

CONCERNS AND IMPLICATIONS OF CURRENT TREND OF SONG LYRICS FOR CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Festus Ife Olisaeke, Ph.D. & Lovelyn C. Olisaeke

Introduction

Music appreciation has to do with equipping a person with requisite knowledge to understand and appreciate music of all or specific genres. The equipping may not be done formally but may be acquired through series of active listening done over time. According to Olisaeke (2014:32), "Music appreciation is the admiration and show of enthusiasm to musical works. It teaches people what to look out for, what to listen to, and how to appreciate different types of music." The fact that there are various genres of music makes the musical art a discipline with a wide variety of areas of interest. Sometimes when the term musical art is used most people especially the elites tend to ascribe it to acquisition of musical talents and knowledge from formal music education training. Inasmuch as this would have been better for music profession, we cannot however do away with the fact that a large number of music artistes are from the streets, that is, outside formal professional music setting.

There is also another tendency to attribute musical art to Western orchestral music often erroneously called 'classical music' which is largely a product of formal classroom music training. When this belief is the case, one wonders where such music genres as pop, traditional, and other music types would be placed. It is therefore proper to state here that musical arts involves every type and genre of music which can be learned formally and informally, practiced and produced for societal consumption. It is also a known fact that those music types that are hardly contained in the formal music training curriculum such as pop, traditional music and others attract a wider audience anywhere in the world. Some countries are however including them in their education curriculum, but the impact is not yet being felt. In

F. I. Olisaeke & L. C. Olisaeke: *Concerns and Implications of Current Trend of Song...* this discourse, attention is directed to pop and traditional musical arts and how they affect childhood education and development in the present Nigeria.

Childhood education focuses on the training given to a child from zero to puberty age. What a child learns either by perception (seeing, feeling, etc.) or by tuition (formal and informal education) forms the knowledge he acquires which shapes his attitude in life. Childhood education is therefore a delicate matter in the life of any individual and should be handled with utmost care to avoid feeding the child with negative knowledge that may destroy his future, and thereby producing a perverse generation. Fafunwa (1991) in Udoh (2018:76) identified seven educational objectives that form the aim of traditional African education for the Nigerian child. These include:

1. To develop the child's latent physical skills.
2. To develop character
3. To indicate respect for elders and those in position of authority
4. To develop intellectual skills
5. To acquire specific vocational training and to develop a healthy attitude towards honest labour
6. To develop a sense of belonging and to participate actively in family and community affairs
7. To develop, appreciate and promote the cultural heritage of the community at large.

Music, when properly applied in educating a child fosters a better and quicker medium to achieving these objectives and goals, and when allowed to distort a child's value of life, achieving these aims becomes impossible. A child may not be trained to study music as a course of study but can be trained to appreciate a type of music that can assist in developing his right attitudes to life. After all, "when children listen to music, they respond with their feelings and emotions, manipulative skills through intellectual means and by combination of these (Onyiuke, 2006:56)."

The Place of Childhood Care Education in the Nigerian Society

The sustainability of every society and every nation is largely dependent on education of its citizenry. Childhood or basic education in the Nigerian context is the bedrock and foundation of every other levels of education in the educational development of every individual person. Every nation also considers education as the bedrock of development, and both government and private individuals and entities bring a lot to bear in ensuring that the citizenry are properly educated. No wonder Agu posited that “Education in Nigeria is no more a private enterprise but a huge government venture that has witnessed a progressive evolution of government’s complete and dynamic intervention and active participation. The Nigerian government has adopted education as an instrument par excellence for effecting national development (2006:2).” In this discourse, the writer looks at childhood education from African sense which considers childhood to mean children from birth till the end of teen age. In the formal academic sense it involves: Early childhood education which is education of children 0 – 5 years, Primary education (6 to 11 years) and Secondary education (12 to 16 years). The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) gives early childhood education a broader name as “Basic education“ and it is defined as the education given to children aged 0 – 16 years. It encompasses the Early Childcare and Development Education (0 – 5) and 10 years of formal schooling. Early Childcare and Development Education however is segmented into 0 – 4 years, situated in day-care or crèche, fully in the hands of the private sector and social development services, whilst ages 5 – 6 (pre-primary) are within the formal education sector.

The National Policy on Education (FRN 2013) states that the objectives of early childhood care education is to: effect a smooth transition from the home to the school; prepare the child for the primary level of education; provide adequate care, supervision, and security for the children while their parents are at work; inculcate social, moral, norms and values; inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and the use of toys, etc.; develop a sense of cooperation and team-spirit; stimulate in the child good habits; and teach the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms, etc., through play.

Early childhood care education has been found to be crucial for satisfactory adult development. It is very useful to the development of the child's physical, emotional, social and intellectual wellbeing. It is the process of laying a holistic foundation for the overall development of a child in all developmental domain of education. In the views of Ibiam and Ugwu in Ibiam (2016), early childhood education is designed to develop the habits, attitudes and skills needed for primary education. Early childhood education is a foundation that helps to shape and improve the children's lives, potentialities and personalities towards self-actualization, training and modelling and it also focuses on children living through play. In the views of Obinaju, Fakrogha, and Inatimi (2015), early childhood care education is the pre-primary care and education given to aid physical, mental and social growth and development of the child.

Early childhood care education has enormous individual child, social and economic benefits. It complements the roles of parents and other caregivers in raising children during the early years. It also sets the foundation for life; ensuring that children have positive experiences and that their needs for health, stimulation and support are met, and they learn to interact with their surroundings. For the Nigerian child, early childhood care education programme results in easier transition to primary school, better completion rates, and reduce poverty for parents and social equality. They appear to have improved social skills and do better in life. They also learn essential life skills that stay with them forever.

At this stage in life, children are known to be very creative and have high exposure to music. They get to sing, learn to play musical instruments easily, and have higher rate of retention. Music is just as important as other things of life including reading and writing. Effiong (2018) had observed that: "A Nigerian child in particular is born and nurtured in music. He grows and learns in society where he lives with music, and eventually takes his exit from the world of music (159)". Tunes they hear just once or twice are recorded in their brains and you find them singing them verbatim. This is the reason care should be taken in exposing children to such musics that are highly reprehensible due to their pervasive lyrical and visual contents.

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If the focus of government and parents on childhood education is to ensure a proper training of children at their early stage of life, would it then not be a negligence of duty to allow a single art form that has been hijacked by degenerates to lure these young ones into wanton behaviours that would be unhealthy for the future generation.

The Place of Music in the Life and Training of a Child

It may not be easy to find any human who does not love and appreciate music. Even animals and sub-humans do. Since there are different music types every human being usually identifies at least one music type he appreciates. However, in this assertion music is music irrespective of the type, and the tendency of man to be naturally drawn to it is unequivocal. No wonder Shakespeare had variously extolled the place and aesthetics of music in his numerous writings with such phrases as “The man that hath no music in himself nor is not moved by concord of sweet sounds is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils, the motion of his spirits are dull as night; and his affections dark as Erebus; let no such man be trusted (Shakespeare 1964: 213).”. In another book the same author had enthused: ‘if music be the food of love, play on; give me the excess of it.’

From creation music has been playing roles in natural and human activities. In the milieu of nature, everything connected with creativity is structured in regulated rhythm and time. From the chirping of the birds, flow of the tide, whistling of the pines to the undulating movements of the heartbeats are all natural activities associated with musical rhythm. On the other hands, the life of man is incomplete without music. This is because music accompanies every activity of man from birth till he bows out of the world. Even a hermit or someone living a life of solitude finds company in music even as he tries to live his life of recluse. This is because music, apart from providing entertainment relaxes the mind, soothes the nerves and comforts the lonely and the sorrowful. There are always music to suit every mood of man be it a propitious or melancholic one. This is the reason music is quite inevitable and indispensable in the life of man. No wonder in ancient Greece, Music formed a major part of education curriculum. Great Greek philosophers like Plato and Pythagoras believed that music was subjected to the same mathematical laws of harmony as the mechanics of the cosmos, evolving into an idea known as the music of the spheres.

The saying goes that 'music maketh a man', and as such it should be ensured that children be exposed to the right type of music that would make them into complete being with right mind-set to assume the position the future reserves for them. The import of music in childhood education cannot be overemphasized. Ancient Greeks educated their children both boys and girls in music from a young age. Even in infancy, children played instruments and learnt through songs. Later on, they learned to play the lyre, either in formal setting or at home, and some went to become professional musicians. Here in the present day Nigeria, music is quite appreciated only as means of relaxation and cooling off during a chill out or during numerous occasions and ceremonies. Beyond that, music seems to be insignificant to most Nigerians especially in the role it plays as providing a fertile ground to seeds of learning; in character formation and general education of the human mind. Only a handful of the Nigerian elites knows the importance of music especially in character training of children and have begun to employ it in their training. Most times they do this informally by engaging them in private lessons with music professionals.

Apart from acquiring knowledge of music and possession of technical ability in its production, its effect in aiding assimilation of strings of information faster cannot be underplayed upon. That is why it is a potent means of dissemination of information and is recommended in teaching the masses including children. Folk and traditional music are employed and therefore handy in the cultural setting while popular music is on the national and international scale. There are lot of musicians of both music types that if their talents are well channelled can produce positive effects in the life of the growing children. They can do this by concentrating in composing morally didactic songs. Old generation of musicians including Bob Marley, Celestine Ukwu, Patty Obasi and a host of others have achieved this purpose. It is left for the new breed musicians to toe the line. In their views Ajaero, Umeainwa and Nwamara (2019) opine that "A morally didactic song is one which messages tend to pass across information that teaches its listeners the distinction between good and bad and encourages them to always be upright and desist from the bad and evil things (78)."

But this tendency is currently being challenged by the unhealthy trend of pop music artistes by unwholesome enculturation of obscenities in their lyrics and video

F. I. Olisaeke & L. C. Olisaeke: *Concerns and Implications of Current Trend of Song... productions*. Samuel and Adejube (2019:19) observed that “Lewd, vulgar, exotic and lecherous words are expressed in the day-to-day compositions and performances of contemporary Nigerian popular musicians. These words are used sporadically in the popular media, particularly in music entertainment and the home video industry.”

Current Trends in Popular Music Today Vis-À-Vis Earlier Practices

The desire of every society is to train its children properly with good moral values in order to be good leaders of tomorrow. The Holy Bible says “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6)”. Characters, attitudes, beliefs and doctrines imbibed at young age usually form the behaviour of a child when he/she becomes a man/woman. It is very difficult to change a person’s character when it has been fully internalized in his system even when he is made to understand that his ways are not right. Characters at the adult level are rather regarded as dogmatic within the personality they are domiciled. That is why children are handled with utmost care and fragility in their upbringing. Fragility in the sense that when a wrong attitude is imparted on them, to change is almost impossible and a herculean task to achieve where possible. Imparting attitude may be direct or indirect. Normal teaching and guidance that is given to a child is a direct impartation of attitudes, but the ones they pick from their environments through association and peers’ influence are indirect. The latter is where the danger lies, and music is a part of it. In consideration of this, music has been identified as number one art practice that heavily influence children’s attitude. Bakare (2019) posits that:

Music is part of young children’s growth and development as children from birth are naturally enthusiastic concerning music; singing, clapping, dancing to rhythms, listening, creating, and playing of musical instruments. It is a truism that early childhood is a viable tool in the teaching and learning activities of cultural values globally; such that all the beautiful things in the world, few surpass images of music in childhood (p. 159)”

The overbearing influence of music is such that checkmating it is a near- impossible venture. However, efforts must continue to be made to do that especially starting at early stages of their lives.

One question that readily calls to mind at this point is whether music is good or bad. Music can be good and can also be bad depending on certain prevailing factors. Most important factor to consider is the content of the messages and the visual effect of pornographic music videos. Good music abounds and can be found largely in the type of music that trended before the year 2000 colloquially referred to as “old school music”. In terms of rhythm, music of the old school is structured in a danceable style with minimal application of various musical instruments devoid of unnecessary commotion that is characteristic of today’s pop music. There were marked pop music genres such as disco, reggae, country, blue, afro-juju, sentimental, etc., with great lyrical and instrumental appeal. Even though no music can really be branded as ‘bad music’ because everything depends on what the listener is looking out for, however as humans are naturally inclined to upholding morality to a high level, it is easy to point out the debased lyrical content in today’s pop music. For some flimsy reasons of making fast sales, today’s musicians have chosen the issue of sex as a major topic of textual expression. Ajaero et al (2019:79) made the following observation:

Unfortunately, hip-hop music in Nigeria has been predominantly profane and immoral in its lyrics, its dress sense and to the nature of most of its dance style as against the moral inclination of the society and its original purpose of creation which was basically to educate, inform and advocate for the common man against the ills of the society and corruption of our leaders through its themes and messages as seen in the songs of Eedris Abdulkareem and Tony Tettula.

Through the use of profane languages by these musicians, children imbibe and use with reckless abandon such words and expressions that are culturally, socially, and religiously considered immoral and unethical. Words that punctuate various aspects of sexual organs and activities which they easily utter include: For sexual activity – sex, fuck, bash, hit, rock, wire, knack, doggy, kiss ya ass, etc; for female sex organ (vagina) – pussy, butt, toto, puna, ass, etc.; and for male organ (penis) – dick, rod, prick, stick, gbola, cucumber, index, odogwu, etc. These words and expressions are highly immoral, debased, and injurious to children’s upbringing and character formation. These days one finds children using these words as expressions without recourse to its implication on their psyche.

Mention is made here some of the music tracks that contain unhealthy languages. These are just but few out of numerous others.

1. Coming by Naira Marley

They go sucking, fucking, orgasm, vagasm, shiverin, cumin, touching, kissing
In the rain, in the sun, upstairs, downstairs, in the car, bedroom, sitting room
Sloppy top, don't stop (oh – yoi)

2. Bounce – Ruger

She want a gangster in her bed tonight; She ah want me, me I know; And man
I full ground, me I dey tonight; She ah calling my phone, Oh she say why you
no unruly.

Bounce your body or we bounce you out; Girlie go down, north to south, shey
you gree. I no fit shout – ay, yeah. Bounce your body or we bounce you out;
omo no scream, no too shout, ay; No loud am, no loud am (Scope dat thing)

3. Soundgasm – REMA

Sexy love, what she needs from a bad guy like me, yeah yeah
Sexy kisses, the thing that she needs from my lips, yeah yeah
Man's XXL is the only air that she breaths, And when I look into her eyes
Baby girl, your body is my medicine;
Sweet baby Melanin, sweeter than sugarcane, If I hicky, hicky on her neck.
Sex like a gangster, on my face, innocent
Stroke her pussy with my index; Shawty gotta orgasm
Tapping on that pussy like I'm trying na kill a mother fucking insect, ah, ah.

Musicians of nowadays seem to lack messages to deliver to people. Perhaps they are overwhelmed by the fact that almost all subject matter have been exhausted by old time musicians leaving nothing new for them to talk about. If this is their reason, then their creativity is highly questionable. As a composer, one can turn around an old song or use the same material for an entirely different creation. But instead of doing that, they resorted to creating and adapting syllabic nuances embedded in erotic messages as their language or means of expression and communication.

This trend, if allowed to continue unabated would adversely affect the quality of life of the children which would also impact their adult life and produce morally bankrupt leaders of tomorrow. Musicians of the old school derived their texts from

F. I. Olisaeke & L. C. Olisaeke: *Concerns and Implications of Current Trend of Song...* contemporary issues of the time they lived. They addressed political and civil issues including man's inhumanity to man, inequalities, social justice, creation of awareness, mass mobilization, apartheid, marginalization, racial discrimination, human rights, women emancipation, and so on. Through music, any topic is possible and any issue can be addressed. Love and emotional expressions were also part of old school's topic but completely devoid of vulgarism.

Musician like Fela Anikulapo Kuti, whose music hit the entire globe like wild fire in the 80s and 90s projected and exposed political atrocities committed in the Nigerian nation by the ruling classes through his music is a force to reckon with. Apart from his personal life-style punctuated by excessive intake of hard drugs like marijuana, his music was not affected by it, albeit public outcry against such a life-style, rather they conveyed messages with international appeal. Sunny Okosun addressed social ills, and as a political mitigator, assuaged Nigerians and indeed Africans with such messages that gave them hope of survival despite the economic hardship in the country and the continent. Other musicians like Evi Edna Ogosi, Felix Leberty, Chris Okotie and numerous others released songs with various themes and messages including love but without moral inebriation. They were celebrated and their musics were enjoyed by both young and old members of the public even up till today. Parents were not discouraging their children from listening to music then, because music were simply good in every respect and conveyed meaningful and didactic messages. The video recordings of their music and dances were also good without bawdy scenes and indecent dresses compared to what obtains today.

Implications of the Current Trends on the Nigerian Society

The need of every nation is to raise a morally sound generation that would uphold principles and philosophies on which the nation is founded and established. A morally bankrupt society is a perverse, retarded, and cursed generation with severe social and economic malaise that would eventually catapult itself to state of anarchy.

The uncensored popular music hitting the Nigerian airwaves on daily basis and which are easily accessible to almost every Nigerian child through phones and social media is grossly affecting the behaviours and characters of children. It also

F. I. Olisaeke & L. C. Olisaeke: *Concerns and Implications of Current Trend of Song...* negates the teachings and practices of indigenous African nations which hold moral values to high esteem. Udoh (2018) had observed that:

Indigenous African education places considerable emphasis on character training. Indeed, it is the corner-stone of African education. The parents, siblings and other members of the community participate in the education of the child by the use of folksongs that reflect on character. Everyone wants him to be sociable, honest, courageous, humble, persevering and of good repute at all times (p. 77 – 78).

If this trend is allowed to continue unchecked, it would appear as giving children free licence to use foul language as if it is the order of the day. Where then is our value system? It is a serious hamstringing on African value system and should be checked.

Children are no more in synch with their cultural upbringing due to the influence and adoption of foreign behaviours made possible through global contacts. The world is really a global village with attendant consequences. Children brought up in an indigenous setting with sound moral upbringing lose the value system inculcated in them through these contacts. Respects for human sexual organs that are hitherto held sacrosanct are now treated with levity and disdain. Ajaero et al (2019:80) had commented that “it is believed that people are often times as indigenous as their culture, meaning that a person when brought up from childhood in the ways and dictates of his/her culture, finds it difficult to deviate from it.” With what is happening today in the pop music industry, one wonders if this belief still subsists among Nigerian youths.

The growing children today see nakedness as a way of life because of unrestricted access they have to illicit music and videos through social media due to the difficulties parents face in-between their works, businesses, and busy schedules to monitor their children and their use of social media devices. The sexually captivating immodest video clips laced with nude girls with pulsating sensuous moves watched by children usually keeps them spellbound on their phones and television screens, thereby sending negative signals on their psyche and mental development. According to Sunday-Kanu (2014:148):

What Nigerians culturally consider immoral and indecent forms the bulk of the texts and related art expressions of pop musical art. For instance,

F. I. Olisaeke & L. C. Olisaeke: *Concerns and Implications of Current Trend of Song... projection of nude girls and their sexually aroused gestures dominating Nigerian pop scene today does not articulate Nigerian ethics and integrity. The pop stars are basically carried away by American musical culture which does not in any way integrate Nigerian cultural values.*

Educationally, this exposure to unholy and excessive pornographic visual images and materials leads to distortion of children's cognitive development and in fact all aspect of mental development. There are things that children are allowed to learn and assimilate as they grow up. That is why learning is graduated from simple to complex. Knowledge that activates their minds to inquire what is beyond their understanding capacity can lead to mental turbulence; even if it does not immediately lead to complete psychosis, something has been tampered with in the sequencing of their logical reasoning. This is why abnormal behaviours among the youths are on the increase.

Another negative effect of this trend on the youth is that children during the course of learning are always found absent minded. Many teachers are overwhelmed as to the reasons students lack concentration in the class. When the mind of a minor is inundated with imaginations of unwholesome things they watch over the television and social media and the unholy things he hears musicians express in their songs, he ruminates over them even when he is engaged in a serious academic exercise. There is therefore the need to check this trend.

The church is not even spared the trauma of the negative effects of this use of foul languages and obscene videos among the gospel music artistes. The musicians also make incursions with splashes of sacred tunes into secular subject matters and infusions of sacred and mundane tunes and hymns to create obscene video clips. Many musicians are guilty of this; worthy of mention here is Saint Janet. According to Samuel and Adejube (2019:30):

The lewd portion of the live performances of Saint Janet has given rise to the controversies surrounding her career. A majority of her critics are clergymen and church authorities who vehemently oppose the use of gospel songs as parody to her compositions. Apart from the fact that she always starts her performance with gospel/church lyrics and songs mainly

F. I. Olisaeke & L. C. Olisaeke: *Concerns and Implications of Current Trend of Song... comprising church choruses, she is also fond of changing the songs to suit her erotic/lewd performance thereby alternating the lyrics in the songs.*

Though it was reported that church authorities criticised the music of Saint Janet, it is still worrisome that very many of them are averse to condemning this ugly trend even as it is clear that it has permeated the church in great magnitude. Perhaps they may be afraid of losing the services of these church musicians which might affect them if they decide to withdraw. Aimiuwu (2018) succinctly puts it this way when he observed: "Sadly many churches do not bother about the quality and standard of the works of these emergent gospel artistes found in churches. Many do not even care about the content of these songs; the lyrics, costumes, or even images displayed in the visuals of such musical videos. The motivating factor here is money and the desperation to survive in a recessed economy (p. 86)."

Conclusion and Recommendation

Vulgarism, violence, eroticism and lewdness are highly and indiscriminately explored and perpetrated in the pop music industry of today's Nigeria such that its effect on the Nigerian children has become intimidating and worrisome. The trend has reached such an increasing momentum that parents seem to be at crossroads with what to do and how to arrest the ugly situation. To this effect, the following recommendations are hereby proffered:

- Government should rise to the occasion and ensure that the compositions of pop musicians be vetted and censored to make sure contents are in tandem with the national and cultural principles of morality and also conform with social norms.
- Anti-graft agencies established by government to censor music production by Nigerian pop musicians should be encouraged to be proactive in the discharge of their duties in order to rid the nation of such unwanted music. Their activities should be extended to also rid the market from being flooded with such foreign music that are not encouraged in the country. Performing Musicians Association of Nigeria (PMAN) and Association of Nigerian Musicologists (ANIM) should be involved in this project.

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- Every prospective artiste should submit his/her compositions and video clips to the body for proper censoring before they are released to the society.
- The church/mosque in whose domain it is to ensure proper instillation of morality in the society should also rise to the occasion and use every avenue available to them especially the pulpit to condemn the practice in its entirety even when they reap from the talents of the musicians.
- Musicians are also encouraged to eschew obscenities from their compositions by conscious application of healthy languages that glorify the soul. The belief that immoral words attract large audience from the youths should be jettisoned. Let them compose morally didactic music that the lyrics would conform with social and cultural norms.

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