Perception of Music as a Career Choice among Youths in Delta State, Nigeria

By

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Abstract

This study explores how young people in Delta State perceive music as a career option, examining social, cultural, and economic factors that influence their aspirations. Using a descriptive survey design complemented by thematic analysis, data were collected from 400 respondents aged 15–35 years across selected Local Government Areas. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, and percentage), while qualitative responses were subjected to thematic interpretation. Results revealed a generally positive attitude towards music as a career, with 68% of respondents expressing high interest. However, persistent challenges such as parental discouragement, financial constraints, and limited institutional support hinder career pursuit. The study underscores the need for strategic policy interventions, inclusive education, and stakeholder collaboration to strengthen music as a viable profession.

Keywords: Youth perception, Music industry, Career choice, Delta State, Creative economy

Introduction

Globally, music has evolved from a form of artistic expression to a powerful economic sector driving innovation and youth employment (UNESCO, 2022). The

creative industries, including music, film, and digital arts, contribute significantly to global GDP and provide alternative employment pathways for young people (ILO, 2023). Across Africa, the rise of digital media has transformed music into a lucrative career, bridging cultural identity and global commerce.

In Nigeria, the music industry has experienced rapid internationalisation, propelled by artists such as Burna Boy, Tiwa Savage, and Wizkid, whose global successes have positioned the country as the cultural heartbeat of Africa (Adesanya, 2022). Despite these achievements, many Nigerian youths remain constrained by cultural expectations and limited institutional support when choosing music as a career (Ogunyemi, 2023).

Delta State, renowned for its cultural diversity and artistic vibrancy, offers a compelling context for investigating how youths perceive music as a career. Understanding these perceptions is vital in addressing unemployment, promoting cultural innovation, and supporting inclusive youth empowerment policies.

Problem of the Study

Despite Nigeria's global prominence in the music scene, many young people in Delta State encounter societal and institutional discouragement in pursuing music professionally (Chukwuemeka & Adebayo, 2021). Cultural stereotypes often classify music as a leisure activity rather than a legitimate occupation, while inadequate policy frameworks and lack of institutional funding hinder its development (Aina, 2022). The disparity between youth interest in music and its social acceptance as a viable career underscores the need for empirical investigation.

Justification of the Study

This study provides insight into how Delta youths conceptualise music as a career. It contributes to academic discourse on youth empowerment, labour market diversification, and creative economy development. Findings will guide policymakers, educators, and cultural stakeholders in designing supportive frameworks for nurturing musical talent and addressing youth unemployment.

Objectives of the Study

To examine the perception of music as a career choice among youths in Delta State, Nigeria.

Specific Objectives:

1. To investigate the level of youth interest in pursuing music as a career.
2. To identify social, cultural, and economic factors influencing perceptions of music.
3. To examine the role of family, peers, and education in shaping career decisions.
4. To determine challenges faced by youths interested in music careers.
5. To propose recommendations for promoting music as a sustainable career option.

Literature Review

Concept of Career Choice and Youth Career Development

Career choice is influenced by multiple factors including personality, education, family expectations, and socio-economic conditions (Super, 1990; Savickas, 2021). Theories such as Super's Career Development Theory and the Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent & Brown, 2021) explain how individuals form vocational identities based on self-efficacy, life stage, and environmental influences.

Music as a Career: Global and Nigerian Perspectives

Internationally, music is recognised as both a cultural product and an economic enterprise (Smith & Harris, 2021). In Nigeria, however, societal values have long favoured professions like law, medicine, and engineering over creative careers (Okoye & Eze, 2021). Nonetheless, technological innovations such as streaming platforms and digital distribution have expanded the scope for music entrepreneurship (Eke, 2023).

Youth Perception and Social Attitudes

Empirical studies reveal that Nigerian youths increasingly view music as a viable career, but familial and religious constraints often discourage them (Ajayi & Nwosu, 2022). Delta State, with its strong ethnic diversity and rich musical

traditions, presents an interesting case for studying how modernity interacts with traditional values in career decisions.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts **Super's Career Development Theory** and **Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)** as theoretical anchors. Super's model emphasises the evolving self-concept in vocational choice, while SCCT (Lent et al., 2002; updated by Nauta, 2022) focuses on how social context, learning experiences, and perceived barriers influence career intentions.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive survey design integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Population and Sample Size

The population comprised youths aged 15–35 years across Delta State. Using Yamane's (1967) formula, a sample of **400 respondents** was drawn from six Local Government Areas (LGAs) using stratified random sampling.

Instrumentation

A **structured questionnaire** was used to gather quantitative data, while **semi-structured interviews** provided qualitative insights. The questionnaire covered four domains: interest in music, influencing factors, family and peer impact, and perceived challenges.

Validity and Reliability

The instruments were validated through expert review and pilot-tested on 30 youths outside the study area. A Cronbach's alpha value of **0.83** indicated high reliability.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using **descriptive statistics** (mean, frequency, and percentage) with SPSS version 26, while qualitative data were analysed using

thematic analysis, identifying patterns and emerging narratives from participants' open-ended responses.

Study Area

Delta State, located in Nigeria's South-South geopolitical zone, has a population of over 5 million people and a rich cultural heritage. The state's musical culture spans traditional and modern genres, making it a regional hub for entertainment.

Results and Data Analysis

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Out of 400 distributed questionnaires, 372 were validly returned, representing a **93% response rate**. Of these, **54% were male** and **46% female**. The majority (61%) were aged **20–30 years**, while 27% were **31–35 years** and 12% below 20 years. Most respondents (65%) had tertiary education, and 52% were unemployed or underemployed.

Youths' Level of Interest in Music as a Career

Table 1 presents respondents' interest levels in music.

Level of Interest	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very High	172	46.2
High	97	26.1
Moderate	54	14.5
Low	31	8.3
Very Low	18	4.9
Total	**372**	**100**

Mean = 4.02 (SD = 0.84)

This mean value (4.02) indicates that most respondents have a **strong interest** in pursuing music as a career. Qualitative responses reinforced this, with one participant stating:

"Music is my passion, and I believe it can change my life if given the chance."

Factors Influencing Youths' Perception of Music

Respondents were asked to rate the influence of key factors on their career perception (5 = Very High, 1 = Very Low).

Factor	Mean	Rank
Parental support	4.18	1
Financial resources	4.05	2
Peer influence	3.88	3
Cultural expectations	3.64	4
Educational exposure	3.21	5

Parental support emerged as the **most influential factor**, confirming previous research that family attitudes shape vocational aspirations (Ajayi & Nwosu, 2022). Thematic analysis indicated that some parents view music as "unstable" or "immoral," discouraging youth involvement.

Influence of Family, Peers, and Education

Approximately **56%** of respondents reported **low parental support**, while **72%** acknowledged **peer encouragement**. Only **31%** had access to formal music education, reflecting the poor integration of creative subjects in schools. One respondent observed:

"Our schools don't take music seriously; if they did, more of us would see it as a real career."

Challenges Facing Youths in Music Career Pursuit

The major challenges identified included:

- **Financial barriers** (78%)
- **Lack of institutional support** (65%)
- **Societal stereotypes** (61%)
- **Limited access to mentorship/training** (58%)

These findings correspond with Aina (2022), who highlighted weak institutional frameworks as a key impediment to creative entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Responses

Thematic analysis revealed three dominant themes:

1. **Societal Stigma and Misconception:** Music is perceived as a hobby rather than a career.
2. **Financial and Structural Barriers:** Absence of funding, inadequate recording studios, and lack of local music academies.
3. **Emerging Opportunities:** Digital platforms and social media now enable youths to reach global audiences.

These qualitative insights demonstrate the dual reality of aspiration and constraint shaping youth engagement in music.

Discussion of Findings

The results affirm that interest in music among Delta youths is high, yet societal and structural factors impede professional pursuit. The predominance of parental influence aligns with **Social Cognitive Career Theory**, which emphasises environmental reinforcement and self-efficacy (Lent & Brown, 2021). Moreover, the mean scores reveal that while music is increasingly valued as a creative outlet, it lacks institutional legitimacy as a profession. These outcomes mirror broader Nigerian findings where creative ambitions often clash with traditional expectations (Ogunyemi, 2023).

Conclusion

The study concludes that youths in Delta State perceive music as a viable and fulfilling career, but face entrenched socio-cultural and financial barriers. Despite enthusiasm, the absence of educational structures and policy support constrains career development in music. With targeted interventions, music could become a strategic tool for youth empowerment and economic diversification in Nigeria.

Recommendations

1. **Policy Support:** The government should enact cultural policies that fund and institutionalise music as a career path.
2. **Educational Reform:** Music education should be embedded in school curricula and supported through talent development programmes.
3. **Parental Sensitisation:** Public campaigns should enlighten parents on the economic value of creative careers.

4. **Infrastructure Development:** Establishment of music academies and digital recording hubs in Delta State.
5. **Private Sector Collaboration:** Encourage record labels and corporate bodies to invest in youth music initiatives.

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