This postural change functioned as a clear turn-seeking cue, illustrating how Hausa men skillfully manipulate bodily gestures to manage participation and signal conversational intent. The meaning and manner in which *káamà- búugùu* (hands akimbo) is performed tend to be gender-specific. The gesture can be executed with one or both hands, each carrying a distinct social meaning. Among men, a two-hand akimbo stance often conveys feelings of tiredness, boredom, or anxiety. However, it is considered highly unusual for a Hausa woman to assume a

full *káamà-qúugùu* posture in public, as such bodily openness is culturally associated with assertiveness and defiance. Traits generally discouraged in female comportment. When a woman performs the gesture, it is typically within same-gender settings, such as among close friends or, in the case of pregnant women, as a gesture of physical relief rather than symbolic assertion.

Among girls, particularly teenagers, *káamà-qúugùu* carries yet another layer of meaning. It is often employed in moments of confrontation or challenge, especially when preparing for a quarrel or physical fight. In such contexts, the gesture functions as both a display of readiness and a nonverbal assertion of dominance. These variations illustrate how the same bodily formhands-on-hipscan be semantically reinterpreted depending on gender, age, and situational context. Thus, *káamà-qúugùu* serves not merely as a conversational regulator but as a culturally loaded emblem of identity, emotion, and power within Hausa social interaction.

Hand Gestures

Hand gestures under this category constitute movements made using the hand or related to the hand for communicative purposes.] Hand regulators such as *tàafa-hánnúu* (clapping each other's hand), *gáisàawáa* (hand shake) *sóosà-déeyàa* (scratching the back of the head), *sháafà-déeyàa* (rubbing the back of the head), *kállónàgóogó* (looking at the watch), *dúndùlè-hánnúu* (clenching of fists) and *káamàgéemùu* (beard stroking) are used by Hausa males.

Instance of male specific regulator is demonstrated in line 31 where Anas performed *káamàgéemùu* (beard stroking gesture) followed by a short pause. The beard stroking gestures used by Anas indicate that he is thinking hard and fast about the situation at hand. It is also an attempt to yield his turn to Bala who was unwilling to take the turn. Anas however maintained the turn. *Káamà-géemùu* is sometimes used as a feedback mechanism. In whatever context it is used it is purely a male gesture. Although there is another gesture that is similar to *káamà-géemùu* (beard stroking), - which is *káamà-hávàa* (chin stroking) which is mostly used by women.

Neuter Gestures

Some Hausa nonverbal signals are not gender sensitive. Such neuter regulators in Hausa include: *gargìzàkâi* (head nodding), *káwàrdàkâi* (gazing away), *mùrmúshdi* (smiling), *dàakàtáa* (putting ones hand out), *núunî* (pointing), *gyáðàkâi* (bending the head slowly sideways) *súnkúyàrdàkâi* (lowering the head), and *kállón-dàsà* (gazing down).

Núunî (pointing) Gestures

In Hausa, pointing gesture can be done using the eyes, the mouth, the head and the hand. However, we shall restrict ourselves to finger pointing.

36 Musa: ya exam ñin?
how was the exam?

37 Binta: balaifi... an gama
is okay..... we are through

38 Binta: (she points to the back)

39 Musa: he pointed at (those videotaping them using his index finger while shaking it)

Two distinct finger-pointing gestures were observed in the excerpt. Binta performed *núunì* using her thumb, intending to alert Musa that they were being videotaped. She did this silently, using gesture in place of speech. Musa, in response, produced a pointing gesture as well, but with his index finger also without uttering a word. The primary distinction between the two, apart from the choice of fingers, lies in the accompanying nonverbal nuances: Musa's gesture was accompanied by a slight shaking of the finger and a smile. While the index finger is commonly used to indicate an object or direction, its meaning changes when the gesture is performed with a shaking motion, as it then conveys a sense of warning, as demonstrated by Musa. This gesture is frequently used among male peers in confrontational or cautionary contexts, but it can also serve as a floor-holding cue in conversation. Among women, the same gesture often functions as a warning, particularly toward children. In Hausa culture, however, pointing directly at a person with the index finger is generally considered impolite.

In contrast, thumb-pointing is typically directed backward and tends to be more static than index-finger pointing. In a different context, it may also serve as a gossiping cue, especially when combined with other gestures a use more commonly associated with women.

Káwárdàkâi (Turning away)

This is used by both males and females. It is demonstrated by turning the head to one side as shown below:

- 40 Aisha: ga niinajiranki
I am here waiting for you here
- 41 (Bilki walks towards Aisha)
- 42 Bilki: ai nafaxamikisaigobe
But I told you to wait till tomorrow
- 43 Aisha: (smiles... Don Allah)
Please
- 44 Bilki: (turns her head) ke kikasani.
It is up to you to decide

Káwárdàkâi (turning away) gesture here functions as termination of interaction. It may convey two meanings here: either she is speechless thereby averting her gaze from the speaker or she is irritated by what she heard. This may eventually lead to loss of interest in the discussion as a whole.

Gìrgìzàkâi (Head shake)

Gìrgìzàkâi is a gesture done by shaking the head up and down or sideways repeatedly. In Hausa, shaking the head up and down denotes agreement, while side by side movement of the head signifies disagreement. Head nodding is not gender specific. In social interactions *gìrgìzàkâi* is exhibited as a listener feedback. It can be seen in the following excerpt:

- 45 Binta: ku zo ga kaya
Come and buy
- 46 Umni: munazuwa
We are coming

- 47 Binta: sauri fa nake yi
I am in a hurry
- 48 Ummi: hmmm ke ta wannan ki ke (walking past Binta)
Just leave me alone
- 49 Hadiza: (held Ummi's hand and drew her back)
- 50 Ummi (nodded her head quickly sideways)
- 51 aa bazansayaba ne
No I don't want to buy

Head nodding may occur either slowly or rapidly, depending on the communicative context and the participant's intention. In this instance, Ummi's quick head nod signified her desire to end the interaction, indicating that she preferred to be left alone. Conversely, a slow head nod is typically produced by a listener to encourage the speaker to continue, functioning as a supportive back channel cue. However, as the listener's intention shifts toward taking the floor, the tempo of the nodding often increases, signaling an attempt to claim a turn in the conversation.

Discussion

The idea that nonverbal cues function as strategies for coordinating social interactions, as noted by Duncan (1972), was affirmed in this study. Hausa speakers consistently relied on nonverbal regulators such as facial expressions, hand gestures, postural shifts, and head movements to sustain coherence and manage turn-taking in face-to-face exchanges. The data obtained from both school and wedding settings revealed that these regulators were not mere accompaniments to speech but served as integral components of conversational organization. In some cases, they were synchronized with verbal messages; in others, they appeared independently, substituting speech entirely and ensuring conversational continuity.

Although conversational turns are often conceptualized as verbal units, the findings of this study support the view that nonverbal signals can also perform turn-management functions. Yang (2010) highlights that bodily actions can carry communicative weight comparable to spoken language. However, identifying when a nonverbal act constitutes a conversational move remains a methodological challenge. Based on contextual and semantic cues, it was observed that Hausa speakers employ certain gestures such as *zúmɓùràbàakîi* (pressing the lips together) or *káwárdàkâi* (turning away) to convey clear pragmatic meanings that can initiate, maintain, or terminate interaction. For instance, in Figure 1, when Hadiza performed *zúmɓùràbàakîi* followed by *káwárdàkâi* as a backchannel response, the speaker interpreted it as willingness to yield the floor, illustrating how nonverbal cues can negotiate conversational rights and obligations.

The analysis further revealed that some regulators function as speaker-maintaining cues, such as *fàrii* (flashing eyelashes) and *wáarè-yáatsúu* (finger spreading), while others operate as listener responses, including *gìrgìzàkâi* (head shaking), *káamàgéemùu* (beard stroking), and *káamà-qúugùu* (hands akimbo). A few, like *fàrii* and *káwárdàkâi*, serve as indicators of conversational closure. These findings align with the conversational analytic perspective that

communication is multimodal, where meaning emerges from the interplay between verbal and embodied behavior.

Most crucially, gender emerged as a defining factor in how these regulators were employed and interpreted. Hausa men and women demonstrated distinct preferences and constraints in their nonverbal conduct, reflecting broader sociocultural expectations tied to respect, modesty, and authority. Men tended to use expansive or assertive gestures, such as *káamàgéemùu* (stroking the beard), symbolizing composure and dominance, while women often employed subtle or deferential regulators, such as *fàrìi* (flashing eyelashes), embodying cultural ideals of *kunya* (modesty) and politeness.

These findings reinforce the argument that gender in Hausa communication extends beyond linguistic expression into the realm of bodily performance. Nonverbal regulators thus function as gendered semiotic resources through which social roles and power relations are enacted and reproduced. In essence, Hausa interactional behavior reflects an embodied social grammar that encodes gender norms not merely in speech but in the very rhythms and gestures of everyday conversation.

Conclusion

Interactions are guided by social rules that ensure coordination and the smooth flow of communication. These rules are largely maintained through nonverbal cues that help participants manage the pace and rhythm of their encounters. Gestures and body postures that perform this regulatory function are known as regulators. This study has shown that gender plays a vital role in shaping how these nonverbal regulators are used and interpreted within Hausa communication. Consequently, Hausa nonverbal regulators can be broadly categorized into three types: male-specific, female-specific, and neuter regulators.

Among all forms of nonverbal regulation, facial expression emerges as the most significant in face-to-face interaction. The effectiveness of any encounter often depends on the speaker's ability to communicate emotions, attitudes, and intentions through the face. In Hausa society, such expressions carry deep social meaning revealing respect, modesty, authority, or restraint depending on the gender and social context of the participants. The study therefore concludes that nonverbal regulation among Hausa speakers is not merely a conversational strategy, but a reflection of cultural identity and the gendered values that sustain social harmony.

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