

Nigerian contemporary artistes

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Introduction

It was a church service and the pastor's voice was the only sound heard around the church as he preaches to his congregation on the need to trust God and be righteous. His intermittent prophetic declarations were loudly echoed with the word Amen before the congregation settles down to continue listening to the word of God. Suddenly, a phone rang loud using the ring tone of one of the Nigerian popular musicians "*ori e o fokasibe*"; meaning "*your head is scattered there*".

The serenity in the whole congregation was such that everyone heard the phone ring. The foolishness of the young guy was such that it was so loud and annoying. He couldn't put it off quickly because it stuck deep in his jean trousers. The vulgarity of the music was so evident that the pastor immediately prayed that "*ori e o ni fokasibe ooo*" meaning "*your head will not scatter there ooo*" before taking a little time to scold young ones in the church on that day. It was so embarrassing that the young guy couldn't wait till the end of the service.

Beyond the spiritual implication lies a moral decadence that keeps polluting our society. A society that has been perpetually enslaved by an unending embrace of Western cultures, ideologies and styles in neglect of its own ideologies and cultures, a society where right and wrong is gradually being interchanged for personal convenience, a society whose moral justification can be swept under the carpet when financial glory is in sight. Such is the society we find ourselves now; such is the present Nigerian society.

Yes, it is certainly not in all cases that this decadence occurs, but the alacrity with which it is experienced in some aspects brings to the fore the signs of a morally crippling nation. Arts and entertainment in Nigeria, particularly music, keeps experiencing an unprecedented degree of talents, and these talents keep increasing day in day out. As of today, only a critical study from state to state and a thorough evaluation from studio to studio can specifically help to determine the number of songs recorded per day, and that is not taking into consideration the ones undergoing lyrical compositions in various locations around the nation.

Despite the entertaining qualities most of these song posses, there are issues as regards the lyrical compositions of some conforming to the noble

objectives of the art of music. Taking a cue from Brown's generalization of Art, he opines that:

Art ultimately must be valued because of its capacity to improve the quality of life by increasing our sensitivity to others and our surrounding, by shaping our perception, by reshaping our values so that the MORAL and societal concerns take precedence over material being. (Emphasis mine) (1977:144).

Stemming from the above, the burning question is how many of these songs are morally suitable? What criterion is being used to certify the credibility of these songs and its release into the market? Or has vulgarity been wholly embraced in the music and entertainment industry in Nigeria? These I hope to discuss in the essay.

What is music?

The simplest definition a layman gives to music is *"the arrangement of sounds that are pleasing to the ears"*. However, as right as it sounds, it falls short of the general overview of what music constitutes. This is why scholars in the art have come up with different suitable definitions of music. For instance, Blacking (1973:60) avers that;

Music is a product of the behaviour of human groups whether formal or informal. It is humanly organized sounds, because music is humanly organized sound, there ought to be a relationship between patterns of human organizations and the patterns of sounds produced as a result of human interaction. The sound may be the object, but man is the subject and the key to understanding music is in the relationship existing between subject and object, the activating principle of organization.

Reflecting on the above, the behaviour of humans is key to generating music, despite it consisting of a series of arranged sounds pleasing to the ear, the functionality of it demands a relationship between the object (sound) and the subject (man). From another purview, Emielu (2012: 69) quoting Maybury-Lewis (1996) intensifies the human involvement when he claims that:

To be human is to make music and the music we make says a great deal about who we are or at least who we think we are. That is why music is not just humanity's way of banishing eternal and terrifying silence of the universe. It is also the way in which each piece of

humanity lays claim to its own particular character. Music is thus profoundly ambiguous. It unites all of human kind for there are no people who do not make music, yet it also separates people, for it is so often an important way of defining the identity of groups and distinguishing them from others.

The above definitions are apt, and they clearly reflect the dimension within which this paper is situated. Maybury-lewis' addresses the issue of identity, character and the clear distinction of people through music. These features are driven by the rhythm, harmony, melody and ultimately the lyrics which serve as a binding chord and an instrument of communication which should be used correctly.

Music and entertainment in Nigeria: A brief outlook

In Nigeria today, one of the unquestionable and indubitable aspect of people's life is entertainment. Major cities in Nigeria are vastly dotted with several social outlets which are constantly visited, especially at nights and during weekends; equally, several social/entertainment oriented companies are always busy on the next strategic place to stage a public show with the established and upcoming stars ready to entertain their numerous admirers and fans. One indispensable agent of entertainment here is music. The likes of Tuface idibia, Wizkid, Eldee, Mi, P-square, Dbanj and a host of others have consistently produced several songs that continue to attract Nigerian music and dance lovers. These are hip hop music that have remained the hub of musical entertainment in Nigeria. Babalola and taiwo (2009:5) explain that:

Hip-hop culture started spreading in Nigeria during the 1980's, but did not grow in popularity until the 1990's when the country witnessed increased availability of Computers and cheap music editing software. This enabled Nigerian artists to achieve higher quality recordings that quickly won over the Nigerian audience. The Nigerian version of hip-hop was popularized by a number of artists including (but not limited to) Rugged man, Tuface, Dbanj, Edris Abdulkareem and Dare art Alade. The general rapid growth of the entertainment industry and support from the media helped popularization of hip hop music in Nigeria. Television programmes like the Mtn y'ello show, music Africa and sound city played a major role in this respect. The popularity of hip hop music has also won the attention of multinational companies

that spend millions of naira (the Nigerian currency) promoting hip hop artists for open air shows. The popularity it has gained over the years has unfortunately contributed to the downward spiral of some cultural and indigenous music. Today, Nigerian youth are so much at peace with hip hop and contemporary music that their phones are stored with different variants of it, consequently, many have lost touch of their cultural music which needs to experience a continuity of being passed on from generation to generations. Olalusi (2012:8) expressed further that:

In Nigeria today, the youth are very susceptible to the allure of Interesting music, lyrical vibes and exciting beats and as such it is hard to find a youth without an i-pod, a wireless earphone, blackberry phone or other technological instrument or equipment that enable them listen to music uninterrupted.

In fact, the club houses around the nation today are staunch patrons of contemporary music. Interestingly, some big night clubs in Lagos, Abuja and Port Harcourt could even bring some artistes to liven the atmosphere. Generally, even though some aspects of it are questionable, the Nigerian entertainment scene is largely metamorphosing into a globally recognized one and this is largely due to the prominence of the Nigerian contemporary music artistes.

Vulgar lyrical composition among some Nigerian contemporary artistes

Music like some art forms thrive on communication and lyrics serves as this vehicle of communication. Through The lyrics of a song, several messages are passed on to the audience or listeners. Lyrics serve as the identity of the artist, a vital instrument which he uses to enhance his proficiency and general acceptance as an advocate of good and communicative music. In Nigerian music scene, particularly when music began as a popular art, several artistes like Ebenezer Obey, Sunny Ade, Sunny Okosun, Christy Essien Igbokwe, Fela Anikulapo Kuti, Onyeka Onwenu and some others were at the fore front of channelling the course of the nation through their lyrics and music. While some of them motivate positively, some castigate and criticize the government, some preach unity and love, and others preach a variety of other messages particularly on God's intervention on Nigeria.

Unfortunately today, the Nigerian music industry is torn apart by different and diverse modes of singing; the post-modern trend as can be found in some art

forms have enabled these musicians to debase the Nigerian moral essence of moderation. Some contemporary Nigerian artistes of today are extremely given to vulgar, lewd and debasing lyrics that speak very badly of the reputation of the music industry. Unlike before when becoming a musician is structured within the confines of set principles and objectives, today it seems different as music artistes can emerge today and rise to stardom the following year.

Formally, it was a transition from stage to the studio but nowadays it is the opposite. The development of sophisticated gadgets that enhance the voice, creates good beats and an overall aesthetic output of music has made many musicians of today lazy and somehow over reliant on their producers. It is not surprising that despite the fact that many of these artistes developed their talents from various church choirs, many of them cannot play any musical instrument. This is a sharp contrast to older musicians like Fela Anikulapo Kuti, Sunny Ade, Ebenezer Obey, Sunny Okosun and some others who play instruments while performing on stage. This is why it can be deduced that the older generations of musicians have more grounding in the theory and practice of music than the contemporary ones. Such was the diversity with which they operated. Although Emielu (2012) claims that *"music is generationally located; you cannot say music now is bad or better than before"* but what can we say about some of today's music with lyrics coloured in the garb of vulgarity? In this essay, we shall consider the lyrical composition of three Nigerian artistes.

Terry G - Akpako

Kiliman, Kilimanjaro (2x)

Ah e mi n saye mi o

Mi o ran yan o

Oya I don kolo e

Oh my Lord ee

Terry gee say me I don dey craze

become crazy

up my waist.

I dey follow to dey scatter the place

keep the place going

its time my own person

come and celebrate

I dey craze x2 oh lord

Oya tile make I nak u akpako

Interpretation

kiliman, Kilimanjaro (2x)

I am living my life oh

I don't mind anyone oh

now I Have gone mad

oh lord ee

Terry gee I have

Oya see as I dey wine

See as I am twisting my waist

I am among those

Oya, oya tile (x2)

Come celebrate

I am crazy oh my lord

come let me give you

akpako Chai make I nak u
akpako chai, I will give you akpako
Shade x3 make I nak u akpako shade x3 let me give you akpako
I go nak u akpako I will give you akpako
See the way she grind me see the way she affects me
Omo he dey blow my mind she is really driving me.

The above lyrics are excerpts from the song. Looking at this lyrics/song, it is clear that it is incoherent, negative, and constitutes nothing but suggestive, raw and lewd lyrics. It is a surprise that while many consider music as a positive instrument of productivity, a lyric like this is still allowed public consumption. The video of the music itself is that which should not be viewed as it contains profane acts and dance movements which present the female gender as objects of sexual slavery. Angela Okah, the Executive Director of Centre for Gender Education, Abuja laments that:

What I find worrisome is that in these scandalous vulgar videos, some beautiful intelligent looking girls are vigorously dancing their heart out virtually nude while the male lead singer(s) is/are clad in his designer clothing and accessories. Wait a minute, must dancer's strip to their bare necessities to aid our appreciation of the lyrics of a song? (www.sistasconnect.com)

It sounds appalling that in this time when the structures of the Nigerian economy and virtually every aspect of its existence is on the verge of dilapidating, all a musician can do is to confidently sing "*I dey craze oh my lord*". Again, the akpako in the song is suggestive. It can be assumed or interpreted as the male sexual organ, this deduction is made through a subjective analysis of a recurring line in the lyrics "*come let me give you akpako*" and consequently evidenced by the rendering of a female name "*shade*" which is a further confirmation of Anjela Okah's vituperation at the female gender's objectification by their male counterparts.

Many conclude that some contemporary Nigerian music are just trash laced with good beats, and their reasons are justified by the amount of vulgar and non-directional music that are constantly released. Today, the distaste for moral uprightness is evidenced by the myopic thinking of some of the youth. This is a critical problem that must be significantly dealt with.

Dadubule- Skailey Mental

Odo, okan, okan, odo
 Meji odo, odo eta
 Okan odo, odo erin, odo oh
 Meji loyan, okan loko
 Meji loyan, okan loko, okan loko
 Meji lepon, okan loko, meji lepon
 Okan loko, okan loko
 Oya dadubule, shidioke (3ce)

Interpretation

one, two, one two
 two, zero, zero three
 one, zero, zero, four, zero
 breasts are two, penis is one
 breasts are two, penis is one
 the scrotum has two eggs
 penis is one (2ce)
 oya lay her down and open up
 her buttocks

From the lyrics and its interpretation, the song is very unpalatable to the ears. It is also lewd, disgusting and simply unprofessional. That the musician can boldly use the human private parts as lyrics of a song is burdensome and highly hypocritical of Gods creative endeavour on his creation. Equally, it is highly corrupt, suggestive, extremely indicative and sexually prescriptive. It ultimately draws a lot of attention to sexual activities thus objectifying the female gender. Now that we are in a state where the percentage of rape in the country is spiralling at an incredibly alarming rate, the music (which unfortunately plays on the streets in some cities) is an open invitation to rape. Oyeniyi (2013) concludes that *"today's music really offers no message to its audience. The type of music we listen to today shows the kind of things we do. When all people sing about is corruption, then it shows the level of corruption we have in our society"*. It is not out of place to conclude that Western idiosyncrasies have successfully polluted the entertainment scene, this is why acts like plaiting of hair, using earrings by male singers, sagging and so on have been embraced as new fashion and what we can refer to as the *"new age"* syndrome. Exactly the same mannerisms are being imbibed by many musical artists.

Fokasibe- Dj Zeez

O fokasibe (5X)
 Ori e o fokasibe (repeatedly)
 (repeatedly)
 ko farabale
 Turn the base line off now yisile
 Iv got the flow now make u la e nu sile
 you exclaim

interpretation

head scatter there (5x)
 your head scatter there
 Listen to me now
 listen to me now take it cool
 turn the base line off, make it low
 I have the flow now I can make

Emi gang an ni mo gbo na mo ki si be	I am the hot one, I am durable
Ibo lo tin sele ka de be	where is it happening let us go there
O ti sure ju awon temi ma da a le	it is sure my people will throw a party
Enemies ti gbe won ma ka nile	enemies are in trouble, they will run away
Won o le ba wa mo ati rin sile	they cant meet us again we have advanced
To ba de yanki won gbo wa ni be	if you get to Europe, they are listening to us
To ba de JD won gbo wa nibe	if you get to JD they are listening to us
To ba de Saudi won gbo wan be	if you get to Saudi, they are listening to us
Gbo gbo party a lenu pa	at all parties we are indispensable

Certainly the nation is in the age and era of slang. Language is important in all verbal arts as it is the key that unlocks the meanings in such work. Essien (2006:2) infers that:

Language is a system of structured vocal symbols by means of which human beings make meaning and communicate and interact with each other in a given community. Put more simply, language is a system of rules and principles in which sound, structure and **meaning** are integrated for communication (emphasis mine).

DJ Zeez's music is culpable of the lack of communication. Interpreting the lyrics in its Yoruba dialect to English (not considering the slang meaning) presents a totally negative meaning. While the musician may claim it is a slang he interprets from a positive perspective, if music is good, there would not be need to explain any part of it, it should be a clear message that is not riddled with controversy.

Even though this song or lyrics is not as lewd as the previous two analysed above, it is as well a critical submission of the general squalid lyrical rendition of some contemporary artists. Oyeniyi (2013) specifically wondered, citing this music as example. *"For instance, D.J ZeeZ's fokasibe, what is the meaning in that music?* Apart from the chorus of the song, it is lyrically poor for a music artist who sings in a dialect that is understood by less than 30% of the Nigerian population to boast of being listened to and appreciated in London, America, Saudi and all over. This speaks of a lack of musical direction on the part of this musician.

Diagnosis and Prognosis

The rather retrogressive content of lyrics in some contemporary artist's music is an alarming call that needs attention. Like it is commonly alluded to, a problem is half solved when you can identify and accept it. Certainly, some

militating issues within and across the music borders in Nigeria have contributed to this menace and it is only prerogative that we identify and proffer some means of navigating it.

1. Lack of self apprehension: One of the qualities or characteristics needed to check or curtail excesses or to generally appraise ones output is an evaluation of what is been done per time. Unfortunately, this quality is lacking in many of today's music artists. The moral consciousness is conspicuously lacking in such a way that any occurrence either in the open or secret could be used as lyrics of music. That is why the male and female reproductive organs can be considered as lyrics by some music artists. There is need to do a self evaluation even from the point of writing the lyrics in order to consider the following:

1. What do I intend to sing about?
2. Is it a lyric that would communicate positively ideas?
3. What are the objectives of singing these songs?
4. What are their lessons there in?

Music has to be meaningful to achieve its aim. That there is entertainment music does not give musicians the leeway to sing about just anything and anyhow. Chielotam (2012: 298) analyses a song thus *"Aladarada adago ozo ka ga adakwa"* meaning *"a breast that has fallen has fallen and another will still fall"*. He laments further that *"instead of singing to praise the value of a woman's breast in nurturing and feeding a child, he sang to make mockery of a woman's breast that has fallen."* There is certainly misplaced priority among some contemporary Nigerian artists and this is due to lack of purpose.

Going down memory lane, the musical accomplishments of artists like Fela Anikulapo Kuti, Sunny Ade, late Sunny Okosuns, Onyeka Onwenu and others have enabled different people classify their music as *"ever green"*, can that be conveniently said of musicians of this days? That is a question many would rather ignore than answer.

2. Parental negligence and subjugation: Parental negligence arises from the non alliance and familiarity of their children with their respective cultural background. The hustles and rigours of making ends meet in this era of global economic meltdown has given most parents the excuse of not taking their wards back home. Onyuike (2006: 37) exemplifies the above, stating that:

Many Nigerian children are brought up in towns other than their own and they are opportuned to visit their homes once in a year, once in two, three, four, five years (or more) as the case may be; they have neither the opportunity to listen to the indigenous music of their people nor watch the indigenous musical performances.

This is a common but very unpalatable phenomenon in Nigeria nowadays, and considering that culture is a harbinger of morals, ethics, values, and norms, such aspects need to be taken seriously. On the other hand, parents of these various upcoming and successful Artists in Nigeria today are being subjugated by the financial rewards they get from their children. The fear of completely losing out from the financial robustness of their children prevents them from advising and insisting on their children doing the right thing musically. When parents consider these financial rewards (no matter how huge it is) as rewards and returns of hard work of their parental duties over the years, they would be confident enough to insist on them doing the right thing in their career, and if the album was initially released without their notice, they would do their best to curtail such occurrences in subsequent album release.

3. Lack of recording policy: Certainly, this is a problem that is very instrumental to the amount of vulgar songs and music we have in Nigeria today. There seems to be no guiding principle or policy to the recording of music in many Nigerian studios. The situation now is such that lyrical content of music is not an issue of consideration. As long as the artist can fulfill the financial bargain of the contract, it becomes a done deal.

It is a rapidly increasing occurrence now because each musician over time develops the interest of setting up his studio/record label where they have the freedom to record and package any music they deem fit. It is a good thing that the Nigerian broadcasting commission responds to this by banning some lewd music and videos, but the corrective measure is not to wait for its release into the public, but to ensure the mitigation of these songs and videos. A cue can be taken from book publications where an ISBN number is given to ascertain its quality and originality.

4. Technological advancements and psychology of the youth: Undoubtedly, technology is one of the greatest gifts of God to man. It is an indispensable aspect of life as it permeates all aspect of human

endeavour. From the other consideration, technology stands as a major debacle in this present generation. The opportunity technology affords are so numerous that its disadvantages (though not yet capable of rivaling its advantages) are fast becoming critical. Unlike the days when land line phones were only in the houses of the rich and highly placed in the society, every tom dick and Harry now possesses a phone. Equally, the internet which is arguably the largest collection of documents and materials all over the world became a double-faced weapon i.e serving the curious and feeding the unserious. Now the nation battles with all manner of fraud and scam.

Pornography and other illicit sexual activities are now being relayed through the internet with many going there time after time. All these are feeders and enhancers of the untoward and immoral lyrical compositions of some of the musicians.

Also, the array of European movies that are unfit for public consumption are already infiltrating the country, the gay/lesbian trend which was surprisingly ratified in America has also become a part of the many challenges of the country. Unfortunately, the musicians who are given to vulgar lyrics/music would be ready to explore this vast opportunities technology affords them, especially when they don't have to play in front of an audience before they can package their music in a studio.

Incredibly, the youth of today have somehow been gradually led into enjoying these music which may graduate to practicing the activities some of these lyrics describe. It is interesting that nowadays the economic instability in the country has made it necessary for both parents to be out of the vicinity of the house for most hours, thus granting them the little freedom to experiment. It is indeed a task that needs optimum concentration; however, tackling these various problems begins with corseting or mitigating the lyrical and visual content of music and videos being released for public consumption. Equally, artists should look into the content of their lyrics, producers also have a lot to do here, and financial gain should not be considered before the credibility of the music to be produced.

Conclusion

Vulgar lyrical composition among Nigerian contemporary artists is like congenital in the eye that is spreading fast in and around the pupil. Without mincing words, it continually stands as a draw back to positive creativity and

makes fun of a nation whose challenges are already numerous enough to cope with others like these. We should take a cue from the great philosopher Albert Camus (1913-1960) who opined that "the society is a jungle; it is the duty of the artists to determine what happens in the society." Hence, the reasoning and reaction of the music artists should navigate from the pessimistic panorama to an optimistic one laden with creative musical compositions that discuss, relay, inform and meaningfully address the multifarious challenges militating against our nation. Let us not forget that real generosity to the future lies in giving all to the present. Thus, it is sacrosanct that music artists and other stake holders in the entertainment industry observe and ensure a huge modicum of appropriateness, ingenuity, positive and meaningful output in their artistic endeavour.

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