

Effects of some of the Emerging Dance Styles on the Nigerian Youths

By

Kehinde Adedamola Olalusi*

Abstract

This essay examines the emerging Nigerian dance styles, i.e. Yahoo, Alanta, Suo, Etighi etc in relation to their practices among youths, as well as the problems and prospects embedded in the applications of these dances. Through the social cognitive theory as propounded by Miller and Dollard (1941), this paper evaluates these dances in its content and context. In this regard, our research methodology entails the non-participatory observation method and interviews, while consultations from academic journals, books, magazines, internet etc contribute to giving credence to our submissions. It was discovered that the constant freedom and access the youth have on the environment and the society at large are critical to the influences of these dances on them. Also, that deep acquaintance with these styles eventually consolidate the urge of dwelling on them, possibly at the detriment of their academics and also against the desire of their parents. Owing to these amplifiable realities, we recommend that parents should ensure that their children receive the required education as well as follow up their enthusiasm for dance practices without hindering one another. Equally, concerned bodies should ensure that the youth practice these dance styles without negative connotations.

Introduction

In the contemporary Nigerian society, the quest for entertainment remains constant. Apparently, one of the fast growing entertainment channels is dance and interestingly, the extensive day to day practice and even competitive tendencies it undergo proves its authenticity. While this qualifying assertion seems glorifying, the continual euphoria of its

*Kehinde Adedamola Olalusi lectures in the Department of the Performing Arts, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

practices may result to unwanted consequences, particularly considering the youth.

Through the current globalisation phenomenon that has gradually crept into almost all spheres of our nation, certain amount of westernisation has been imbibed, thus ensuring a hybridisation of the western trends and styles in African culture. Unfortunately, music and dance has been adversely affected by this form of hybridisation. Consequently, today, rather than seeing children practice and dance to our various cultural dances, they whole heartedly embrace the contemporary style which is fast spreading like wild fire.

This researcher supports creation of dance styles, we however find it bothering that rather than complement our cultural dances in terms of varieties, these styles have almost completely taken over, at least from the perspective of the youth. The vibrancy and rapid growth of hip-hop musicians and their art has further consolidated this contemporary dance styles as it encourages varying degree of movements that could identify with the music. It is however sad to note that some of these dances have obscene gestures replete in them. Invariably such dance styles can be likened to the analogy of "a container with no content" because of the crazy dispositions it tends to portray. It is however heartwarming to note that a few of these dances have prospect of developing as a viable dance form. This paper therefore takes into consideration the above highlighted factors. We ultimately seek to ameliorate the conditions of such dances that have negative effect on youth in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

In order to appropriately situate the discourse in this paper, the "social cognitive theory" shall be adopted. This theory according to www.wikimedia.com:

Stemmed out of work in the area of social learning theory proposed by N.E Miller and J. Dollard in 1941. Identifying four key factors in learning new behaviour, (i) drives, (ii) cues, (iii) responses, and (iv) rewards, they posit that if one were motivated to learn a particular behaviour, then that particular behaviour would be learned through clear observations.

The dichotomy between cultural/traditional dances and contemporary/modern dances has been further strengthened by the changes that are replete in the society. The putative cause of this range

and dance. The allure of sounds, beats, lyrical flow and raps of various styles have made the contemporary music a constant phenomenon in their daily practice. This is why we envisage that the various Nigerian dances currently practiced are still in the emerging stage; this is because as musicians come with variety of new styles, new dances are imminent.

From the creation and consequently popularity of the Galala dance, several other dance styles have emerged. Despite this, Galala (though not as effectively practiced like before) still enjoy a level of practice. This goes to show that the dynamics of the Nigerian music and dance is deeper than what it was a decade back. Today, the phase it has undergone is awe striking; it has even been adopted in religious worship where youths have constantly practiced these various dances as their own way of expressing thanks and appreciation to God. As such, it is very common to find dances like Alanta, Etighi and others performed to gospel songs. It is however more interesting that some youth who are getting married nowadays opt for a Disk Jockey (D.J) who mix different forms and versions of love music from contemporary Nigerian musicians to suit their taste, they hide under the shadow of that day being special to them thereby ridding the other guests the pleasure of dancing to the traditional music which such occasion call for.

Dancing to this various music has been made easy by the adaptability of these various Nigerian contemporary dances to different music. Though the dances are created by different people (most of who are equally musicians), other musicians have adopted their style of dance as an appendage to their overall performance on stage.

Environmental factor is also a key influence on the practice of dance among Nigerian youth. A key example of this is the Ajegunle (ghetto) city where galala originated from. It is discovered that environmental factors are prime to the creation of the dance. Ugolo (2001, p.142) provides a deeper insight, stating that:

John Odafe Asiemo, popularly known as Daddy Showkey is a pop musician who has invented a pop dance that truly reflects his personality and the socio-political environment/atmosphere in which he grew. His dance is a by-product of so many factors which include the effects of urbanization, military rule, poverty, deprivation; injustice, oppression, violence, etc. as can be seen in Nigeria and indeed the ghetto life in the cities and urban centers in the eighties and nineties.

Although, many dance styles have emanated from Ajegunle after galala, other factors are responsible for such dances; majorly based on individual creative instincts. Owing to the above, it is obvious that these emerging dance styles have had effect more on the Nigerian youth.

Effects of the Emerging Nigerian Dance Styles on the Nigerian Youths

Just like a doctor's prescription would have effect on an obedient or disobedient patient, several other aspects of life encounter such moments where effects are unavoidable. In a culturally viable country like Nigeria, particularly in the area of dance, several inhibitions or otherwise could result to certain effects which may be palatable or not. Of a truth, arguably no one has an immediate answer to the rapid growth of technological advancements on virtually every aspects of life; certain aspects of it can be considerably checked before metamorphosing into what may eventually not be handled. In the area of dance in Nigeria, the contemporary and postmodern trends have undoubtedly created an impression, particularly among the youth. However, irrespective of this, we are all progenitors of a passing phase of culture and tradition, and are all obliged to protect these culture and tradition for future purposes.

Thus, it is interesting to note that there are young ones who have the heart of the likes of Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Alvin Ailey and others who have left their prints in the sands of time. However, caution has to be applied in some other aspects.

Since music plays a significant role in the practice and appreciation of dance, it is thought wise that a considerable amount of appropriateness be ensured in the lyrics of the music. This is because it has a way of affecting creation of dance movements. An example of this is a track from Raymond King's music album titled "Alanta dance" which goes thus;

Call:	New dance wey dey reign now (repeated many times)
Response:	Alanta
All:	Paka, poka, paka, paka poka (8 times) He be like say something dey scratch your body He be like say something dey bite your body na so dem dey dance Alanta

Verse One

He better make you spoil your face oh
If you wan dance Alanta,
My friend make you spoil your face oh

Na so dem dey dance Alanta
 Fine girl make you spoil your face oh
 If you wan dance Alanta
 Fine boy make you spoil your face oh
 Na so dem dey dance Alanta

Verse Two

At the same time make you scratch your belle
 He be like say he dey bite your belle
 At the same time make you touch your self
 If you like make you touch your head

Chorus

Call: New dance wey dey reign now (repeated many times).

Response: Alanta

The lyric above is in Pidgin English which is commonly understood and accepted by all, some of who live in Ajegunle city. The track and album itself seems to be dedicated to alanta dance, and invariably it serves as a manual for the preliminary teaching of the steps. Majirioghere (2008, p. 21) notes that:

Alanta dance gyrates contorts his body like some rubbery contraption and flexes like a gargoyle, eyes popping out, legs set like a quadrilateral triangle, a distended tummy and tongue pocking out of his mouth. It is an aggressive war-like dance.

From our observation of the video, the lyrics and consequently the dance reveal more. The dances were made to suit the lyrics, making both unpalatable and immoral to the sight. We see ladies and young guys disfiguring their faces, poking tongues out and doing movements that can be characterised as imbecilic or abnormal, the lyrics even went as far as asking fine boys and fine girls to "spoil their face" while dancing Alanta. First, it is a negative attitude to creativity considering that creativity should be for positive change. Secondly, the documentation of this lyrics and dance patterns into Compact Disk for public consumption means young ones who are barely old enough to discern right from wrong would be exposed to such abnormalities thinking it is dance.

From another perspective, we review Dj Zeez's track titled "ori e fon ka si be". The lyrics of the song goes thus;

Chorus

Ori e o fonka sibe (2ce)

Ori e o fonka sibe, fonka sibe, fonka sibe

Solo

Te ba de yanki

Won gbo wa nibe

Te ba de Dublin

Won gbo wa nibe

Ni Germany a le nu pa

Your head is scaterred around (3ce)

if you get to Europe, they are listening to us

if you get to Dublin, they are listening to us

in Germany, we are well known

Interpretatively, the song makes no meaning as it is only eulogizing the singer himself; here the objective of his music which should be touching and impacting lives positively is defeated. In the first instance, the interpretation of the song when combined with the Nigerian dance style called "Yahoozee" produces a pathetic experience, particularly from semiotic point of view. Yahoozee is a type of dance style that demands usage of the hands (specifically the first two fingers next to the thumb) in rhythmic patterns, strocking the hands interchangeably beside and over the head, equally with movement of the right leg continuously. An examination of this music and the dance styles produces a degenerating communication, which could mean "your head is not correct". This equally falls short of the expectation of the Nigerian music and dance which should be morally alright for artistic consumption. The implication here is that young ones, who learn faster at tender ages, rapidly develop interest in such music and dance, especially in this slang oriented environment now in Nigeria.

The freedom and access children now have to the society is unbelievable, this affords them the opportunity, to go to the streets where other forms of behaviours are entrenched into them by their friends and peers.

Unfortunately, it is from bad exposures that some of these young ones develop a strong desire to venture into music and dance, consciously or unconsciously neglecting their academics. Interestingly, it is a common phenomenon for some music and dance prodigies to allow crave for money and fame becloud their sense of judgment with respect to education. Ayo Balogun popularly known as Wizkid was reported to have dropped out of Lead City University having developed his music carrier

which started at a very tender age of eleven. This syndrome is pathetic, particularly considering that while a graduate certificate has suddenly become preliminary and graduates are enrolling for masters, some musicians and dancers have suddenly rest on their school leaving certificates, thus considering fame and wealth a more viable option.

Another area bedeviling the emerging Nigerian dance styles is crave for night outs at clubs and different social gatherings. Usually, there are night clubs who offer extensive practice of dance during the weekends and it is customary to find a few Nigerian artists invited to some big night clubs to sing and perform. In a bid to sell themselves, they are given to employing young ladies who dance in all manner of ways to keep the audience's attention and equally create impression of them. Afolabi (1999, p.13) expatiate on this, saying that:

Many Nigerian artists have found the trick of good sales of their work in the purveyance of sex and obscenity, sometimes raw pornography. In performance, many Nigerian artists (musicians especially) employ the services of professional (female) dancers who rather than dance normally are expected to wriggle their waists, busts and buttocks in rhythms that are suggestive of sex act.

This is really appalling because the various Nigerian dance styles that have emerged are intermittently used in these night clubs. More than ever, the Nigerian dance scene needs to be purged of various irrelevances that are quite obvious.

Conclusion

The Nigerian entertainment circle has grown tremendously, majorly because of the rise of, and practice of contemporary dance and music. Its emergence and continual practice has obviously almost driven the cultural dances to an abyss of neglect and artistic subjugation. This paper is not an attempt to be vitriolic, but only as an artistic forceps and to mediate between the idiosyncratic nature of some emerging Nigerian dance styles and our cultural dances which is the hub of our indigenous entertainment circus in Nigeria.

As we have highlighted in our discourse, these Nigerian contemporary dances as practiced by the youth seems to be hotchpotch in its approaches, and the reason not farfetched is their dependence on creativity that is imbued with styles that are chronical in nature. It is even made more glamorous by the post modern trend which unfortunately has

had its place among youth. Nevertheless, since we cannot completely annihilate these dance styles, it is our prerogative to provide some recommendations that would prune this dance styles as well as improve the practice of our cultural dances. They are;

- That the Federal Ministry of Youth Development in conjunction with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism should cogitate and strategically ensure the repositioning of the Nigerian youth through several orientation programmes that border on core issues relating to their behavior, way of life and particularly the Nigerian cultural heritage which they are not really abreast of. Equally, a standard measure of practice of the emerging Nigerian dance styles should be put in place, along with its music counterpart so that the moral standards which we hold highly in Nigeria would be upheld.
- That parents (most especially mothers) give a considerable time to their children, particularly with respect to their activities within the society. They should know what they do, the friends they keep, the kind of music they listen and dance to and generally, what constitute their daily experiences. Also, it is considered highly imperative that parents endeavour to take their children home at least once or twice in a year. This will breed familiarity with the cultural and traditional dance of their ethnic group, affording them the opportunity to learn and practice the traditional dances like the contemporary dances.
- That music and dance practitioners within the contemporary society should seek education irrespective of successes achieved in their chosen career. This will be a viable tool in stamping their authority within different strata, and equally earn them an undisputable advantage in all ramifications.

Beyond pontification, we hope that with our highlighted points above, and other useful/relevant points as reflected in our discourse, there would be a better, an improved and a favourable practice of the emerging Nigerian dance styles.

References

- Afolabi, J. (1999). Sexploitation and the performing arts in Nigeria: A critique. *The Performer: Ilorin journal of the performing arts*, 1 (2):8-20.
- Anizebe, O. (2006). DSTV owners must hear this. *Vanguard newspaper*, June 28.
- Majoriogehe, B. (2008). Galala, Alanta are echoes of suffration in Ajegunle, *Tell magazine*.
- Nicholls, R. (1997). African dance: Transition and continuity. In: Kariamu Welsh, Asante (Ed.) *African dance: An artistic, historical and philosophical inquiry*. Eritrea: African World Press Inc.
- Santrock, J. (2008). *A topical approach to lifespan development*. New York: Mc Graw-Hill Companies Inc.
- Social Cognitive Theory. (2013). Retrieved from www.wikimedia.com
- Ugolo, C. (2001). Pop culture and daddy Showkey's Galala dance of resistance: Lessons for democratic government. *Nigerian Theatre Journal*, 142-147.