

Retracing African Moral Values and Balancing Afro-Pop Music

Tairu, Abiodun Olukayode¹, Olayemi Oluwakemi Titilola (*Ph.D*)² and Maraiyesa, Ayokunle O.³

Abstract

This study examines the complex relationship between Afro Pop music and traditional African moral values. Through a critical analysis of lyrics, music videos, and artist interviews, this research investigates how Afro-Pop's increasing commercialization and global influence affect its representation of African cultural norms. The study combines a mixed-methods approach with content analysis and surveys to interrogate the data samples of 16 collected Afro-Pop songs. A riveting exposition of respect and modesty versus vulgarity and profanity was juxtaposed to reposition and validate the status of African morality through the festering of Afro Pop Music. The study contributes to the ongoing debates on cultural globalisation, African identity, and the role of music in shaping moral values.

Keywords: Nigerian Afro Pop Music, Africa, Moral Values

Introduction

Afro-Pop music has become a global phenomenon, captivating audiences with its infectious beats and catchy melodies. However, beneath its rhythmic surface lies a complex web of cultural, social, and moral dynamics. As Afro-Pop's influence extends beyond Nigeria's borders, questions arise regarding its representation of traditional African moral values. African music has served as a vessel for cultural expression, storytelling, and moral guidance for decades. However, the increasing commercialisation of Afro-Pop raises concerns about the potential erosion of cultural authenticity and moral integrity. This tension sparks an essential inquiry: What happens when the pursuit of global appeal compromises the very values that

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1. tairuabiodunolukayode@gmail.com
 2. Department of English, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Nigeria; kemi.olayemi@oouagoiwoye.edu.ng
 3. Aletheia University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria; Ayokunle.Maraiyesa@aletheiauniversity.edu.ng

define African identity? This study explores the intricate relationship between Nigerian Afro Pop music and African moral values, navigating the intersections of cultural heritage, commercial pressures, and artistic expression.

Methodology

Considering a mixed methodology for this work, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was experimented on pupils and secondary school students, respectively. This experiment was carried out randomly in Ogun State among pupils and students within the age bracket of six and fifteen years to verify what is easy for them to memorise: Academic Literary Poems or Afro-music lyrics. The following Afro music lyrics under sample 1 to 16 were tested. The results show that both the pupils and the students find memorising and singing the Afro music lyrics easier than memorising and reading poems. They conveniently mention the names of the music artists, the titles of albums and singles each of the song artists released, and the years the songs were released. Therefore, there is a need to call out Nigerian students on the fact that reading culture is gradually being replaced by woke Afro-music lyrics which fill up their brains.

Discussion

African Didactics and Moral Values

Many African poems teach morals, edify social norms and values, promote and preserve our cultural heritage. The Anthology of African Poetry, annotated by K.E Senanu, advocated for the freedom of the black race. Woke Afro-pop music lyrics on the other hand, desecrated and violated the piety and virtues inherent in the African culture, tenets and precepts. For instance, in **Sample 1**: Simi ft Falz: *Mind your Business*

You know that girl with 20k followers on IG na
Dat girl that is always shaking her bum bum dat is always doing oh keep popping...
(Pidgin)

Do you know the girl with 20k followers on Instagram?
She is fond of shaking her back side, while shouting keep popping. (English)

In the *lines* above, if only what is left for an African lady is to shake her bum bum naked or appear nude on Instagram in order to have followers and make money, then it is a big shame and slap on what African culture has to say on decency, mode of dressing, modesty and the like.

In **Sample 2**: Rema: *Bad Commando*

Bad man dem know

Dem know say I be bad commando (pidgin)

People know me as a bad human being. (English)

The position of African concepts of having a good name is eroded and dragged in the mud here if an African child is proudly saying or is proud to say that he is *terrible*. An average African child is expected to bear and strive to keep a good name. He has dual responsibility to maintain and preserve his father's or family name, make his own name, and ensure he protects the good name he has made for himself. But when a new culture says something is *bad* or calls something *bad* where or when in actual fact, they mean to say good, it becomes a cultural problem. Take for instance a brilliant boy who scored 100% in Mathematics is nicknamed or labeled *the baddest boy* even when he has done something good and achieved something great. This type of speech culture is not found in African traditional culture and does not promote our cultural heritage. But when the African-Nigerian Afro pop artiste Davido has named himself *baddest boy* even when everyone knows that he is actually doing good for himself, there will be a gradual cultural shift and coinages of rough, vulgar words that will be naturally acculturated into African Modern Language as a result of contact with Afro pop music.

In **Sample 3**: Asake's *Terminator*

My banana, oh my bana'

Come chop my bana'

Sh'oni power?

B'oni, kowa

Elemi l'oma last (Pidgin & native language)

If you are sexually strong and you know it,

Come and let's have sex. (English)

In lines above, The African traditional culture is against all forms of sexual immorality chiefly in practice or in behaviour, in thinking or in words. Also, the Christian ethos of chastity preaches to flee from every appearance of evil, with zero tolerance for sexual immoralities, fornication, pre-marital sex, prostitution, and so on. Therefore, what Asake's *Terminator* is bringing to the table of culture and practice, all in the name of woke pop music is to be criticized. The lyric of the song is practically inviting people to come to the sex table to come and eat a particular type of *banana* which metaphorically depicted a *dick* and to be vulgar a *penis*. The underlying implication or the interpretation of this could not be anything other than *sex*.

In **Sample 4:** Teni's *Billionaire*

Iyalaya anybody oh, anybody oh yeah
Otedola o lori meji oh, lori meji oh yeah
I wanna be a billionaire, billionaire yeah yeah. (Pidgin & native language)

Everyone becomes a bastard once I become a billionaire,
Otedola has no double head. (English)

An average African child is taught respect for the elderly. The usage of abusive words is not encouraged at all but it turned out to be a style in Teni's *Billionaire* where and when she said *iyalaya anybody* all in the name of song and catchy lyrics. Also, an average child is taught to learn how to grow and run his own race without paying attention to distractions such as money and position. He is taught to be honest and show contentment and satisfaction not to talk of uneven comparison. This is where the concept of destiny comes in *Ori, Kadara* and *Ayanmo*. But where Teni says *Otedola o lori meji ooo* (*Otedola has no double head*) she is already going against and contradicting these good virtues even though when she is trying to inspire herself and other people not to give in to poverty but strive to be rich like Otedola in her song.

Sample 5: Tiwa Savage's *All Over*

And if you tell me say make I bend low (bend low, bend low)
I no go waste time but to do like so (bend low, bend low)
Iba di mi jo ibadi mi jo disco
This loving loving no be chop and go. (Pidgin & native language)

Just tell me to position for sex and I am ready straight away. (English)

Sample 5 shows the clear picture of the evil and dirtiness inherent in Afro pop music and how modern African child is lured into committing sexual havoc which contradicts African traditional tenets. For instance, the lyrics from Tiwa Savage's *All Over* present an African lady who will not say no to clubbing and partying and who will not say no to pre-marital sex or allowing a man to have canal knowledge of her even right at the club as the party goes on, so long the man will not run away later.

In **sample 6,** Davido's *Sweet in the middle*

You can find me in the middle
I go die for dey middle cause you go
Sweeter for middle you know you know you know
Come to the middle you know you know you know
Make I kiss am for middle you know you know you know
After party you can share my bed
Gave me the pussy came I'm such a G

Dick so good she don't wanna leave baddest. (Pidgin)

Let me have your private part located in the middle of your body,

That middle part is sweet, let me kiss it,

And let's have sex after the party.

I am a bad guy with bad dick and trust you will like it. (English)

In *lines* above, the level of vulgarity inherent in Afro pop music is greatly felt as words such as *pussy*, *dick*, are grossly and apparently mentioned without reservations. Davido's nickname *baddest* is also clearly pronounced. Meanwhile, *sweet in the middle* in the lyrics, is a metaphor for *pussy*, as the women sexual organ is located in the middle of human body. Vulgarity does not promote and portray African cultural heritage as blatantly used lavishly here in Davido's song. An average African child would be corrupted by the lyrics of this song.

Sample 7, DJ Kaywise ft Olamide in *See Mary See Jesus*

Hennessy ti wole

See Jesus

See Mary see Jesus

Alert ti wole

See Jesus

See Mary see Jesus

Awon tiyin ti yagbe sinu Church

You no believe me you no believe Jesus

In Sample 7, DJ Kaywise ft Olamide in *See Mary See Jesus* is a pejorative and a deliberate mockery of the holy names; Mary and Jesus to bring ridicule to Christianity. The weaving in of those holy names into pop music without blinking an eye shows the desperation of African pop music artistes in looking for lyrics so long there is beat to cover up and embellish the song which will conceal their irreverences, errors and vulgarity. The climax of the insensibility in the Afro pop lyrics as questioning and critiquing the purpose and intention of the 'woke songs' and its impact on average listener within the African setting is the fact that the song artiste said and I quote: Your fans have defecated in the church. *Awon tiyin ti yagbe sinu Church*.

Sample 8, Naira Marley: *Put a*

Sometimes when I open Instagram is bum I see

Nigbami ti'n ba shi Insta (IG) idi ma ni

Different sizes and types of bum

Idi araba, idi oro, idi abajo, idi arere, Idi ganlebe, idimu

Away with your dirty bum

Gbe'di jor t'ani idi ofo (t'ani idi ofo)

Ha! you will not sleep
Ah! E ni sun
Do not stroke the bum and forget to caress the nipple
Ma lo te idi gbabe nipple, (gbabe nipple)
Baby girl be strong to shoot your bum and not run away
Ye oh baby, ma 'sa gbori duro yo 'di fun (yo 'di fun)

In Sample 8, one wonders how morally bankrupt many Afro pop music artists can be and also imagine the damage their lyrics have caused the African society. The cultural implication of this is that these profane songs are with us and with our children and are not far from their mouths. Is it possible to sing a song and not act the song? A critical look at the contents of Naira Marley's song in sample 8 above has spoken loudly enough that good morals, social norms and African cultural values are gradually being pushed to extinction without remedy through the Afro-pop lyrics engraved in African child brains.

Sample 9 Magnito ft Patoranking: *As I get Money Ehn*

If I Get Money Ehn (Remix) Lyrics
As i get money ehn, i con start to enjoy
I open my company, all my village people na im i employ
Everybody wey know me before come dey call me oga bomboy
I marry my girlfriend e no reach two weeks na im she born boy
As i get money ehn, i sign big footballers
I sign mikel obi i no ask am how much, i paid him in dollars
There is nothing money cannot do, i make messi goalkeeper for gunners
If i write exam i no dey bother again, i dont care if i come last
As i get money ehn, i call my landlord
I tãll am to tell me the cost of his propãrty just in one word
As i get my own money i begin to diet
I want to become the next metusela am not ready to die yet
A hundred and fifty years is not too much and thats my target

The bad influence money has on an average African young person and the reason many of them want to get rich quick is projected in the lines above. The reason is not far-fetched, they want to oppress, show off, and spend lavishly. If not, how is it possible for him to employ all his village people into his own company? The entire village includes all the elders and members of his family that raised him as a child in the village. The fact that he said people who did not know him before will start to call him oga bomboy, shows how self-conceited, self-indulgent he would become and the subsequent pride that will follow. His behaviour as a sexual pervert is revealed when he said that he would get married to his girlfriend and the latter would bring

forth a child barely two weeks after marriage. This suggests that he would have had carnal knowledge of his girlfriend before getting married to her. This is a case of pre-marital sex that negates ethos of chastity in African traditional marriage rite. In Africa, it is forbidden for a young man to have carnal knowledge of his would-be wife before the night of their nuptial.

If i write exam i no dey bother again, i dont care if i come last

The above line shows that an average young person no longer has interest in academics; all that matters is to get money and spend it lavishly. This opinion of the young folk and their lackadaisical attitude to study is always not in tandem with the interest of their parents. It is always the wish of the parents to send their children to school or learn a trade and become successful but many of these young ones do not bother whether they fail or pass an examination according to the excerpt above.

There is nothing money cannot do, i make messi goalkeeper for gunners

The above line indicates that oppression is the major reason for becoming wealthy. Everyone knows that Lionel Messi is the Greatest of all Time (GOAT) Barcelona football striker. How he would be converted into becoming a goalkeeper again even for average football club like Arsenal not even Barcelona can only be achieved through money if possible anyway and no other reason could justify this if not oppression.

*As i get money ehn, i call my landlord
I táll am to tell me the cost of his propâty just in one word*

The climax of his self-conceited and the inadvertent hubris and pride is exhibited in the lines above. His landlord has once been the one who provided him with shelter when he was a poor man, now, that same man he wants to ridicule and treat with disrespect and contempt. African culture does not support ingratitude or ungratefulness.

*I want to become the next metusela am not ready to die yet
A hundred and fifty years is not too much and that's my target*

His inordinate ambition and selfish interest is revealed in the lines above. He has even forgotten that no man can through anxiety add a day to the number of years he would spend on earth. Or can I say that he dare bargain for the number of years he is to spend on earth or bribe death with money? This is a contradiction to African cultural and traditional beliefs, as Olodumare and the gods dictate when to be born and when to die. African young folk can only be led astray if they follow the philosophy of these woke Afro pop music artistes.

Sample 10 Davido: *Owo ni koko*

And if you dance like Raymond o
Omo nye ko kan wa o owo ni ko ko

Ma lo nogere owo ni ko ko
Ma lo suwegbe

In the lines above, much emphasis is placed on money as the only thing that can be so important in whatever one does or tries to get. While African proverbs and aphorism in conjunctions with religion ethos believe that love of money is the root of all evil and a good name is better than riches and horses, lyrics from Davido Owo ni koko maintain an opposite view and make his audience see money as the ultimate of any life pursuit. This shared belief, has the tendency to lead African young ones who are Davido's fans astray from the old precepts and as a result causing a cultural shift from focusing on virtue to pursuing money.

Sample 11 Seyi Vibe: *Hat Trick*

Money dey, leave matter
Tems, ara sán ta'bi 'di ' kÍjá

Seyi Vibe just as Davido also echoes the importance of money in any matter. They meant that one can do anything and anything is possible so long money is involved. Also the use of vulgar lines resonated throughout Seyi Vibe lyrics many of which depict sex and immorality in different shades and forms. Sad enough, artiste like Seyi Vibe has become the heartthrob of many African young folk, most especially in South-West Nigeria where his lyrics are widespread and not far from the mouth of any woke youth.

Sample 12 Seyi Vibe: *Chance*

Pick one, pick two, check up
Straight winning, no handicap, win up
When dem ah sleep off, me I dey up

In lines above, gambling, gaming and betting are encouraged. Meanwhile, African culture encourages hard-work and diligence. An average young person in Africa of today does not believe in working hard before earning money. They prefer to stake the little money given to them by their parents on betting and gaming or gamble with the properties bequeathed unto them by their progenitors. This became possible because song artiste such as Seyi Vibe is their role model and they do his biddings as commanded by his lyrics.

Sample 13 Tiwa Savage: *49-99*

Waiting for Danfo, waiting for Uber and Okada
Ìmí no be so me I want to live o
I got to get the dollar, ko kunle'

In sample 13, Tiwa Savage wants to get plenty of dollars that will fill a house and so she will not have to wait for Danfo, Uber, Okada, or use any means of local transportation. The

lines sound like a prayer but on closer examination one would see the hidden inordinate ambition embedded and embellished in her lyrics. This is because even the whites who own dollars do not get or have it that much to the extent that anyone will have it filled up a house. This is the type of music available in the name of Afro pop music which has the tendency to pollute and adulterate the minds of an African child and probably lead them astray. The lyrics most of the time present life as bed of roses and filled with debaucheries which are not so according to African cultural practices.

Sample 14: DJ Enimoney ft Olamide, Kizz Daniel, LK Kuddy & Kranium:
Send Her Money

As i dey shaa the girl, with my kondo She dey shout abeg
As I was fucking the girl with my dick, she was shouting to take it easy
She dey tell me, she wanna go to the bed
She wanna bend low, like the back of my benz
Shaa mi...

And back (butty/bum) i no dey show no mercy
Butty gat me screaming 'lord have mercy'

In the lines above, immorality is well pronounced as metaphors such as shaa and kondo which depict fuck and dick respectively, are used in the lyrics. Again, nothing tells us in the lines that the sexual escapades that happened are done by legally married couples because no married man will refer to his wife in African culture as 'the girl' as seen in the lines, but what we have in the lines is a representation of a mere hook up and hang out which is not supported by African traditional culture. The fact that the name of God is called or weaved into immorality 'Lord have mercy' as seen in the lines, shows a complete loss of soul into perdition and eternal damnation all in the name of music. The screaming of 'Lord have mercy' is not 'a sincere call to be saved' from the immoral act but serves as exclamation to savour and enjoy the sweetness of the butty while having sex with a wrong person or while in the immoral business.

Sample 15: Mr P. ft Niniola: *One More Night*

You say I be your tomato
Wanna see me tomorrow
Give me one more night
I know you're high and wanna get down tonight
You sipping Henne in the club and it feels so right
So we can get down at the back of the club tonight
'Cause I just want to handle you

In the lines above, the sipping of Hennessy depicts that sexual immorality becomes easy with taking of liquor. The fact that the musician claims that it is so right to sip Henne in the club is an indicator that probably an average young person may be misled or confused as to which is right or wrong through the music they listen to. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the type of music one listens to defines or controls or has impact or shapes ones behaviour and beliefs.

Findings

1. Afro Pop lyrics frequently prioritise individualism over communal values.
2. Music videos often objectify women, contradicting African norms of respect and modesty.
3. Globalisation has led to the homogenization of African cultural identity.
4. Afro Pop's influence on African youth may erode traditional moral values.
5. Commercial pressures threaten the authenticity of African cultural expression.

Conclusion

The intersection of Nigerian Afro Pop music and African moral values reveals a complex dynamics of cultural preservation, commercial pressures, and artistic expression. This study has demonstrated that Afro Pop's global appeal often comes at the costs of compromised moral integrity, as artists navigate the tension between cultural authenticity and commercial viability. Nigerian Afro Pop music's global success presents an opportunity for cultural exchange and representation. However, this study underscores the importance of preserving African moral values in the face of commercialization. By acknowledging these complexities, we can foster a more nuanced understanding of Afro Pop's impact on African identity and moral fabric. As Afro Pop continues to shape African cultural narratives, it is essential to prioritise moral responsibility, cultural authenticity, and artistic integrity. By doing so, we can ensure that the rhythms of Afro Pop resonate with the heart of African values.

Recommendations

1. The music industry must balance economic interests with cultural responsibility.
2. Artists should prioritize cultural sensitivity and moral accountability.
3. Industry stakeholders must promote diverse representation and inclusive storytelling.
4. Education and critical thinking are crucial for African youth to navigate cultural globalization.
5. There is need to explore alternative music genres that promote African moral values.

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