



# Mukabala

Journal of Performing Arts and Culture



Volume 4 Number 1



SEPTEMBER 2019

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**CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN MUSIC VIDEOS AND THE QUESTION OF  
MORALITY: A STUDY OF FLAVOUR'S CATCH YOU**

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**Abstract**

*The beauty and uniqueness of African cultural norms are heading for extinction because of acculturation. Acculturation in art is not bad, but when misused, it automatically affects the well-being of the people, especially children. The myopic conception of devaluing the cultural norms in Nigerian music is negatively affecting the Nigerian child's development both morally, socially and otherwise. This is because many a time, they tend to speak, dress, dance and behave like the westerners based on what they watch in some Nigerian musical videos, which is not in line with Nigeria paternal training to their children to be respectful, humble and well dressed when and where. This article contextually analyzes some areas in musical videos where cultural norms towards a child's development are being devalued. The paper reveals that some parents lack the charisma in impacting the required cultural norms on their children. On the side, the Nigerian Music Artists' Slogan is "More Quality More Money". Therefore, cultural civility in their music videos is thrown to the winds. In conclusion, the watchword should be, while trying to do cultural syncretism, let only the good ones be adopted while the bad ones should be deemphasized.*

**Keywords:** Morality, Music Videos, Culture, Misinterpretations

**Introduction**

The existence of every being is centred on his/her cultural norms. It gives an individual cultural identity, cultural transformation and cultural sustainability. Cultural norms are not made out of mere assumption or speculations; rather attitudes, beliefs, mythology and religion contribute to their emergent. The Unison of Western and Nigerian ideologies especially in music videos will help the children to value and appreciate cultural syncretism most importantly where cultural norms are projected. The cultural upbringing

and norms in the Western realm are conveyed in flawed language use; improper dressing (almost nude), children taking parents to court where the corrective measures are prescribed and children, introducing boyfriends/girlfriends to parents inappropriately; all these are acceptable in western society.

However, when such practices are adopted in Nigerian culture through music videos, they exhibit nonconformity with the Nigerian environment. Akas Nicholas observed that "cultural norms should always be adapted by others based on understanding the people's environmental influences and not cultural aesthetics" (24). Gabriel E. Idang concurred by saying; the cultural norms of a people are what marks them out distinctively from other human societies in the family of humanity.

The beauty of every cultural norm is the ability of its indigenous owners to understand, appreciate and cherish its sacredness. Thus, in adapting the attributes of other cultures through a syncretic lens the following are to be considered:

- a. The suitability
- b. The cultural moral disturbance
- c. The cultural psychological trauma on the native people

The aforementioned therefore, provides a frame for the isolation and adoption of certain foreign cultural emblems which must be interrogated for suitability, moral appropriateness and impact on the indigenous people. The successful pruning of such foreign cultural material along these lines thus makes them safe for usage within the Nigerian context.

### **Cultural Norms and Child Development: The Misinterpretation**

The side effect of westernization has affected the appreciation, value or originality of cultural norms among the lifestyle of Africans, especially children. The urge and anxiety to meet with the new trend of activities have made some children, through their parental idealized training, to see our cultural norms as mundane, barbaric and unconventional. Aurolyn Luykx noted that, Children of differing cultural perception and training often have different ways of expressing their ideas which always affect societal cultural norms (213). Some of our unique African communalism before the coming of Western ideology is gradually going into extinction because of poor documentation and while some parents shy away from saying the truth to avoid being tagged ancient.

Suffice it to say that, the level of misinterpretation placed on African cultural norms both in style of dressing, eating, sitting, dancing, marriage, talking, religion, drinking and respect for elders, has been wrongly appreciated and immortalized in the mindset of our children, because of the negativity of cultural syncretism. Kofi Gbolongo (2009) maintains that Cultural syncretism automatically becomes poisonous when both cultures are totally against the traditions, myths, language, art, norms and memories guiding

indigenous people. The high level of bastardization or misinterpretation is mostly from celebrities; actors, actresses, musicians, fine artists and others, who use their creative work consciously and unconsciously, to enrich more of style, money and fame, than the real cultural norms, which are the source of cultural identity.

Eze Dons suggested that Culture is what makes people unique or distinct from others. It is what distinguishes one group of people from other groups since no two distinct groups are the same so also are no two cultural norms that are the same (141). From the above, one can argue for or against maintaining cultural norms because of the dynamic essence of the entertainment industry and people's high sense of demand. This, nobody is against, but there is a need to consider the effect of musical content on children within the ages of 0- 10 years who might come in contact with such videos. These category of children are their formative ages, and tend to retain what they see, feel or observe. Lev Vygotsky stated that, in the process of development, the child, not only masters the items of cultural experiences but the habits and forms of cultural behaviour which he/she is exposed to through the media (123).

It is a truism that the world is dynamic and not static, and as such different cultural norms/ barriers exist in different societies. Through the cultural difference that exists from one society to the other, one can clearly differentiate between the African way of life and that which is Western. For instance, in some Western music videos, the artists could be nude, smoking or taking hard drugs. To them, such are acceptable norms in the videos, although, when the same is repeated in the African context, it appears to be totally a total abberation and an affront on the collective moral standing of majority of the population.

This paper, therefore, advocates that Nigerian music artists should always be critical and culturally sensitive in their creations. By so doing, children will learn about and appreciate African/Nigerian cultural norms and aesthetics and not the other way round. Therefore, the Nigerian entertainment industry (music industry), needs to make a deliberate attempt to project and celebrate the enormous cultural values that the nation is endowed with rather than showcase nudity in music videos both in content, form and language. Again, this shift is important because many children who are exposed to and have express access to social media have grown up to believe that some of the negative things trending are accepted norms. As such for most young people, being able to follow trends, memorize, recite and perform such de-cultured music videos amongst their peers is a huge criterion for acceptance and validation. The consequence of this type of consciousness is the dereliction of the didactic indigenous cultural orientated music. Artists are more concerned and rightly so about breaking even and smiling to the bank; forgetting that as artist/performers their works are expected to be a vehicle for societal transformation and reconstruction.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Cultural Norms Theory was propounded by Melvin Depleur in 1970. In his discussion about how the media affects the audience, he pointed out that people are easily moved or influenced by what they see. He further states that the mass media selectively presents and emphasises certain contemporary ideas or values. According to this theory, the mass media influences norms by reinforcing or changing them. The positive attribute of Cultural Norms Theory is that it always allows for the understanding of the differences between one culture and another. By so doing, it becomes possible for people to adapt the contents that are suitable for their culture and discard inappropriate ones. According to Binford, as cited by Roger M. Keesing, "Cultural norms at times are believed to be under serious direct genetic control which serves as a watchdog to individuals and groups within a particular ecological community" (34). Furthermore, Harris, as cited in Keesing, avers that Cultural Norm Theory is "the culture concept that comes down to behaviour patterns associated with a particular group of people (75).

The objective of Cultural Norms Theory is to understand what has been and how effective it is. Keesing maintained that Man is an animal and like all other animals must maintain an adaptive relationship cultural wise within his surroundings to survive before advocating for another (76). The phenomenon of western cultural intrusion into the Nigerian space is inevitable due to the influence of globalisation; however people must always try to understand what they are adopting and its possible impact on their society.

Defleur avers that, "cultural norms cultivate reliable guidelines for daily living and contribute to the health and well-being of a culture. They act as prescriptions for correct and moral behaviour, lend meaning and coherence to life and provide a means to achieve a sense of integrity, safety and belonging. He also added that "Cultural Norms Theory presents a sense of order and control upon aspects of life that might otherwise appear chaotic or unpredictable based on cultural influence from another culture" (n. P.). Keesing went further to note that, Cultural norms theory consists of standard for deciding what is, for deciding what can be, for deciding what one feels about it, for deciding what to do about it and for deciding how to go about doing it. It is based on this ideology above, that this paper adopted Cultural Norms Theory by Melown Defleur as its working metaphor to critically analyze the selected case study based on its sociological, moral and psychological influence on an average Nigerian child.

### **Cultural Degradation in Nigerian Music Videos**

Culture as a unique aspect of life has been given various scholarly definitions. However, the most acceptable or suitable definition for this paper is that "culture is a people's way of life; its entire ramifications towards sustaining their identity, originality and transformation" (Akas 32). Akas' definition suggests a deliberate and constant push for cultural preservation, documentation and sustainability of our indigenous cultural art forms. The problem of foreign cultural behaviours and lifestyle being portrayed in Nigerian musical videos is perhaps heightened by artists' pursuit of fame and money.

This has resulted in the type of content which artists put out in their musical videos; full of negative images and expressions. This trend portrays the neglect of cultural values by some Nigerian musical artists, which invariably contributes to the high level moral decadence expressed by young Nigerians today.

On the contrary, early Nigerian musical artists such as *Fela Kuti, Oliver, Bright Chimeize, King Sunny Ade, Onyeka Onwenu* and others, used their songs to mirror social and political issues in Nigeria and to proffer solutions when and where necessary. These artists projected the rich Nigerian cultural heritage in all ramifications and they were celebrated for it world over. Unfortunately, what we witness among some of our 21st-Century music artists such as *Flavor, Davido, Wizkid* and others are massive exposure of nude women, use of crude language and immoral dance display, which are alien to the Nigerian culture. This worrisome cultural deterioration has reduced and restricted the societal acceptance of some musical videos in churches, traditional events, interludes and receptive tools for important personnel in the country, while the westernized musical videos are strictly meant for clubs, competition and promos. Suffice it to note that, this problem can only be addressed when parents, the National Film and Video Censors Board and Ministry of Information put a very serious ban to videos with vile content.

#### **Analysis of *Catch You* by Mr Flavour**

The essence of analyzing this music video subjectively is to understand areas where the artist went against the cultural norms of Nigeria and its attendant side effect on the psycho-moral development of a Nigerian child. Indeed, music is generally accepted based on its dynamic trend, but when x-rayed about what should be, it goes against the Nigerian cultural belief system and perception. The dehumanized cultural norms portrayed in the video are as follows:

- a) Language
- b) Culture

#### **Language**

The use of language in the music video (*Catch You*) is highly immoral and inhuman to an average Nigeria woman. The artist (*Flavour*) used vulgar language and symbols to represent sexual engagement between men and women. This is made evident in the lyrics of the song as presented below:

**Verse:** If I catch you, I will chop you like carrot (x2)  
If I catch you, I will chop you like banana (x2)  
If I catch you, you will feel me kparaga.

**Chorus:** E don tey wey I dey find you  
E don tey wey you dey burst my head  
E don tey wey I need you (Mr. Flavour)



**Plate 1: A Pictorial Presentation of Flavour Showing His Sexual Ability**

From the above picture, verse and chorus, women are not presented in good light as hardworking, master planners, helpmate and selfless-beings which invariable are the true qualities of a woman; rather she was portrayed as a mere sexually eatable fruit like carrot and banana. The quantification of a Nigerian woman as mere a fruit, as a symbol for sexual satisfaction is not acceptable. Such projection of women before children and youths reduces their peer mates (girls) to the only object desired for sex. No doubt, this can lead to drug abuse, unwanted pregnancy, abortion and STDs. At times, the ability of some Nigerian music artists to produce videos as a conscious tool for negative propaganda in the mindset of some Nigerian child is nothing to write home about. Remember an adage that says 'children retain more what they see than what they read'. As such, at their growing stage they imitate everything they see, watch and observe. Nigerian music artists, therefore, should always present women as unique creatures and not as tools for sexual objectification, especially before the mindset of children. Language is a very essential part of cultural identity; hence its usage in any form of media should be justified wisely.

### **Culture**

The music video, "*Catch You*", by Flavour went totally against the scholarly definition of culture as a people's way of life. This paper can strongly say that what Mr. Flavour portrayed in the video was the opposite, as culture was redefined here as "borrowed and imported way of life". In Africa, women are not allowed to expose their body, only on some notified occasions such as legalized sexual intercourse for baby making, aging mothers as a sign of fruitful youthful age and period of peaceful revolt to buttress their points to the ruling class. A woman's body in Africa is always upheld as sacrosanct, which is the ideal cultural norm and value. It is a taboo for a young lady to expose her body without any reason; older women will always frown at it. But Flavour went contrary to this in his music video, *Catch You*.

The commercialization of nude women reduces them to sex toys and symbolised by 'carrot' and 'bananas', being sung by the artist. The act of nudity by female characters in Nigeria music videos is a westernized ideology and not African. The White man who some times goes nude or naked, usually have a reason, either during summer or special carnival occasion, meanwhile, in the Nigerian context, there is no social, moral and economic justification behind such act. So such videos should not be aired and if it is aired at all, censorship board should always be strict on what goes on national television to avoid corrupting the sanity of a Nigerian child watching such videos.

### **Conclusion**

From the Cultural Norms Theory, which is the theoretical framework of the paper, one will understand that what differentiates one culture from another is the ability of the people to maintain what is theirs before borrowing from another culture. This has been a major problem in some of the music videos of Nigerian artists (especially Mr. Flavour's *Catch You*) where they adopt some uncultured aspect of Western culture and force it on viewers to accept. Such misnomer can be denied or controlled by adults, but growing minds like the Nigerian child might find it difficult to resist, except on serious paternal control and monitoring. In Africa, culture and style of training children both in what they see, watch, eat and whom they play with differs. So Nigerian musicians through music videos should always put these into considerations. An Igbo adage says "Ofu onye anaghiazunwa" (One person does not train a child). Nigeria musicians (especially Mr. Flavour) should always see themselves and their music as a corrective tool, by so doing, they should always present songs and dance in the videos that are culturally didactic. Making profit is indispensable but it is very important to note that average Nigerian children see them as *demi-gods*, as role models and, thus, accept their works of art as a second Bible. Mr. Flavour and others should always praise or infuse cultural ideologies in their music videos towards encouraging the Nigerian child to accept the generalized cultural norms, before aligning themselves to what they see, watch and observe that their performances are culturally un-African, that way, the ideal template of African cultural norms will be immortalized in their minds.



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