

'Chop Life, Wahala No Dey Finish': Combating Despondency and Evoking Positivity in Selected 'Pandemic' Nigerian Hip-Hop

Ebuka Elias Igwebuike 

International Political Sociology, Christian-Albrecht University of Kiel, Germany
English and Literary Studies & Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Nigeria
ebukaigwebuike@yahoo.com

Paul Ayodele Onanuga 

English and Literary Studies Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria
emperornugadellio@yahoo.com

Frolence Rubagumisa Rutechura 

Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics, University of Dar es Salaam
rutechura @udsm.ac.tz

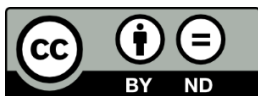
Abstract

Songs as creative cultural products perform functions beyond entertainment. Indeed, in many African cultural contexts, songs are useful for teaching and performing religious rites, as well as stimulating social consciousness. Contextualised in the (post-) COVID-19 pandemic period, the study whose findings this article reports applied positive discourse analysis (PDA) to examine selected Nigerian hip-hop stars' 'resistance' voices against depression, despondency, and dispiritedness. More specifically, the article analyses representative lyrics of four songs from popular Nigerian artistes. The songs were produced between 2020 and 2021, marking the heights of the global pandemic. They were purposively selected based on their thematic preoccupations about survival strategies during the pandemic. The article identifies how these artistes adopt a utopian stance and project an 'overcomer' trope through four discursive processes: their explicit identification of life as a blend of opposites and contraries, their reconstruction of problems as an ever-present enemy, their projection of 'chopping life' as false consciousness; and rendition of money as the source of happiness and solution to problems. The article, based on the analysis, submits that through lyrical creativity and awareness of the subsisting social realities, music discourse can help advance coping strategies to overcome challenges for the depressed group. Therefore, the study calls for further on other African artistes' COVID-19-related songs to provide more insights into the interconnections between language use in music and positive health and well-being, especially in health crises.

Keywords:

Nigerian Hip-Hop, COVID-19 pandemic, Positive Discourse Analysis, Despondency, Positivity

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Introduction

The December 2019 outbreak of the coronavirus, popularly remarked as COVID-19, has had (and continues to have) far-reaching effects on human social interaction. The virus, a severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), quickly spread globally within a few months, leading to the declaration of a pandemic by the World Health Organisation (WHO) on 11 March 2020. Even though at the onset of the pandemic, concerns were on limiting the spread of the virus, culminating in the lockdown procedures in many countries as well as restrictive social interactions, especially in public spaces, soon after, the implications of the incursion of digitised sociality as well as the effects of enforced seclusion on mental health and general individual wellbeing took centre stage. This occurred amidst scholarly engagements on the toll of the pandemic on human, economic, social, and natural capital. A major outcome of many of these studies is the identification that the pandemic has significantly altered and reshaped living experiences, foisting what is now globally referenced as the 'new normal.' For instance, Simon et al. (2021) explored the impacts of the COVID-19 lockdown and relevant vulnerabilities on capability wellbeing, mental health, and social support and identified that individuals with a history of mental health challenges recorded a worsening of their plight while age and physical health conditions also influenced the levels of impact of the pandemic. In addition, there are documented instances of greater stress to individuals, families, and organisations, as well as the worsened vulnerability of hitherto marginalised communities.

It, however, was not doom and gloom as human communities rose together through the pandemic. Some positive outcomes have manifested in the increase in social cohesion, more integration of technology into social interactions, improved civic participation in combating the virus, as well as more collaborative research ventures globally. These are achievements despite the unravelling of national and international politics in interventions, especially in the dispersal of vaccines. Nevertheless, the necessity of reaching global populations in terms of awareness and the need to mediate the well-being of such populations have been germane in the COVID-19 discourses. Richardson et al. (2020) examined the prevalence of knowledge of COVID-19 prevention behaviours and common symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 and belief in misinformation about COVID-19 in

selected locations in Nigeria. The study further investigated the relationship between knowledge of information on COVID-19 and receipt of COVID-19 information. It explored these aspects in the advocacy management style that involved existing government structures – the Seasonal malaria chemoprevention (SMC) model – in spreading COVID-19 information and stimulating communal well-being. The study reported positive feedback on the dissemination and knowledge of information on COVID-19 among caregivers in Nigeria. Richardson et al.'s (2020) study is a mainstream application of existing medical structures in combating the rage of the pandemic. Within the context of cultural and creative sectors, Howard et al. (2021) focused on how musicians adapted to the demands of the pandemic about their musical productions and the application of creativity to their craft during the period. The study asserted the agency of artistes in their music-making practices and resonated this with the long-term implications of COVID-19 on the music industry. Howard et al.'s (2021) study foregrounds the place of popular cultural practices during troubling times. These efforts invited the following questions, which lie at the heart of the current study: How did hip-hop artistes, as the most renowned popular music artistes in Nigeria, accommodate the COVID-19 reality in their songs? How stimulating are these lyrical renditions in positively contributing to the psychological well-being of the listeners? Consequently, the present study postulates that Nigerian hip-hop songs produced during this difficult period also positively contributed to COVID-19 discourse in Nigeria. To affirm this argument, it interrogates how purposively selected Nigerian popular music lyrics are wielded as coping strategies and contextualises the selected artistes and their songs as indicative of the consciousness in contemporary Nigerian hip-hop.

Contextualising the COVID-19 Outbreak in Nigeria

Amzat et al. (2020) succinctly capture the introduction, impact, and responses to the identification of the coronavirus in Nigeria. Following the discovery of the virus in late 2019 in a province in China, Nigeria recorded its first case in February 2021 from an Italian traveller who had travelled across different Nigerian states before testing positive. From this index case, Amzat et al. (2020) record that positive cases surged to 12,486 (16.3% of tests done) within the first 100 days of the incidence of coronavirus in the country. The outbreak also led to 354 recorded deaths. Ajibo (2020, p. 512) documents the intervention attempts by the Nigerian government to stem

the spread of the virus among the populace, noting that the government instituted:

A ban on social gatherings (there are mechanisms to arrest and punish those who defy this); a shutdown of Lagos, Abuja, and Ogun states, which are regarded as the epicentre for the coronavirus pandemic; and other preventive measures such as an increase in screening at border entry points, self-isolation, social distancing of not less than 2 meters, use of hand sanitizer, and washing of hands frequently, all of which have been emphasized and publicized through formal and informal media outlets

Although most of the health directives were not adhered to by the general populace, the country successfully steered through the turbulence and disruption. Obi-Ani, Anikweze, and Isiani (2020) examined the ramifications of the influence of social media on the discourses and narratives around the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria. Noting that such influences unravelled within both positive and negative outcomes, the study recognises the place of social media platforms for both vertical and horizontal dissemination of valuable information. Thus, though the government and other concerned individuals fostered information-sharing to stem the spread of the virus and to create public awareness, the study also identifies that 'these platforms have been abused as people hide under its anonymity to spread fake messages and instigate panic amongst members of the general public' (Isiani 2020, p.1).

These obvious realities of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the everyday experiences of citizens notwithstanding, Obi-Ani et al. (2021) identify a leadership gap in attending to the outbreak in Nigeria. Asserting the implications of the progressive deterioration of the healthcare sector, the study observes that 'an inept and unconcerned leadership, accompanied by dilapidated health institutions characterized by poor working conditions and incentives' worsened the response to the virus outbreak (Obi-Ani et al. 2021, p.2). This is amidst public disenchantment of the mismanagement of appropriated funds for the revitalization of medical facilities (Eme, Uche, & Uche 2014) as well as the decision by medical staff to go on strike action in the middle of the pandemic. Inevitably, several political and elite figures lost their lives (Fabiya, Alagbe, & Awornd 2020),

culminating in a widely shared belief among the masses that the virus only affected the rich.

A major public talking point during the pandemic was the penchant of the Nigerian elite to indulge in medical tourism in the face of broken health facilities in the country. This has a long history. Sadly, within this discouraging scenario, many of Nigeria's trained and qualified medical personnel continued to relocate, even during the pandemic, from the country to practice in more conducive environments while the government and the political class, as if oblivious of the necessity of improving the situation, instead brought in Chinese medical personnel and equipment (Atoyebi et al. 2020; Yakubu 2020). Unsurprisingly, this drew public outcry, although the government persisted with the action.

During the pandemic, there were also scandals involving the discovery of palliatives meant to assuage the social well-being of the 'poorest of the poor' within Nigerian society. Made up mostly of privately donated food items, these palliatives were instead stored away, kept by politicians to seek political patronage. Upon the discovery of the 'hideouts' in different parts of the country, Nigerians thronged out, including members of security outfits, to loot and plunder the hidden resources. All of these realisations contextualise the hardship that Nigerians underwent during the pandemic and provide valuable insight into the content and ecology of the songs which constitute the data for the present study.

Popular Music, Existentialism and Coping Strategies in Hip Hop

Several studies have sought to identify the relationship between songs (their tunes/beats/melodies), lyrics, and their influences on their listeners (Arnett 1991; Anderson, Carnagey, & Eubanks 2003; Västfjäll, Juslin, & Harti 2012; Onanuga & Onanuga 2020). A contention, however, remains regarding which exactly influences listeners more: song melodies or lyrics. Ali and Peynircioğlu (2006) aggregate studies that have attempted to resolve this contention. Although they identify that melodies of songs were more dominant than the lyrics in eliciting emotions, they also conclude on the difficulty of identifying the boundaries of their intersection and separating the extent of their influences on listeners. What is, however, agreed upon is that songs and their lyrics are impactful. Biasutti et al. (2020) aver that music can positively affect physical, social, and psychological (including cognitive and emotional) well-being, submitting that music can foster inclusion and provide emotional support for marginalised

individuals and communities. Juslin (2005) links the content of songs, especially their lyrics, to the display of emotions by listeners. Levitin (2006) also asserts the intricate relationship that exists between song production, lyrics, and social reality, affirming the communicative potential and influence of music lyrics on society.

Whereas Destree (2018) asserts music is critical to entertainment and leisure – even lauding its restorative qualities, Bennett (2005) reinforces the role of music as imbued with affective qualities, especially since it is not a passive cultural product. Since music is made for an audience, it therefore means that it is a platform for diffusing ideologies and viewpoints. Lehman (2021, p. 274) recognises this, stating that “music-making and music listening are important for building communities in physical and online spaces. Music is not simply made for personal enjoyment, as Aristotle’s contemporaries had believed, but is embedded into our social being and is a crucial part of connecting with others.”

Ransom (2015) also contends that music lyrics are useful tools in mass communication, particularly as listening to meaning-filled lyrics has been adjudged to stimulate increased well-being among listeners. This finds provenance in Lindblad and de Boise (2019), who engage issues around specific health challenges such as loneliness, isolation, and a heightened risk for suicide among older men and explore the benefits of musical engagement for this demography. They identify that music assisted with the management of emotions as well as in improving relationships and positively managing social contacts. The implication is that songs can have effects on the behaviour and psychological states of listeners, whether positively or negatively.

Within the context of the present study, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has had significant effects on the emotions and psychological states of human populations. The resultant loneliness and self-isolation during the pandemic have led to people looking for ways to cope with the difficult situation. In the plethora of interventions adduced to assist people during the tough period, scholars have engaged the contributions of music in the management of the pandemic because music as a cultural and creative sector product, particularly those that are venue-based, were significantly hit by the lockdown measures as well as the introduction of social distancing regulations. Martínez-Castilla et al. (2021) acknowledge the negative outcomes of the coronavirus outbreak and interrogate the roles

of music in the well-being and emotional stability of 507 respondents in Spain using an online survey. The study submits that music consumption toned down the feelings of vulnerability, remarking music has immense benefits. Lehman (2021) provides valuable insight into how popular music was practically manipulated into the coronavirus pandemic discourse. The study focused on the appropriation of a popular hit song, 'Sweet Caroline,' which transformed from being used in adverts to becoming adapted as an advocacy song during the virus outbreak. Lehman (Lehman 2021, p. 272) envisions Diamond, the artiste who sang 'Sweet Caroline' as performing a civic duty while also, within the context of the COVID-19 lockdown 'participating in the form of digital and musical leisure to pass the time.'

These studies assert that music satiates the deep psychological, social, and emotional needs of the listeners and also performs therapeutic functions that may positively influence well-being. Although there was an upsurge in online streaming and innovative digitisation, the human need for sociality and physical presence means that artistes and listeners would always yearn for pre-COVID-19-normality.

Riding the Wave: Hip-Hop in Nigeria

Nigerian hip-hop has grown so massively in the last two decades from a genre that started as an imitation of its more prestigious and globally recognised proto-genre, American hip-hop. As a cultural product, not only has the sub-genre asserted its domestication, leading to a coming of age manifestation on the local scene – aided undoubtedly by the availability of music software and the work of radio DJs in Lagos, unarguably the capital of Nigerian popular culture – it has also spread its wings as an export to the international scenes. Unsurprisingly, these Nigerian hip-hop exponents have won global recognition through national and international awards, participated in collaborations, and continued to enjoy massive following both physically and online – across borders. There is an increasing identification of the appropriation of Nigerian hip-hop across borders, as attestable in Korean hip-hop and Israeli hip-hop. Expectedly, the ubiquity of hip-hop presence in Nigeria has also stimulated academic inquiries.

Several scholars have explored Nigerian hip-hop, and these have come from diverse perspectives. Studies have taken a moralistic viewpoint, engaging Hip-Hop's history of misogyny and patriarchy and its manifestations in lyrical and visual renditions. Some other studies have focused on Nigerian Hip-Hop's representation of gender (Onanuga 2017)

and how these are both outcrops of cultural realities and also influential in the fossilisation of attitudes and behaviours. Other studies on Nigerian Hip-Hop have also been interested in the thematic focus of these creative productions and how these are representative of the contextual realities immanent in the Nigerian environment (Nwabueze 2016).

Several studies have also undertaken scholarly engagement of the linguistic content of these songs. Their studies are predicated on the significance of language as encoding the concerns of the Nigerian landscape as well as providing the possibilities of deciphering the peculiar linguistic forms and implications of language use within the context of hip-hop. Within some of these lyrics-based studies, there has been a recognition of the creativity and linguistic expressiveness foregrounded in the songs (Akingbe & Onanuga 2018) as well as the politics of language manifesting in the use of diverse languages spanning Pidgin, English, Yoruba, and other indigenous languages (Omoniyi 2009; Fasan 2015) in these songs. Given the hugely religious and moralistic stance in the country, scholars have also assessed these songs from the viewpoint of their influences on the listeners, with many pointing at the overtly sexualised lyrics and videos, use of drugs and alcohol, etc., as identifiable negative influences.

Some other studies have also been interested in the ideological constructs explicated in these songs and the implications of such lyrical content on the listening public (Akingbe & Onanuga 2020; Onanuga 2020a) as well as in the examination of the formation of identities and their appropriation for capitalist commercialisation (Gbogi 2016; Onanuga 2020b). Identifiable across this gamut of studies is the acknowledgment of the harvestable diversity of Nigerian hip-hop, as well as the extent of its influence in the Nigerian environment.

The current study is, however, in the context of the Coronavirus pandemic as it examines selected songs which were produced by Nigerian music artistes as forms of psychological aid to assist their fans and the general public in coping with the unprecedented demands and toll which the pandemic had enforced. It is apposite to ask: Why are these artistes involved in such forms of advocacies? For one, it characterises the interventions as the artistes' ways of leveraging their social capital, a Bourdian construct that implies an individual making use of their social position and status (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992). In addition, the songs because of their contents accumulate 'contagious magic' (Roberts 2014)

which is the “rubbing off” of symbolic capital to maximize consumption across cultural industries and activities’ (Lehman 2021, p. 275). So not only are the artistes representing themselves as affected by the pandemic that grounded shows and public events, but they also through their music make attempts to reap the gains that such consciously emotive songs evoke in the public.

Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) and Inspiring Discourses

Positive Discourse Analysis (subsequently PDA) is relatively a new approach to discourse analysis. This approach focuses on and draws attention to how discourse inspires change in society. Unlike Critical Discourse Analysis which critiques socio-political order and examines how discourse is used in the projection of power, hegemonies, and inequalities, PDA examines ‘discourse of positive change and discourse as the site of resistance’ (Martin & Rose 2003, p. 36). According to Martin (1999, pp. 51-52),

If discourse analysts are serious about wanting to use their work to enact social change, then they will have to broaden their coverage to include . . . discourse that inspires, encourages, heartens; discourse we like, that cheers us along. We need, in other words, more positive discourse analysis (PDA?) alongside our critique; and this means dealing with texts we admire, alongside those we dislike and try to expose.

Martin’s submission calls for the reconfiguration of CDA in a more positive sense instead of its focus on ‘critique of processes which disempower and oppress’ (Martin 2004, p. 186). In this case, PDA as an approach studies how texts are used to advocate for change and how change happens in the processes of improving society. According to Nartey (2020, p. 3), PDA ‘seeks to identify discourses that have the potential of promoting the changes we desire to see in society. In other words, PDA engages with real-world problems by emphasizing areas where discourse works’. PDA has been deployed extensively in the study of political and resistance texts (Nartey 2020; Nartey & Ernanda 2019) and climate and environment (Stibbe 2017). This study, however, extends the application of this theoretical orientation to music. This is because of the observation that music, whose discourse also inspires hope and change, has not been analysed within the PDA methodology. It contends that, although the hip-hop genre has been

demonised as promoting violence and drug use as well as objectifying women and projecting patriarchy, the genre still possesses positive contents that are useful to the human environment. Moreover, the genre enjoys remarkable social capital, particularly among young urban youths who continue to be influenced by hip-hop culture. Of specific note in this study is that it avers that the genre, through the purposively selected lyrics, highlights practical strategies for coping with mental health issues and managing stressful situations. It finds these useful within the context of the global pandemic, which has affected everyone.

In the application of the tenets of the PDA theoretical orientation to purposively selected musical discourse, attention is paid to the analysis of linguistic features that trigger positivity. The critical assumption is that through their linguistic and thematic contents, these selected artistes weaponised their creative productions during the COVID-19 pandemic to stimulate communality and mental well-being. This resonates with Hughes' (2018) acknowledgment of the necessity for PDA to focus on progressive rather than oppressive discourses.

Methodology: Data and Procedure of Analysis

Four songs are purposively selected for this study. These are 'No Wahala' by 1da Banton, 'Wahala' by Cajeto ft. Hussain Dada; 'Problems no Dey Finish' by Prayy ft. Young Jonn; and 'Problem No Dey Finish' by Erigga. The four Nigerian hip-hop songs were produced between 2020 and 2021 during the peak of the global coronavirus pandemic. While the songs were not centred on the pandemic, Covid-19 poses one of the greatest economic challenges during the period under discussion. Therefore, these songs dwell on current life challenges and ways of coping with the accompanying difficulties. 1da Banton's 'No Wahala' is a song with an upbeat tune, and it encourages the listening public to have fun despite the obvious difficulties and complications that come with daily survival. Unsurprisingly, because of its racy beats, the song was a big hit and trended online, especially on TikTok. Cajeto ft. Hussain Dada's 'Wahala' sustains the narrative of braving the odds and trudging on despite challenges. 'Wahala' in Yoruba, a language that has been dominant in Nigerian hip-hop, means 'trouble.' However, the song recognises that despite the presence of trouble, it is necessary to find ways to cope successfully. 'Problems no Dey Finish' by Prayy ft. Young Jonn is a recognition of the efforts required to surmount

life's challenges. Navigating through a plethora of dichotomies – being poor vs being rich, living in Nigeria vs. living abroad – the song elevates the need to work hard, work smart, and look up to divine intervention. The fourth song, 'Problem No Dey Finish' by Erigga, catalogues the different physical and attitudinal problems present in the Nigerian environment. Employing several allusions and contextual discursive materials and weaving these into an emotive narrative, the song attributes its positivity to the pale reality that problems are unending.

Positive Discourse Analysis of Selected Songs

Subsequent sub-sections analyses the lyrics of the selected songs. It employs our familiarity with both the lyrical content and context and to the larger socio-cultural realities which manifest in the songs to the presentation of our analysis. To avail ease of comprehension especially to a non-Nigerian audience, it provides the English gloss of non-English expressions in the lyrics. Two central functional identifications persist across the song texts – the use of the songs as channel to (re)present and combat despondency as a result of difficult life conditions; and the use of the songs as frames for positive life outlook and as coping mechanism. These are however interrogated through four headings – identification of life as a mix of opposites and contraries; reconstruction of problems as ever-present; projection of 'chopping life' as false consciousness; and rendition of money as the source of happiness and solution to problems.

Identification of life as a mix of opposites and contraries

The human existential realities indicate that people are bound to face challenges in their day-to-day navigation of their experiences. Impliedly, there are going to be highs and lows. The artistes whose lyrics are analysed recognise the fecundity of this reality and are willing to intersperse it in their discography. Contextualised within the global outbreak and spread of COVID-19, these artistes remark the need to be prepared for setbacks and difficulties. The following is an evidential excerpt:

Dan malio malio
I embark on my game Ferdinand Rio
Men, I come to stay
I don turn to Mario
You can never pull me down

I don turn magnifico ('Problems no Dey Finish' by Prayy ft. Young Jonn)

The artiste relies on popular culture in asserting their perception. Using allusion to the game of football and leeching on metaphor, Prayy ft. Young Jonn presents life as a battle, form of war. This is linked to the football match that happened in 2011 between Rio Ferdinand of Manchester United and Mario Balotelli of Manchester City. Mario's celebration in front of Manchester United fans enraged Ferdinand Rio after the 2011 FA cup semi-finals defeat by the Manchester City. During his celebrations of their victory, Mario made some gestures to the Manchester United fans which provoked Ferdinand to the extent that he wanted to attack Mario. One must understand that Rio Ferdinand is a decorated and highly rated defender during his playing days and is usually referenced within football circles as highly dependable. In the excerpt, through a comparison of the two great footballers, a progression from problem to solution is made. Ferdinand is likened to a starting point, which is filled with difficulties but it was later 'turned to' a moment of success and hope represented by 'Mario'. Thus, by further withstanding the difficulties, Prayy ft. Young Jonn has turned to 'magnifico', an undefeated champion. 'While 'You can never pull me down' asserts positive will to defeat attendant difficulties, 'I don turn magnifico' project unwavering resistance to bowing or surrendering to persistence challenges.

Through this lyrics, Prayy ft. Young Jonn makes a positive intervention to bolster the emotions of listeners against succumbing to defeat. The reference to Mario also emanates from the field of video gaming especially of the intensely popular Super Mario Nintendo game. Because of its ubiquity among a generation of Nigerians, the game is usually used to represent longevity and dependability. This is especially as the game character has to navigate treacherous enemies before reaching the end of each level. The lyrical persona therefore harnesses and imbues himself with these dependable qualities to restate his confidence that he can survive through the hardest and harshest setback. In doing his, he also emboldens his listeners, which is consistent with Ransom's (2015) submission that listening to meaning-filled lyrics has positive effects, including increasing well-being.

In documenting the contrarian quality of human existence, these artistes also comment on socio-cultural issues. The affirmation that life is a mix of opposites involving the rich and the poor, the developed and the developing nations, and so on, is further extended by Prayy ft. Young Jonn thus:

You get money, or you no get money (whether you have money or not)

Problem no dey finish (Problems do not finish)

You dey for naija or you dey for Germany (Whether you are in Nigeria or Germany)

Problem no dey finish (Problems do not finish)

You get motto or you get okada (Whether you have a car or a motorcycle)

Problem no dey finish (Problems do not finish)

You be a landlord or you be a tenant (Whether you are a landlord or you are a tenant)

Problem no dey finish (Problems do not finish) ('Problems no Dey Finish' by Prayy ft. Young Jonn)

First, through a comparison of two opposites, problems are depicted as being experienced by the rich and the poor, the developing and developed countries, and so on. In particular, 'You dey for Naija or you dey for Germany' presents problems of life as universal since there is no country, developed or developing, that is free from challenges. Here, Naija (Nigeria), a developing country, is contrasted with Germany, a developed nation, as inescapable locations of problems. Through this identification, the artiste provides subtle commentary on the continued spate of migration from the Global South to the Global North and suggests that escaping from underdeveloped or developing countries does not imply that the grasses are greener in the new environments. The submission is that problems transcend borders and cut across all strata of society. Both the wealthy (car owner and landlord) and the poor (motorcycle owner and tenant) are contrasted as facing challenges of life. Through these analogies and the repetitive refrain 'Problem no dey finish,' Prayy ft. Young Jonn encourages people to enjoy their lives since, at different life stages and times, people are faced with challenges.

Reconstruction of problems as ever-present

Liadi (2012) documents the concern of Nigerian hip-hop with the prevalent social challenges manifesting in the Nigerian environment. This reality is subsequently attributed to the popularity which the genre enjoys in the

country. When artistes and their songs speak to the realities experienced by their listeners, there is the accruing benefit of social and cultural capital. In the songs for the current study, one identifies the acknowledgement of the existence of social, political and personal problems. Although the artistes do not primarily go ahead to proffer solutions to these problems beyond stating that individuals must forge ahead, these songs, within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, attempt to stimulate their listeners in order to convince them that indeed problems are ever-present in life. Some exemplifications include:

Chei wahala dey (Chei! There is trouble)
My brother problem dey (My brother, there is trouble)
Do not disturb my peace ...
Omo (Indeed!)
Wahala (Trouble)
Wahala no dey finish (Troubles are unending)
I just want chop life coz wahala no dey finish (I just want to
enjoy my life because troubles are unending)
(‘Wahala’ by Cajeto ft. Hussain Dada)

In this excerpt, the artistes (Cajeto and Hussain Dada) signal the ever-present nature of troubles and problems. However, they state that calmness is required in order to attend to and handle these troubling situations. More importantly, the artistes assert that troubles are common and widespread situation in which everyone finds themselves. To combat the existential challenges, one must ensure that they enjoy their lives to the fullest. Such enjoyment reduces anxiety and focus on the daunting problems. This dint of Epicureanism is a familiar trope in hip-hop culture, leading to accusations of the valorisation of materialism and hedonism (Podoshen, Andrzejewski & Hunt, 2014; Mitchell 2001). Erigga in ‘Problem No Dey Finish’ testifies to the near ubiquity of the problems which many Nigerian young people have found themselves combating. The artiste (Erigga) identifies some of such as including unemployment, cultism, police brutalities, bad leadership, bad roads and dearth of infrastructure, fake life and peer pressure:

No be your AC spoil I'm hot problem no dey finish (Your AC has
not got spoil, I am the one who is hot - problems are unending)
Who goes there disembark problem no dey finish (Who goes there?
Disembark - problems are unending)

The country hard I no go lie problem no dey finish (The country is hard, I cannot lie – problems are unending)

To make am for lag na die problem no dey finish (To be successful in Lagos is difficult – problems are unending)

Why you think say banny dat do nyash Problem no dey finish (Why do you think female prostitutes engage in anal sex? – problems are unending)

Even some Lekki boys dey do nyash problem no dey finish (Even some Lekki boys do anal sex – problems are unending)

Many graduate, no get work oh problem no dey finish (Many university graduate are jobless – problems are unending)

Some no dey see anything chop oh problem no dey finish (Some cannot even eat – problems are unending)

Una road dey make body dey pain me problem no dey finish (Your roads make one's body ache – problems are unending)

To dress comot hard police fit go detain me problem no dey finish (One can even be detained by the police for dressing – problems are unending)

But when we talk she say we dey on drugs problem no dey finish (However when we lament/complain, they say we are on drugs – problems are unending)

(*'Problem No Dey Finish'* by Erigga)

The documentation of the preponderance of problem-identification helps to present the problems as commonplace and to draw the listeners into the shared knowledge that the problems are ever-present. In *'No Wahala'* by 1da Banton, documentation of the problems is sustained:

Wahala e no dey finish ohh oh (Problems are unending)

Make you try dey enjoy oh (so try to enjoy)

Say katakata, wuruwuru e no dey finish ehen (Troubles and problems are unending)

Make you try dey enjoy oh (So try to enjoy)

Problem e no dey finish (Problems are unending) (*'No Wahala'* by 1da Banton)

1da Banton reconstructs the problem as an ever-present entity that should not constitute anxiety. The key message *'Wahala/Problem e no dey finish'* (Problem is unending) captures life challenges as infinite. Through the use of onomatopoeia (katakata and wuruwuru), the problem is named as a lingering phenomenon. Reduplications in the words depict the persistence

of problems. In particular, the phrase 'make you try dey enjoy' admonishes and encourages listeners to 'worry less and enjoy life more' as problems are part of life from which one learns. It encourages the elimination of overthinking. Consistent emphasis on the pervasiveness of difficulties reinforces positive attitudes toward coping strategies. Coping does not depend on having more money since being rich does not solve all the problems, as expressed by Cajeto ft. Hussain Dada:

More money, more problems
So tell me now how we go take solve them (Tell me how
we can solve these problems)
Sometimes I wish say wahala na kpoli (Sometimes I
wish problems were weed)
Me I go just roll it all and burn them (I'd have just rolled
them and burnt them) ('Wahala' by Cajeto ft. Hussain
Dada)

'More money more problems' portrays the indestructibility of problems. To successfully combat problems, the artiste seems to suggest the need to temporarily pretend and have a taste of pleasure. To surmount the endless challenges and difficulties, the artiste wishes that he could transmute his problems to weed (cannabis). He suggests that smoking weed avails him of temporal relief. Kpoli (weed) is desired to be a problem which can be rolled and 'smoked.' According to Conway (2021), with about 20.8 million people who consumed cannabis, Nigeria had the highest number of cannabis consumers in Africa in 2018. Such temporal concealment and pretence of pleasurable living include attractive physical appearance, as stated by Cajeto ft. Hussain Dada:

How can you be ma bestie (How can you be my best friend)
Hair looking messy ('Wahala' by Cajeto ft. Hussain Dada)

Daunting problems are obvious in physical traits, especially unkempt hairs. Cajeto ft. Hussain Dada advocates for a change of attitude towards problems through positive character trait, especially having well-groomed hair. Such positive attitude changes life's realities. The diversity of these constructions of the reality of life's challenges not only reinforce the

necessity of bracing up and standing firm, they also assert the creativity with which people confront difficult situations (Martin, 2022).

Projection of 'chopping life' as false consciousness

Chopping life is projected as false consciousness in the songs. In this case, the lyrics promote a way of thinking that prevents people from perceiving the true depressing nature of their socio-economic situation. The following expressions serve as examples:

Ngwa chop life ooo (kpakpa ngolo) (Please enjoy life)
Enjoy life ooo (kpakpa ngolo) (Enjoy life)
Uwa bu ofu mbia ooo(kpakpa ngolo) (You live only once)
Chop life ooo (kpakpa ngolo) ('Wahala' by Cajeto ft.
Hussain Dada)

The lyrics capture chopping life as false consciousness. They implicitly try to present a state of the mind that life is meant to be enjoyed, thereby preventing people from seeing their present difficult situation. In particular, *Uwa bu ofia mbia* which could be transliterated as 'the world is visited just once' presents the passing phase of one's journey on earth as well as the need to make the best out the rare opportunity to be alive. Imperative constructions hinged on emphatic verbs (enjoy and chop) as well as the adjective of urgency 'Ngwa' (quick) are used to make subtle commands and present rapidness, the pace at which the artiste expects that life should be enjoyed. The message is a wakeup call on listeners to perceive their present unhappy situations positively by creating a sort of pleasure to manage the situation. In addition, the call to merriment is instant. This urgency to enjoy life while one is still alive and healthy is also captured by 1da Banton:

Make you try dey dey enjoy, oya now
Make we dance like no wahala (Eyyah no wahala oh)
You see this life, I cannot kill myself
I just wan live my life, live am jeje oh ('No Wahala' by 1da
Banton)

1da Banton continues to advocate for positive handling of difficult situations through instant fun. 'Oya now' is a subtle plea for urgency to wake up from despondency. Through his strident emotional appeal, the listeners are coerced to forget their troubles temporarily and enjoy themselves. Thus, they are encouraged to merry as if there is no troubles or

wahala. 'I cannot kill myself' is a popular Nigerian expression that means that 'one cannot go beyond ones capabilities'. It connects with the expression of 'living life jeje oh'. Such living includes the habit of feasting and drinking as well as marrying. The message is an admonition to listeners to take life's difficulties easy.

Rendition of money as the source of happiness and solution to problems

As opposed to the popular biblical text in 1 Timothy 6:10 that, 'For the love of money is the root of all of evil', the songs construct 'money and more money as the source of joy'. It is important to contextualise the tones of these songs with the socio-economic backgrounds of many Nigerian artistes. The country continues to contribute substantially to the global population of poor people. Creative vocations like music therefore becomes a leeway for escaping the suffocating grasp of poverty. It is therefore unsurprising that the necessity of making money to make up for their previous lack and the perception of money as critical to social mobility and psychological freedom resoundingly reflect in the songs (Onanuga, 2021). For instance:

I no like wahala (I don't like trouble)

I no go find your trouble (I don't look for trouble)

I no like kasala (I don't like problems)

So far my money dey double (As long as my money is doubling)

As my money dey pile up oh (As my money increases)

E dey make me happy oh (Happy oh) (It makes me happy)

As my money dey pile up oh (As my money increases)

('No Wahala' by 1da Banton)

Having more money is presented as a source of fulfilment. Through the synonymous relations between 'dey double' and 'pile up', massive accumulation of wealth is foregrounded as a source of happiness and solution to difficulties in life. This view finds expression in the biblical allusion from Ecclesiastes 10:19 submission that 'but money answereth all things'. Such areas that money provides solutions or answers to include 'wahala, trouble and kasala', all of which are different but similar shades of difficulties in Nigerian Pidgin parlance. In this case, the solution to problem comes from acquiring a lot of money since money is believed to be able to resolve any form of problems. Invariably, the text encourages industriousness, by sticking seriously to one's source of income. That is

being hardworking pays and money guarantees peace of the mind. Such view is also expressed by Cajeto ft. Hussain Dada thusly:

No harmony without money...
Everyday I dey pray (Every day I pray)
Make my problems no pass my daily pay (that my
problems should not surpass my daily pay)
Because e go get as e be when dey tell u as e dey be
(because it is somehow when they tell you the
reality)
U no get money u no get say chai (You don't have
money, you can only exclaim) ('Wahala' by Cajeto
ft. Hussain Dada)

The expression 'No harmony without money' stems from the notion that happiness comes from money and that money brings joy. Such guarantee finds expression in money solving problems as well as footing bills. This is subsumed in 'make my problems no pass my daily pay'. The idea of 'money talks' or 'money answereth all' resonates in 'U no get money u no get say chai'. This foregrounds the central theme that money gives one voice and also powers and dignity. As in some other African countries, the Nigerian society is structured in a way that the rich are revered as demi-gods. Such wealthy person is in an elevated position or a podium of power from which others are controlled. Thus, the message is that it is only money that is sought for as the cure for problems. In line with this, Prayy ft. Young Jonn advocates for monetary blessings:

I've been working all day, working all night
I do everything in accordance
Baba shower your blessings in abundance... shower your
blessing ('Problems no Dey Finish' by Prayy ft. Young Jonn).

The Nigerian environment is chronically religious and success is always attributed to divine intervention, even among hip hop acts (Onanuga, 2020). It is thus unsurprising that in 'Problems no Dey Finish', the artistes, despite affirming their industriousness since they have 'been working all day, working all night', are still reliant on God who is referenced as Baba (father) to 'shower your blessings in abundance'. Through this identification, the artistes index the place of the divine in financial, economic and psychological/mental wellbeing.

Conclusion

This article has examined lyrics of songs on the theme of problem (wahala). Through a positive discourse analysis of purposively selected lyrics from Nigerian Hip-hop, it submits that the lyrics encourage positive change as well as motivate music audience to find paths towards wellbeing despite the subsisting societal challenges. This truism is congruent with Hidayah's (2021) submission that positive discourse analysis reveals how to change for a better condition than before. The lyrics promote self-love and encourage the listeners to stay positive and focused in the face of enraging difficulties without resorting to moodiness. The songs implicitly persuade the listeners to rethink what it means to be human and to be alive without a kind of enjoyment. Indeed, these songs affirm that trouble and challenges are part of human existence. However, what is important is to be purposeful in surmounting such challenges. It is important to contextualise this finding especially in the face of pervasive denunciation of the hip hop genre as filled with negative contents and outcomes. Thus, the songs discussed in this study suggest positivity and seek to influence their youthful listening aficionado, particularly in line with Emerson's (2002) affirmation that contemporary young people's everyday lives and identity development are significantly impacted by popular culture. The study, therefore, recommends that future research could further examine hip hop songs produced by other African artistes during the pandemic in order to determine the interconnections between language use in music and positive health and well-being, especially in health crisis situations.

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