African Music as a Tool for Nation Building and Curbing Societal Instability in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined African music as a tool for nation building and curbing societal instability in Nigeria. This research paper employed a multi-disciplinary approach, drawing upon historical records, ethnographic studies, and cultural analyses. It delved into the historical evolution of music in Nigeria, showcasing how different forms of music have played a role in fostering unity also serving as a tool for nation building and curbing societal instability. The Federal Government of Nigeria has adopted education as an instrument par excellence for effecting national development (NPE: 5). African music education is among the recommended tools needed for effecting and achieving this goals. African music has broad-spectrum application-capable of being used for emotional expression, entertainment, communication, education, correction, social assimilation, aesthetic expression and vocational enterprises. African music therefore, serves as an efficient vehicle in promoting socio-economic activities capable of inducing national development. It therefore concluded that African music is a dynamic and multifaceted force that contributes to the development of a country in cultural, social, economic, and individual dimensions. Its ability to foster unity, creativity, and a sense of identity makes it an invaluable asset to any society.

Key words: African Music, Nation Building, Curbing, Society, Instability.

Introduction

Human beings have the burning desire to create, whatever it may be and however tiny or grand it looks. The interaction with sound is unavoidable, either to make it or take pleasure in it. Individuals have always found music significant in their lives, whether for amusement in listening, the emotional response, performing, or creating music. This is no different for classical music or contemporary concert music. Both music have immense worth for our society, likewise a veritable tool for nation building and curbing societal instability; however, the problem human encounter in this field is that this music is little known and hence underappreciated. As a music scholar, it is my responsibility that others can be motivated to learn to enjoy the art for which I have utter passion.

Indeed, there is no better way to measure how far society has evolved but through music. It has, for instance, been used to express emotions when words seem not to be enough. Advocacy and social change are some of the ways music can be used in nation building and curb societal instability in Nigeria. For example, one good song with a message can bring a point more deeply to more people than a thousand rallies.

No doubt, music has played great roles in the Biblical and social affairs of mankind. David played music with psaltery, harp, cymbals and trumpets to praise the Almighty God and to ask for forgiveness of his sins (1 Chronicles 13:8). He also played music for King Saul in times of his distress (1 Samuel 16:23). It is a fact that, when a baby is born, his or her mother's lullaby lures the baby to sleep.

Music is also more than the groovy beats being created by the magic fingers of Davido, the renditions of the music maestro, Chief Stephen Osadebe, as well as other musical artists that had used it to express their feelings or criticize the ills of the society.

Moreover, artistes are musical town criers who satirize social foibles in order to make human society and living worthwhile. Fela Anikulapo Kuti, through his music, was criticizing military governments in Nigeria. Fela used music to

comment on the socio-political and economic climate in Nigeria. His messages opened the eyes of Nigerians on the various ills plaguing the society then.

Music also aid in ideological change and mass orientation and re-orientation. Ideological change and music are like two hearts in one beat. They beat as fast as the drums in the jungles of Africa. Many songs have helped to put some core national issues in the front burner of national discuss and have helped in creating a paradigm shift in the country. These artist, with their songs, have contributed immensely to national growth and unity among the people thereby curbing instability in the society. As the country celebrates its 64th anniversary, IVORY UKONU and ADEDOLAPO BALIKIS chronicle some classic songs composed to celebrate and unify citizens.

In lieu of the above, every October 1 is a significant day in the history of Nigeria. It is a day set aside each year to celebrate Nigeria's independence from British colonial rule. Nigeria officially became a politically independent country on October 1, 1960. Besides being blessed with diverse natural resources, Nigeria is home to an estimated 350 ethnic nationalities, cultures, and indigenous languages, making it a great nation with diverse strengths. Nigeria is also blessed with many talented artiste who have recorded and released songs that celebrate the nation in an attempt to unifying the citizenry. Music legend, Onyeka Onwenu is very passionate about the unity of Nigeria. She has to her credit many Nigerian-themed songs, including One Love Keep Us Together and Unity Song among others. These songs emphasise the theme of love and unity in a world of struggle and dreams of staying alive (Ukonu, 2022).

Before looking at this positive aspect of music as a tool for nation building, let us consider the instability rocking the Nigerian states in recent time. The diversity could be a national strength for the country, but it is being accentuated as an advantage for a group of individuals, at the expense of the general welfare of the people. Although control over spoils from the political economy may be the ultimate motivating force for fighting and violence in Nigeria, the splits occur along many identifiable cultural and regional lines over power and distribution of public resources (Bouchat, 2013).

Tactically, progressive efforts are made towards curbing societal instability in Nigeria with a song titled "Nigeria My Beloved Country". This song by Funmi Adams was a household anthem in the 1980s. Adams who seems to have vanished from the Nigerian music scene was popular during this period. Her songs were aimed at inculcating the positive values of culture in young Nigerian children. She also sang about Nigeria in All We Need Is Love (Ukonu, 2022).

Scope and Methodology

This research paper will employ a multi-disciplinary approach, drawing upon historical records, ethnographic studies, and cultural analyses. It will delve into the historical evolution of music in Nigeria, showcasing how different forms of music have played a role in fostering unity and curbing societal instability. Furthermore, the paper will examine case studies and examples of music's impact on promoting national integration. It will also explore how music serves as a mirror reflecting the complexities of Nigerian nationality.

Significance of African Music

Music serves as a universal language that transcends cultural and language barriers, bringing people together, fostering a sense of unity and curbing societal instability. It has the power to evoke emotions, bond individuals and communities, and promote social coherence. Every problem in the world has a root cause, according to Ali (2013) asserted that societal instability in any nation constitute threat to lives and properties, hinder business activities and discourage local and foreign investors which invariably slow down economic growth and development. Nigeria in recent times has recorded unprecedented security challenges such as Boko Haram Terrorists (BHTs) attacks, militancy, armed robbery, banditry, kidnapping for ransom, Fulani-Herders farmers clashes, cultism among other social vices.

These deviations manifest themselves in various ways and colours over time and under various circumstances. A peaceful country or individual does not exist. To bring peace, wars are fought, people are killed, and cultures are destroyed to preserve cultures. There are still more conflicts and more killings as a result of each

conflict. No amount of wealth, political influence, or military might will be sufficient to bring about world peace (Jega, 2002).

African musical concerts were a remarkable example of nation building for Ali (2013), as Christian and Muslim performers were seated next to each other. For him, true music can only be formed when life is reduced to a single tune and a single beat; he constantly repeats this sentiment. He was always emphatic that music is made a compulsory subject in schools.

African music is regarded as a sacred and powerful art form in a religious gathering, and the need to revitalize this art form, the state, and the nation was reinforced. If we take a broad interpretation of music, that is, if we understand it as union, concord, and cooperation, then we can conclude that it is needed in no field of life. As a result, if many more people send their children to music classes, they will be contributing to national elevation. African music must be a part of our national awakening effort.

In other words, we may no longer have to strive if children grow up in their natural innocence: we may be able to live in a world governed by love and harmony. And African music is without a doubt a weapon that can be used to reach this lofty goal. He advocated for making African music a compulsory subject in schools because he considered it a constructive activity that uplifts the soul and leaves no place for societal differences or enmity (Ali, 2013).

Therefore, we live in a world governed by love and peace. And African music is unquestionably a tool that may be used to achieve this great goal. Because he saw African music as a constructive activity that uplifts the soul and leaves no room for social divisions or hostility, he recommended making it a compulsory subject in our schools.

Some Nigerian artists, on the other hand, have developed works of art based on the national patriotism. With these compositions, the country has become much more unified and united together as a whole. Most Nigerian citizens adore the songs and other musical creations created by Nigerian musicians. The songs and

compositions of "One Love Keep Us Together" by Onyeka Onwenu and "Nigeria Go Survive" by Veno Marioghae-Mbanefo are incredibly popular and loved by Nigeria citizens. As a result, music plays a critical role in fostering national cohesion.

The Role African Music Play in Nation Building in Nigeria

The role African music play in nation building cannot be underestimated in that African music could be term as the 'mouth-piece' of the nation because; African music does not only educate, entertain and inform, it also does the following:

- African music preaches Freedom and Need for a democratic society.
- African music preaches Justice and Equality in our society.
- African music preaches Unity in our societies.

African music plays a pivotal role in facilitating national integration and cultivating a sense of cohesion among the various populace of Nigeria. It serves as the primary means of communication for the human spirit. The enjoyment derived from music is one of the most valuable presents we can bestow upon ourselves. It exerts a significant influence on the human psyche. The music's wonderful pulse harmonises frictional and passionate ideas and sentiments. The significance of music in fostering national cohesion is immeasurable. The national anthem of Nigeria is an aesthetically pleasing composition that serves the purpose of fostering unity within the country.

Collectively, individuals from many religious beliefs, cultural backgrounds, and linguistic groups engage in singing the song. This tends to help bring the country closer together. Music, without even a doubt, is the closest comparison to the infinite and the essence of things since it is entirely dependent on the ethereal vehicle. African music enhances and harmonises emotions. It educates the soul by purifying and maintaining its self-controlled, profound, harmonious motions. Learning a great art like music calms emotions. African music is subtle and delicate, and it makes mental movement complex and delicate.

This research study examines African music's role in national integration. African music, which transcends language and region, has always promoted togetherness,

harmony, and cultural expression. It explore the historical foundations, cultural variety, and varied significance of music in shaping Nigerian identity in this study. Throughout history, Nigeria have been faced by many crises before getting to the present stage. The founding fathers of Nigeria were patriotic in their aspiration to bring together Nigerians of all stripes to demand independence from British colonial master. The verse in the national pledge "The labour of our heroes past shall never be in vain… One nation bound in freedom, peace and unity". It connotes one indivisible entity to harness peace and unity in the nation (Saheed, 2015).

The Importance of African Music in the Development of a Country

African music encourages individuals along the path of Truth and Illumination. Due to its ability to fulfill purposes beyond entertainment, education, and information, music might function as the propaganda apparatus of a nation. It expresses our society's inherent desire for liberty and democratic principles. African music advocates for the imperative of justice and equality in our society. Both individuals and the nation are educated via African music to cultivate self-sufficiency and resilience. Individuals with a background in African music, whether via official education or self-study, contribute taxes to authorised entities, who then allocate these funds for various purposes. To prevent the decline of society, it is crucial to acknowledge the significance of African music in fostering sound mental and emotional well-being in individuals (Banisudha, 2024).

African music plays a crucial role in the development of a country, contributing to various aspects of society, culture, and economy. Here are several ways in which music is important for the development of a country. African music is a powerful expression of cultural identity. It reflects the unique history, traditions, and values of a community or nation. Preserving and promoting traditional music helps maintain a sense of cultural heritage, fostering pride and unity among the people. Music can bring people together.

Banisudha, (2024), states that festivals, concerts, and musical events provide opportunities for communities to gather and celebrate shared cultural experiences. Shared musical experiences can foster a sense of belonging and social cohesion,

transcending differences and promoting understanding among diverse groups within a country. African music education enhances cognitive abilities, including memory, attention, and problem-solving skills. It has a positive impact on academic performance, especially in subjects like mathematics and language.

Exposure to a variety of musical genres can broaden individuals' perspectives and contribute to a well-rounded education. The music industry can be a significant contributor to a country's economy. This includes revenue from music production, distribution, concerts, and related businesses. Music tourism, where people travel to attend concerts and music festivals, can also boost local economies and create job opportunities. A thriving music industry contributes to the overall creative sector of a country. This includes not only musicians but also producers, engineers, designers, and other professionals (Banisudha, 2024).

According to Banisudha, (2024), the innovative nature of music often spills over into other creative industries, fostering a culture of creativity and innovation. Successful African music exports can enhance a country's global influence and soft power. Icons from a nation's African music scene can become cultural ambassadors, shaping perceptions of that country on the international stage. It can be a universal language that transcends linguistic and cultural barriers, facilitating international communication and understanding. Music has a profound impact on individual well-being, providing emotional expression, stress relief, and a means of coping with challenges. A culturally rich musical environment contributes to the overall happiness and mental health of a population.

Conclusion

African music is one of the aspects that encourage and enhance nation building and curbing societal instability. It's easy to observe from the instances provided above that African music serves as a critical link in the process of nation building, fostering unity and abating instability in the society. It can be used to reflect current social issues in many ways, for example, musicians and songwriters can create songs that address social issues, such as racism, poverty, climate change, and inequality.

African music can also be used to inspire people to take action and create change. African music, as a cultural right, may aid in the promotion and protection of other human rights. It can help in the healing process, dismantling walls and boundaries, reconciliation, and education. Around the world, music is being used as a vehicle for social change and bringing communities together. This study affirms that music has the power to address national challenges. The truth of its efficacy or success can never be disconnected from man's day-to-day existential desires, such as peace, unity, or societal stability, which are the most obvious purposes and uses.

In summary, music is a dynamic and multifaceted force that contributes to the development of a country in cultural, social, economic, and individual dimensions. Its ability to foster unity, creativity, and a sense of identity makes it an invaluable asset to any society.

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