

Towards Transformation of the Nigerian Youths: The Place of Yoruba Popular Music

Kayode Olusola
Department of Performing Arts
Olabisi Onabanjo University
Ago-Iwoye, Nigeria
Kayodeolusola2@gmail.com
kayode.olusola@oouagoiwoye.edu.ng

Abstract

Since the year 2012, West Africans, especially the Nigerian government and citizens have been witnessing an increase in civil crisis because of different crimes committed in African society and the involvement of the youths in these negative activities. Since music is said to have an emotional and psychological influence on human minds, this paper, therefore, examines the text content of and relevance of popular music in Nigerian society and highlights the role played by popular musicians as agents for positive transformation of the youths among the Southwestern part of Nigeria. Relying on Femi Adedeji's Transformation musicological theory, this work explicates the song themes and other lyrical contents of selected popular music in the Yoruba language fashioned towards positive transformative direction, for the purpose of socio-cultural analysis. The research findings show that some Nigerian popular musicians have for over three decades, been making use of the message in their music to sustain the positive transformation of lives and behavior of people of Nigeria, especially the youths. The song lyrics by the old *juju*, *fuji*, *apala*, *sakara*, and Pop musicians are found to be more effective because of the Yoruba cultural concepts and moral values inherent in them. This essay concludes that music has an affective mechanism that positively influences the lives, personalities, and world-views of Nigerian youths in general if properly channeled towards a positive dimension. This paper concludes that the Nigerian government should use appropriate agencies like the National Film and Records Censor Board and Nigerian Copyright Council to prevent music that

contains lyrics that can encourage violence and criminal acts circulated into Nigerian markets.

Keywords: Positive transformation, Youths, Popular music, *Jùjú*, *Fùjì*, *Àpàlà*, *Sákàrà*, and Pop musicians.

Introduction

Among West Africans, Music is a common phenomenon that plays multifarious functions and roles in the lives of the people. . Music also forms an important tool for exhibiting, communicating, and documenting their culture, history, norms, and other societal values. Vidal (2000) opines that ‘one of the most common forms by which man expresses his emotions, feelings, and sentiments’ is through music.

Scholars like Euba have observed music (1968) Omibiyi-Obidike (1977), Adegbite (1988), Vidal (2000), Adedeji (2010), Olusola (2018), and others to have greater affective roles on the lives of the people in the society. This makes music to be one of the modes of imparting cultural and moral education, as well as a tool for propagating the ethical norms, religious beliefs, and general worldview of the people in any African society. Just like in any other African and world societies, there exist different forms of music among the people of Nigeria which are the most frequently used, and serve ritual and entertainment functions in festivals and religious worships as well as other music for social gathering and recreation.

In the last two decades, different West African societies like Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, and others have witnessed disorderliness in their political, economic, and social status and structure. Nigeria recently experienced an economic recession because of a fall in the price of crude oil, which is the major source of income for the country. Recorded on www.tradingeconomics.com that the rate of youth unemployment rose from 23.63% in 2014 to 38% in the second quarter of 2018. Other factors include bad leadership, poor management of resources by the ruling class, and widespread corruption in every sector in Nigeria. The effects of these are felt in the form of a rise in the rate of unemployment, inflation, a fall in the rate of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) decrease in Nigeria’s foreign reserve dilapidation of roads, railways, airlines, power supplies, and others; which in consequent led to mass retrenchment from jobs by manufacturing companies, service providers and banking sectors.

Since the inception of Nigeria’s economic recession in 2015, the country has recorded cases of crimes and violence, especially among the youths. This violence and crimes manifested in the form of youths engaging in terrorism, armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom collection, cultic rival clashes, political hooliganism, and fights resulting from land disputes among others. The

most common form of crime committed by Nigerian youths in recent times is electronic/internet fraud popularly known as 'Yahoo-yahoo' and 'Yahoo-plus' which both employ the internet and other electronic means in defrauding the victims. Other forms of crime committed by the Nigerian youths include money ritual and 'Yahoo-extra' which involves diabolical means of collecting money from people; which at times may lead to the death of the victims.

Even though Nigeria's constitution is against drug abuse and trafficking, drug abuse still constitutes another alarming crime committed especially by Nigerian youths. Before the last decade, drug abuse was seen in the forms of Indian helm smoking, and intake of cocaine, heroin, Indian hemp, and alcohol. In recent times, youths have also device other means by using common drugs like tramadol, codeine, and some cough syrup as hard drugs. Other improvised methods include the use of a mixture of alcohol, herbs, and other chemicals to produce hard drugs they call '*Scunk*' and '*skutchy*'. Intake of hard drugs has been observed as the motivator of a series of violence and crimes committed by the youths in most societies.

Akinrinade (2016) is of the opinion that music is used to influence individual and group behavior in different ways. There is often the transmission of soft influence on man by the power of musical sounds and messages. Man tends to admire, appreciate, and listen to music because of its effect on man's existential feelings. Since popular music like juju, fuji, hip-pop, and rap music are mostly patronized by the youths in Nigerian society like every other African society, this paper therefore within Adedeji's (2006) Transformative musicology theoretical framework, examines and highlights the content and relevance of popular music as a mechanism for crime prevention good personality-builder among the Yoruba youths in Nigeria. This will also highlight the impact of musicians and their music in fostering positive transformation in the lives of the youths in the Yoruba-speaking area of Western Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

Adedeji's (2006a) transformative musicological theory, postulates that music could be used as a vehicle for the transformative processes needed in our society and that composition constitutes its major tool. He stressed the need to redirect music compositions to meet all social challenges; and the urgent need to compose music that prognosticates into the future by focusing on transformative themes. According to him, 'The music composed for transformative purposes would fall under the category of music for life's sake as against music for music's sake'.

In view of the depravities in society, Adedeji (2006b) theorized that music, popular, religious, or traditional re-contextualized to address socio-political

problems and serve as a vehicle for positive transformation while retaining its artistic qualities. This is very realistic since some popular music carries textual or philosophical themes and contents, which portray cultural norms, values, religious messages, nature, love, and good tributes. Adedeji also stated further, “One of the major weapons in our hands to combat social ills in our society, as art musicians, is to compose music that condemns crime, bad governance, oppression, and terrorism. Music that encourages decent behaviors, love, harmony, justice, respect for human life, truth, hard work; didactic music that teaches morals and ethics and music that shows the path towards a glorious tomorrow” (2010:3).

Similarly, to Adedeji’s position, Forchu (2011) opined that the purpose of music as part of the societal development process served if the themes of songs composed were aimed towards hard work rather than lauding easy wealth or other vices promoting it. Their music should exalt honesty, trustworthiness, and other qualities that promote peaceful coexistence. ‘This is possible because of the fact that while music is consumed, it leaves a psyche that re-directs the person towards a new personality’ (Forchu 2011:23). Thus, musicians must be aware of the cultural, moral, and ethical norms of their culture, write, and perform music that promotes morality and opposes immorality.

Olusola’s (2019) Crime-musicological theory also contends that the study of the nature and causes of both the known and new forms of crime, and how being perpetrated could be studied through music. That is, lyrics of some popular music could contain useful information that exposes crimes and how they could be combated. He is also of the opinion that music if the texts and its coded lyrics are well decoded, can be positively employed in obtaining information on terrorism, kidnapping, drug abuse/trafficking, fraud, and other crime issues as well as preventing crime to foster individual and societal transformation.

During this research, it was discovered that many popular musicians in Nigeria, especially the fuji and hip-pop musicians have produced many songs which promote and encourage crime and violence both by using direct language or coded statements. Some hip-pop musicians Naira Marley’s ‘Am I a Yahoo Boy?’, 9ice’s ‘Living Things’ and Small Doctor’s ‘If You No Get Money’, Olamide’s ‘Science Students’ and others promote and encourage internet fraud, drug abuse and other forms of crimes among the youths because their music are mostly patronized by the youths.

Despite the assertion above, numerous Nigerian popular musicians have released song tracks that preached violence and crime among the youths in Nigeria. Songs are produced in different genres of music, but because of Western acculturation and other modern technological influences on the youths, Most of these songs are ignored by youths but heavily patronized by adults in

society. However, a few Nigerian Hip-hop musicians like Teni, Asa, Adekunle Gold, and a few others still channel the lyrics of their music towards transforming the Nigerian youths and society for the better.

Popular Music in Nigeria and Its Positive Transformative Roles on the Youths

Popular music includes various music performed or produced for public consumption. This music recorded in Cassettes, CDs, DVDs, and VCDs or uploaded on the internet for people to download for commercial purposes. The consumption of popular music is open to all individuals as opposed to cult or ritual music meant for the initiates only. The performances of popular music are held at nightclubs, beer shops, and at different social engagements.

Euba (1989) also described popular music as those associated with nightclubs with private parties or other social contexts in which merriment (*àrìyá*), leisure, and consumption of beverages are prime objectives. These descriptions seem adequate if one looks at popular Music as a type simply understood, experienced, and enjoyed, without any specialized musical instruction, as is typically the case with popular music.

Okafor (2005) describes popular music as socially entertaining and dance music-oriented music with broad, immediate, and implicitly transient appeal that draws its core clientele from urban dwellers, adding that ‘It is understood and accepted by a lot of people not as a final solution to their problems, but as a tropical of their sentiments and current worldview. In harmony with the above assertions, Lucy Ekwueme (2008) described popular music as music that is enjoyed and appreciated by many people. It is social dance music for people across age, sex, class, and ethnic barriers.

Oikelome (2013) observed and argued that ‘we use the term contemporary popular music to index the numerous genres of popular music in Nigeria. These include both popular music with purely Western elements and others derived from both religious and indigenous inflections. Examples of such could be pulled from the genres that sprouted and grew in the early sixties (Highlife and Juju) and the dance hip-hop music. He stated further that ‘the emergence of popular music can be traced to the pre-independent period, which witnessed the rise of highlife and Juju as well-established genres.’ While discussing the roots of Nigerian Urban Music in the Pre Independence era, Ambrose Campbell the producer of the very seminal ‘Highlife My Life’ stated in Oikelome (2013:71-72), thus:

There was juju music with Tunde King,” Campbell explained, “and then by 1939 Ibos, Itsekiris, Liberians (crew sailors) and we the Yorubas, the

Lagos boys, brought our own kind of song and they their own kind of song; we used to jam together. (*Nigerian Content Online*, 2011 quoted from Oikelome 2013).

Contrarily, Laz Ekweme (1985), in his analysis of the cultural significance of popular music in Nigeria, disregarded the potential cultural relevance of Nigerian popular music. He accused the musicians of lacking professional musical training and a limited general education. Furthermore, Ekweme argues that Nigerian pop musicians are incapable of exercising the discipline required to perform or sing, harmonize creatively, articulate uniquely, vocalize artistically, vary their fundamental structures, or even move in a dynamic manner. Similarly, Onyeji (2002) also reports that the popular musicians' image in Nigeria in recent times is blighted by such aspersion as illicit sex, unwanted pregnancy, unhappiness, broken homes and relationships, and inhuman desire.

Despite Ekwueme and Onyeji's concerns, Waterman (2010), Adedeji and Omosilade (2013), Onwuegbuna (2013), and other scholars have shown the many roles popular musicians have played in social-cultural, education, positive societal transformation, and other social events in various African societies. Bringing in many Nigerian popular musicians' international recognition, awards, and honorary doctorates. Dr. Orlando Owoh, Oliver De Coque, and Dr. Ayinde Barrister earned doctorates from international universities, while Ebenezer Obey (MON), Nelly Uchendu (MON), and Osita Osadebe (MON) received the National Award of Member of Order of Niger. I.K. Dairo (MBE) received the Queen's Award of Member of the British Empire for his musical ingenuity.

Nigerian Popular Music in Positive Transformative Direction

Juju Music

For over three decades in Nigeria, several *juju* musicians have continued in their efforts to compose and produce songs the themes of the lyrics are in a positive transformative direction. Being a Yoruba-based musical genre, most of the song texts are composed in Yoruba language, therefore communicating to the large Yoruba-speaking people of South-West Nigeria. Many of these songs' lyrics contain Yoruba cultural concepts and philosophical texts that educate the youths on moral values. The following is an example of juju music in a positive transformative direction:

Mase Ja, Mase Fa'jogban

Ebenezer Obey

Mase ja ma se fa'jo-gban s'omo-lu-a-bi l'a-ye re o

Máşe jà máşe fà jògbòn
S'òmólúàbí láyé rẹ ò

Do not be a hooligan and don't commit crime
 live peacefully as a person of integrity

In the song above, Ebenezer Obey advises the youth to stop hooliganism and to behave responsibly because yielding to this advice will transform the lives of the Nigerian youths and enhance crime-free and peace in society. Other music includes, 'E Se Rere' (Do Good) by Orlando Owoh, which condemns evils and admonishes everyone to be compassionate to their neighbors. Another song in this category includes Sir Shina Peters' song titled 'Omo Ile-iwe, Kawe re' where he appealed to students to concentrate on their studies due to the benefits of being well educated among others.

Fuji Music

Fuji music is another Yoruba-based musical genre that has its early exponents produced songs the themes of the lyrics are in a positive transformative direction. There few Nigerian Fuji musicians have also made efforts through their music in combating crime and violence among the Nigerian youths. The sustenance of the demand for their music over decades has helped

Mase Rere L'aye Mi

Ayinde Barrister

Mase re-re l'a-ye mi ma-se-re-re ma-se-re-re l'a-ye mi
 ma-se re-re mi-o se-ka l'a-ye mi o ni se-ka l'orun mi o ni se-ba-je o-mo-e
 lo-mi-ran ma-se-re-re l'a-ye mi ma-se-re-re

in sustaining attainable goals in positive transformation in Nigeria. The following song by Ayinde Barrister is an example of such song:

Màsé rere láyé mi màsé rere
Màsé rere láyé mi màsé rere
Mi ò sikhà láyé, mi ò ní sèkà lórun,
Mi ò ní sèkà sòmọ ẹlómíràn
Màsé rere láyé mi màsé rere

I will continue to do good as long as I live
 I shall do no evil on earth nor in heaven
 I will not harm a fellow human being
 I will continue to do good as long as I live

In the song above, Sikiru Ayinde Barrister appealed to the youths to be of good moral and ethical conduct always. Other songs in the positive transformation direction include Kollington Ayinla's song titled 'E jeka Sise' also advised the youths about hard work and the benefits of being diligent as against being fraudulent or exploring other evil channels of quick money-making. Other in this category include the song title 'Iwa Irele' (humility) by Saheed Osupa where he advised the youths to imbibe the spirit of humility among others.

Naija Pop/Hip-pop Music

Despite the observation and concern of some scholars regarding the corrupt and negative thematic

contents in the lyrics of many Hip-pop musicians in Nigeria, some of the musicians have been able to distinguish themselves by composing and producing their music in English, Pidgin-English and Yoruba languages which

Omode

Funmi Adams

Omode o e ye mo'gun o-lo-ro Ai-ni-te-lo-run q-ti-ba-ke-gbe

5 ni, e ma-mu gba-na o oun so ni do'de ni to ba pe ju we-re nio ya lo-

9 la o-mo to ye ko tun i-tu se o ti ya we-re ni Ya-ba o

are also in the positive transformative direction towards attaining sustainable goals in combating crime and violence among the youths. The following song ‘Omode’ by Funmi Adams is an example of songs in this category:

Omode o emá mógùn olóró
Àìní itẹ̀lórùn ní àtí ibákégbé ní
È má mu gbáná yéye ọ̀n sọ̀ni dọ̀dẹ̀ ní
Tóbá pé jú wẹ̀rè ní yíọ gbẹ̀yìn è
Omo tó yẹ kó tún ilú ẹ
Ó ti ya wẹ̀rè ní Yábà

Youths stop drug abuse
 It is greediness and bad peer pressure
 Stop drug abuse, because it can lead to insanity
 If you persist, it will result in madness
 Youths that supposed to build the nation
 Many have turned to lunatics on the street of Yaba

In the song above, Funmi Adams advised the youths against drug abuse and explained the consequences of the act if not desist from it. Other songs in positive transformation include ‘Eko Dara Pupo’ (Education is important) by Bunmi Olajubu where she advises the youths about the importance of education to their future and personalities. The song titled ‘Omo Mi S’ohun Rere’ (My Child, Behave Well) by Christy Essien Igbokwe are song that encourages children and teenagers to embrace good moral behaviors and education as part of the war against crimes and illiteracy. Other hip-hop music in this category includes songs like ‘Heal the World and ‘One Love’ by 2Face, ‘Talk’ and ‘This is Nigeria’ by Patoranking, and ‘Great Nation’ by Timi Dakolo. These Hip-hop artists through their song lyrics, encouraged the youths to embrace peace, honesty, and integrity for them to build a better Nigeria.

Research Findings

The analysis of the musical data collected has revealed that, despite the fact that some Nigerian popular musicians like Remi Aluko, Afeez Fashola popularly known as Naira Marley. Babalola Falemi popularly known as Sauce Kid and Hushpuppi have at one time or the other, been found to be directly or indirectly involved in criminal acts, while the music of some has been perceived to promote immorality and crime in Nigerian society. Some Nigerian popular musicians have for over three decades, been making use of the message in their music to sustain positive transformation of the lives and behavior of

people of Nigeria, especially the youths. The song lyrics by the old juju, fuji, Apala, Sakara, and Pop musicians are found to be more effective because of the Yoruba cultural concepts and moral values inherent in them.

Conclusion

The overall effects of the economic and political problems that Nigeria has encountered in the last two decades have influenced many Nigerians, especially the youths, towards sourcing for quick and alternative means of making money. This has also drastically fostered a different form of modern corruption in the form of sex slavery, kidnapping for ransom payments, making fake documents, and other numerous electronic means of financial fraud. The Nigerian politicians also took advantage of the situation to engage these youths as political thugs in rigging elections, buying votes, and all other election violence.

While well-meaning Nigerians, corporate organizations, political institutions, and other local and international public interest groups are working to sustain attainable goals in combating crime and violence among youths in a disordered society like Nigeria, Nigerian musicians from different regions consciously or unconsciously produce songs that positively transform. Since, music has affective power in influencing the thinking and way of lives of people, personality, and their world-view in general, popular music in positive directions is found to be more apt in communicating and educating Nigerian Youths on moral values and ethical behaviors expected from them as citizens.

Recommendation

This paper thus suggests that the government should establish an immediate liaison with stakeholders, including the officials of the Performing Musicians Association of Nigeria (PMAN), Association of Nigerian Musicologists (ANIM), and Society of Music Educators of Nigeria (SOMEN), via the Ministry of Youths and Culture. The stakeholders should endorse the government's concerns and be amenable to providing them with the necessary resources to improve the education of their members and students regarding the subject matter. The Nigerian government advised to make use of appropriate agencies like the National Film and Records Censor Board to prevent music that contains lyrics that can encourage violence and criminal acts circulated into Nigerian markets. The government advised organizing periodic seminars, crusades, and workshops for popular musicians and the youths on their roles in society and nation-building.

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