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# Contemporary Nigerian Popular Music: A Menace to National Development

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#### ABSTRACT

There is no gainsaying that most of the recent forms of contemporary popular music produced, packaged, made available for public consumption constitute grave danger and serious threat to moral uprightness in Nigerian society. This has exposed the Nigerian society to a wide variety of insecurity and violence. This is evident as seen from series of moral decadence and dissipation that infiltrated the lives of the citizenry - especially the youths (the leaders of tomorrow) ranging from, sexual abuse, money mongering, indiscipline, examination malpractice and indecent dressing to mention but a few. Music is a powerful tool and a force for mobilization which brings about either reformation or deformation of character due to the type of rhythm, melody, harmony and principally the lyrics of the songs. This paper examines the new trend of contemporary popular music in Nigeria with a view to assess its negative and pessimistic impacts on the character of the citizenry in Nigerian society. Live performances of contemporary popular music were observed and audio and video tape materials relating to the said music were also analyzed based on their educational and moral values of such songs. It was discovered that many of contemporary popular music as we have it today in Nigeria communicates vulgarity and coarseness to the listeners and this poses a lot of negative effects on the attitude of the youths. Musicians employ indecent words to attract the youth thus creating negative influence on the character of the leaders of tomorrow (the youth) to engage in various debaucheries. The paper therefore, suggested that relevant agencies should be put in place to ensure that apart from entertainment, music should convey positive character building messages rather than egg on and motivate illicit acts. Likewise, musicians should compose songs in the spirit of societal reformation so as to impact moral virtues on the younger generation thus encouraging holistic human development.

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#### 1.0 Introduction

"Music is a lot like alcohol and drugs. It can be very influencing and destructive when misused. It can distort one's emotions, reasoning, judgment, perspective and behaviour Peer pressure only makes it worse." (Proctor, 2003:1)

Music is an imperative medium through which philosophies, emotions and agendas are conveyed. Since the earliest times, man has often expressed his or her feelings through music. The musical themes are often a reflection of societal issues that manifest in the worldview of the musicians, their audience and the geopolitical environment that they find themselves.

Nigeria as a nation is increasingly witnessing the projection of musical competition amongst youths by communication companies, thereby making it an important means to fame and wealth creation. This paper assesses the often neglected theme, which is the place of contemporary music in relation to good governance and national security. There is an inter-penetration of different organic relations in the determination of good governance, and national security outcomes. Scholars have shown that many sectors and organic issues often blend together to ensure good governance and national security. The power of music to produce behavioural changes in man remains a neglected tool for good governance. Music is used to influence individual and group behaviours 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. This is because music often generates powerful emotions in man.

Sometimes, music effects extra-ordinary influence on man, which creates high emotional appeal that could be momentary beyond the control of musical audience. It is not unfamiliar to see people of all echelons of the society as they play certain musical tones aimed at enhancing their effectiveness in whatever they are doing. Music is often played to generate a powerful intangible force of creativity and productivity. Consequently, music could be used in the same light to build peaceful political socialization and integrate the Nigerian society into improving opposition to national violence and insecurity that is growing on a daily basis. This act of peace building and socialization could be achieved when the different musical artistes begins to increase performance on topical issues that would enhance durable peace in the Nigerian society. In the pre-colonial times, individuals, groups and communities that were once engaged in conflict, uses music as a post-conflict peace mechanism for post-conflict transformation and reconciliation.

Okafor (2005) defines music, precisely, "as a system of expression which uses sound, rhythm and time. Its effect is perhaps the most important feature and the very reason for its existence"

Looking at it critically, one would see that the relationship between social life and musical styles are illuminated in many cases by the dynamics of music as seen in situations of change either for good or bad. Nigeria is presently in a situation of increasing conflict and terrorism that calls for change. Societal changes can be promoted by music artistes when the lyrics of their songs begin to capture issues of socio-cultural, political and economic issues of Nigeria that needs to be turned-around, in order to attain good governance and national security in the country.

#### 2.0 The place of music in man's life

Music is a sound arranged in such a way that when listened to, is pleasant or exciting. To start with, it serves as an entertainment tool. For instance, in an occasion or event, it plays a vital role that makes the event lively for the people. Similarly, it creates a cordial relationship among the people, a vehicle for

both propaganda and an agent of comfort in wartime; it produces a complex web of pleasure, power, and identity. The social function of music during wartime presents an intersection between two significant social experiences, musicality and conflict. It serves as a meeting point of two seemingly disparate practices that work powerfully to promote political goals. Correspondingly, the social role of music in violent conflicts is multifaceted; it serves as tool for settling disputes owing to disagreement between two or more people, It can be played to bring harmony between aggrieved citizens. When actively involved in music, it enhances self-esteem and promotes the development of a range of social and transferable skills.

Music represents a basic part of human existence, arising from the physiological, psychological, and sociological needs of humankind. As such, the value of musical pursuit is derived not only from the endeavour to achieve the highest forms of the musical art according to socially accepted norms, but also from everyday musical encounters of every person. To this end, music is a necessary, life-enhancing experience which should be nurtured by all individuals, not only by those gifted with exceptional musical aptitude (Liske, 2001).

Liske (2001) also posited that music integrates the mind, body, and spirit as well as provides opportunities for self-expression, bringing the inner world into the outer world of concrete reality, which in turn offers avenue to "flow states" and peak experiences. It also creates a seamless connection between motivation, instruction, assessment, and practical application – leading to "deep understanding." Nothing is inspirational like music. He stressed further that music is an invariant. It has been present in all cultures, at all times, and throughout the known historical development of the human species, facilitating emotional, physical, and social expression, also, it satisfies the human need for aesthetic enjoyment, provides for communication of cultural ideals, integrates, and enculturates. It serves as both a reflection of, and a catalyst for sociological and technological growth. Here, Liske explicates the spectacular and splendid role of music to man which has to do with feelings and emotion which affects physically, the communicative role of cultural ideas and the social expression of life (Liske, 2001).

Music also has an intellectual mission and makes intellectual activities graceful and refreshing. Also, Music makes it possible to experience processes from beginning to end, develop both independence and collaboration thereby, providing immediate feedback and opportunities for reflection. It makes it possible to use personal strengths in meaningful ways and to understanding sometimes-difficult abstractions through these strengths. It merges the learning process and content, thus improving academic achievements which result<del>s</del> in enhanced test scores, attitudes, social skills, critical and creative thinking. To substantiate this, Adesokan (2002) says that

"the functions of music include the perpetuation of the societal group and its solidarity to meet the needs and satisfaction of individuals, social responsibility, moral values and skills; as an instrument of unity in binding members of the society together, used in the community as a way of mobilizing people for communal labour, as a means of communicating to people during political transition on the radio, as an effective means of communication in the educational system and a tool for bringing positive change in the moral activities of children in Schools and Colleges". P5

Music exercises and develops higher order thinking skills including analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and "problem-finding." It is an essential component of any alternative assessment program which provides the means for every student to learn (Ogunrinade, 2012)

Moreover, Music serves as a tool for corrective measure, that is, it informs the people of the habit that is uncultured so that such behaviour can be spurned. Furthermore, In African setting, people do not only listen to music, they actively take part in making it. It is an agent that can be used to educate people on several things that will develop and advance the society at large. In addition, it serves as a source of income to humans, a profession for particular class of people. In Africa, music serves as a message or symbol that indicates happenings within a society such as naming, weeding, house worming, burial and so on; the type of music played will inform the audience or listeners the happenings in such a place. Music is being used by individuals to enhance the quality of life. The increased availability of music especially through media encourages people to use music to manipulate their own moods, reduce stress, alleviate boredom while undertaking tedious or repetitive tasks, and create an environment suitable for a particular kind<del>s</del> of social occasion.

Music is a part of virtually every culture on Earth, which varies widely among cultures in style and structure, a product of the creative genius in man as well as a medium that connects the written word to social rights issues, conveying a message of hope to the audience, a form of freedom and expression, often used to evoke political issues, serving as an advocator, campaigner and inspirer of social justice.

Merriam (1964) explicates the purpose of music in the life of man as

"emotional expression, aesthetic enjoyment, entertainment, communication, symbolic representation(as found in the texts of songs, cultural meaning of the sounds, and deep symbolism related to human experience), physical response (the use of music for dancing to accompany physical activities), enforcement of conformity to social norms(the use of music in providing instruction and warnings),validation of social institutions and religious rituals(the use of music for religious services and state occasions), contribution to the continuity and stability of culture, and contribution to the integration of society (music is often used to draw people together)".

#### 3.0 Popular music of Nigeria

Popular music is a type of music that is generally enjoys the favour of acceptability by the people for which it is made. This can be within a given cultural or geographical location or transcend cultural boundaries, thereby extending beyond its immediate locality (Adeola, 2001). It reflects the country's multi-ethnic population as well as the pervasive influence of the Western culture in the society through a diverse assortment of styles such as juju, highlife, Fuji, apala, reggae, makosa, hip-hop, afro-beat, country, waka, to mention but a few. As a result of its typically urgent appeal and simplicity (people can easily understand and participate without prior training) which goes beyond ethnicity, religion, geography, gender, age and socio-economic considerations. Therefore, it ranks high within the entertainment sectors. This is not surprising, as music being an integral aspect of African culture is also an agent of economic empowerment (Forchu, 2009).

Contemporary popular music in Nigeria is the existing and prevalent musical genres that has wide appeal and typically distributed to large audiences through the music industry. It can be referred to as modern commercially successful music available to the public through commercial record company (Adegbite in Adeola, 2001). Below are selected types of Contemporary popular music of Nigeria.

**Imported Afro-Music:** This is the collection of those musical forms whose origins are traceable to foreign countries. However, the patterns, structure, theme and general concept of the music have been transformed to reflect the realities of Nigerian society. Okafor (1989) argued that "these are the imported musical forms based on the most up-to-date rock idioms from the West and which have other socio-political implications to black solidarity. Their strongest characteristics are their rhythms, freedom or improvisation and protest. They are closely modeled on the styles and forms found in the Caribbean and the United State of America. The popular Afro beat, Afro-rock, jazz-rock, and Congo music have been championed by musical protagonists like Fela Anikulapo-Kuti and Majek Fashek. This kind of music is much appealing to the masses because of the agitating influence against negative social order in the Nigerian society that hinders social integration and political peace process at the commencement of this genre, but has now turned to be a contemporary popular music that promotes immorality. The Nigerian music industry is presently characterized by "corruption" or "imitation" of all forms of

western musical beats and rhythms. While both of them manifest specifically in the form of piracy, the problem of corruption in the music industry could be seen more as an extension of the culture of corruption found in different sectors of the Nigerian economy, while those who engage in the imitation of other people's music may be driven by the quest to have their name in the book of musical artists or better still, to make money from the sale of such imitated musical products.

**Reggae:** This form of imported music is traceable to Jamaica, an Island in the Caribbean. Historically, reggae emerged as a meeting point between gospel and plantation Negro songs in the 1960's. Amadi recorded that "reggae represents a viable form of folk music of Jamaica, an English-speaking Island in West Indies. Nevertheless, reggae is not just a musical art form but also a socio-political movement of Jamaican black youths whose main objective was and still is to protest against man's inhumanity to man". World crisis and failure of leadership are among the major subjects of reggae, which is rendered through a black cultural idiom. Today, the Nigerian State is experiencing an increasing wave of political violence, terrorism and social disintegration. The activity of the Bakasi Self Determination Front (BSDF) is gaining both domestic and international attention.

The continuous ethno-religious and political conflicts in many parts of Nigeria, followed by the growing alleged mass-human-butcheries in Jos, Plateau State, Kano, Potiskum, Yobe State and Ezillo, in Ebonyi State as well as Maiduguri, in Borno state calls for a rise in massive reggae music that would use the serious lyrical tones, which depicts social criticism against the growing social disintegration and abortion of peace in Nigeria. The increasing waves of killings in different parts of Nigeria, backed by political violence, generated by poor political leadership needs urgent condemnation by reggae musicians across Nigeria. This political violence is a form of violent culture that is primarily driven by the quest to attain part of state power or to preserve it.

**Hip-hop Music:** Hip-hop music is a genre or brand of music, developed in the 1970s, when Black parties became common in New York City, particularly the Bronx, a community well known for its large African American population. The term 'hip-hop' is often credited to Keith Cowboy, a rapper with the American singing group (the Furious Five) led by DJ Grandmaster Flash. It is believed that Cowboy created the term while teasing a friend who joined the United States Army by scat singing . For example, making melodies with the voice similar to musical instruments) the words "hip/hop/hip/hop" in a way that mimicked the rhythmic cadence of marching soldiers. Keyes (2002) identifies four essential elements of hip-hop culture: graffiti, break dancing, turntabling (or DJing) and rap. The most prominent of these in contemporary times is rap. Rap is a musical form that includes an underlying beat often created by a specialized beatmaker. The performer speaks rhythmically and in rhyme, generally to the beat (Sakar, Winer and Sakar, 2005). One major feature of hip-hop that made it

acceptable in most parts of the world is the sense of freedom it facilitates through its expressive nature. It has few rules, promotes originality, and artists can sing about almost anything, especially how they feel about their world.

**Ragga:** This is a form of imported music that appeals to the emotions of love and sex, while presenting its message. Today, most music performed by young Nigerian musicians translates to its audience a sense of love and sex, notwithstanding its central theme, "Ragga is described as the love child of reggae and rap from the states; the sexiest to come out of Jamaica and the best dance music in the dance halls". Through the promotion of the spirit of love, the hate psychology, which drives violence in the political behaviour of the Nigerian political elites leading to massive killings, kidnapping of opponents as well as the loss of lives and properties could be put to check. The likes of Shabba Rank, BujuBanton and Tiger have used their songs like Wicked in Bed, Batty Rider and Gal Flex to promote the sexual appeal of the youths. The music industry in Nigeria today virtually showcases the effeminate parts of the female artists and other assisting performers as a means of attracting the battalions of youths in the country, who are easily lured by the media promotion of such music. Consequently, the fact that this type of music has become increasingly fascinating among the youths make<del>s</del> it a strategic

form of music, which could be harvested in the process of peace building and socializing the youths into an anti-political violence posture in Nigeria. Many of the Nigerian youths that have fallen prey to the antics of politicians are often driven by the quest for drops of coin from the political booty of the elite, while others would simply exhibit violent behaviours to make them closer and dear to the hearts of a given politician as a road map to political rewards. The use of musical concerts to gather these youths for political purposes has become easier, following the media popularity of some Nigerian artists. This makes some of the youths to erroneously believe that every music gathering is a road map to fame. It could be observed that the greatest number of Nigerian youths of every ethno-religious background sings the words, tones and rhythms of this kind of song, sometimes better than the original artists. The implication is that through such raga music, the young, populous citizens in the country, could easily be sensitized on the need to promote peace, political peace education, good social relations and avoid acting as ambassadors of political violence and social disintegration.

**Fuji:** In the traditional Yoruba land, fuji music stimulates vibrant dancing and attracted Islamic converts. Since the society determines the success and growth of a musical genre, Fuji began to grow as an integrative force for the Yoruba Muslim faithful. This turned Fuji into a strong competitive music against juju music. Because of its religious characteristics, the resultant effects of the development of Fuji music became an intra and inter-religious integration of the different Islamic sects. Consequently, Fuji music grew into a vital and indispensable element in Yoruba social events for people of diverse religion. At that point, it has developed from its traditional religious status into what could be called the dissemination of a hegemonic Yoruba identity in the iconic representation of social relationships as in sonic relationship.

**Juju:** This is another traditional Yoruba music that was innovated by the likes of King Sunny Ade, Ebenezer Obey and Shina Peters. Both the Fuji and Juju music are characterized by deep Yoruba proverbs which promote peaceful societal order and enhance social integration. In traditional Yoruba worldview, peace and social integration are generated through communicative relationships, especially during musical and dancing process. Waterman also documented that an effective performance of Juju and Fuji predicates not only the structure of the ideal society but also its interactive ethos and peace. Ridgeway and Robert(2003) stated that the structural dynamics of music within a culture may well reflect symbolically the socially defined patterns and rhythms of daily interaction found in that culture.

# 4.0 Music and immorality

Music is an artistic form of auditory communication incorporating instrumental or vocal tones in a structured and continuous manner in order to create an agreeable (pleasing and harmonious) sounds. While immorality entails the quality of not being in accordance with standards of right or good conduct. Immorality relates to behaviour which transgresses a given norm or system of morals - such acts could be sexual, irreverence, or violence amongst other things. The extent to which music promotes these categories of immorality remains the major focus of this article. It cuts across the political, socioeconomic, and religious spectrum of our society. While music has been generally viewed as a source of entertainment and means of livelihood, however, over the years, popular music has indicated a direct reflection of the picture of the society. Basically, the increase and commercialization of music in our society today has contributed to the rate of immorality in our society. Unlike in the past when African music was a source of good inspiration to the listener which promotes virtue and stands the ground of forming and reforming acceptable character in the life of the listener, Vidal (2011) attests to this when he writes:

"Yoruba children folksong repertoires are part of the oral traditions existing in the Yoruba society and constitute part of the modes of cultural transmission".

# As part of the educational roles of the Yoruba folkloric music, he avers that:

"it develops children's creative role with freedom of musical expression, yet conforming to the performance model that customs and tradition demands for each play". p.289

Nowadays, music has grown from being a mere entertainment to becoming a competitive profession. Therefore, to survive, musicians are compelled to devise all sorts of means to gain competitive advantage. Once a musical idea sells for one musician, competitors replicate this idea to have a share of the dividend therein, without consideration to the negativities such music promotes.

In this day and age, there are many factors that affect the development of our youth. Perhaps the most prevalent of these factors is music. Although music has been around for centuries, the post-modern era has seen a dramatic change in musical culture which has made many youths to be dependent on it. However, Objective of every performer should be to elevate the moral and the intellectual tone of the masses, rather than pander to low and vulgar tastes (Lagos observer in Vidal 2012).

In addition, it is worth mentioning that lyrics nowadays, particularly focus on sex and rape, doom and gloom, death and suicide, blood and violence. The lyrics often contain satanic rituals and actual oaths to Satan. Many others carry strongly implied messages that promote immorality. Some lyrics are outrightly satanic. Some, though not mentioning Satan, promote masochism, murder, suicide, sexual deviance, hatred, bigotry, violence, and occult practices. While others promote drug and alcohol abuse, prostitution, profanity, homosexuality, promiscuity, rebellion, and other immoral behaviours that have been expressed through music for decades. According to Adeola (2001) a look at the content of some popular music as we have today in Nigeria reveals a lot of vulgarity, which has a consequent effect of moral decadence especially upon the youths. Many artists-more or less believe that unless they become vulgar, they will not have good audience appeal, hence many of them especially the Fuji, Juju and Dadakuada artists become so carefree in their renditions and such cultures are imbibed by the Nigerian recipients of the music, thus loose and indecent language is a negative influence of popular music on the Nigerian society. He gave an example of such music by examining the lyrics of the music by late Alhaji Odolaye Aremu, a popular Yoruba (a Nigerian language) Dadakuada artist.

Oko loni e man sepe lemi	[The penis says you must not curse me]
Obo loni e ma bo nmole	[The vagina says you must not cover my glory]
Kelembe ti oje ngboro	[The mucus that does not allow me to hear]
Maa fi oju ruuku	[I will rub the eyes to the dust]
Waa lo joko pelepele Ki o gbohun enu mi, Adegbale dorm Emi Aremu gbajumo oko muni Alhaja muni o feran mi pupo Ti njini lonaajo pee, ni nkan bi aago meta oru Ani Alhaji Odolaiye Aremu a faa wa Dakun wa foko lule laarin itan o	[Go and sit down quietly] [And listen to my voice Adegbale the sinner] [I, Aremu the popular husband of Muni] [Alhaja Muni loves me so much] [She wakes me up midnight at about 3.00am] [She says Alhaji Odolaye Aremu, our alpha] [Please push down your penis between my thighs] (Adeola, 2001 pg 81)

Probing the lyrics of the above song, one would see that today's contemporary musical culture in Nigeria can be highly detrimental to the development of youths and the Nation at large. In many public schools in Nigeria, the impact of music is instantly visible. From young men dressing to emulate their favourite rap artist to young women dressing to match the women and dancers featured in the music videos. Music has certainly had an impact on the fashion of many young people; however, the influence does not stop with clothing alone, some males now put on earrings like their female counterparts in order to attract females. Contemporary popular music has undoubtedly had its greatest impact on Nigerian youths. Young people look for role models and individuals to pattern their lives after. Unfortunately, the role models they find in the world of Contemporary popular music do not always serve as the best models to follow.

Contemporary popular music of Nigeria tends to focus on wealth. The wealth is attained by being a thug and participating in such activities as gangs, drug dealing, and larceny. It explicates that the use of

drugs and narcotics is another negative habit, which many of the Nigerians youths learns from popular artists. Many of the artists believe that the use of drugs enhances their performance; they use it and many of their fans who often want to be like them does it also like them. He pointed at the late Fela Anikulapo Kiti's shrine which presents an example of how popular artists can negatively influence his fans. Indian hemp and other drugs are freely used <del>at</del> in such places (Adeola, 2001).

Another problem lies in the fact that the get-rich-quick and easy lifestyle is far too alluring to young people, especially in our society which promotes individualism and looking out for number one to begin with. When you multiply the effect of hearing that crime pays, a dangerous pattern begins to emerge. The lure of the Contemporary popular music world is so strong that youth decide to take the path to music riches rather than stay in school. The trend towards more dangerous lyrics is culminating today in Nigerian Contemporary popular music. This presents a real threat to the physical health, emotional wellbeing of especially vulnerable children and adolescents. There's a direct correlation between Contemporary popular music, drugs and violence. Today, the trend is towards more destructive themes. Those who listen to it are getting a much more dismal, darker, bleaker outlook on life than those in the last generation. Music which glorify sinful living—sexual immoralities, rebellion against parents, murder, suicide, homosexuality, booze, lust, selfishness, self-glorification, worldly pride, et cetera have dominated the present contemporary popular music of Nigeria.

Many musicians take illegal drugs before their concerts to assist them in performing in concert. In many videos, you can actually see that the singer or musician is high on something, and they are giving an awesome performance (in most cases). A little much of whatever they are will end up like falling half dead on the platform of fornication, a ride of drunkenness, a ride of dirty-mindedness, a ride of lesbianism, a ride of rebellion and that of suicide. Another common phenomenon with the Nigerian popular musicians is the use of touts, which they call "Bouncers" or "Parkers". Those boys are used often for fighting when the need arises during the performances of the artists. They stand around as defenders or protectors of the bandleader and instruments. This encourages idleness on the part of many young ones and it is not toward nation building.

Music is spiritual- it directly affects one's spirit and mood. Music has the ability to control our emotions—to make us cry, stomp our foot, make us angry, or cause us to dance to the rhythm. Since Satan is a spirit, he is able to influence our spirit man through the media of music.

# 5.0 Conclusion

Music is an art that influences man's behaviour. It is a vital tool for social reconstruction and peace building. The Nigerian society evidently shows high propensity reaction towards musical tunes. However, in the course of such reflections, some musical artists have performed and produced certain tracks that promoted social conflict and societal disintegration. The 'Nigeria Jaga-Jaga and the Do Me I Do You'' are popular tunes in Nigeria that is capable of generating multiplied violent effects depending on the inferential and conjectural interpretation given to it by its audience. The themes and messages of those insignificant musicians have in many ways affected and destroyed the citizens' sense of reasoning notably the leaders of tomorrow (the youths). Hence, as a nation, Nigeria continues to battle with the challenges of nation building, musicians should incorporate in the lyrics and wordings of their music performances, ways to reprove and reprimand the masses to neglect violence, terrorism and ethno-religious divisions, so as to promote peace and social integration. It is only when peaceful and inter-group relations in the country is attained, that Nigeria could crawl-out of multiple socio-political and economic predicaments that have overtaken the sovereign state.

Conflicts, terrorism, ethnic segregation and political violence starts in the minds of men, therefore, music should be used to influence or gear the mind of men towards peace. The efficacy of music is so powerful that it can penetrate the strong walls of the human mind. Thus, the dynamic nature of music should be explored by musicians and the musical audience in order to create a new, peaceful and

behavioural pattern that would promote good governance, national security and the socio-political and economic stability of our conflict and terror ridden Nigerian State.

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