



Protest and Activism in Selected Nigerian songs

ODJE EMMANUEL EGERE
Delta State University, Nigeria

Abstract. Music is an integral part of any society. In Africa, music accompanies almost every event irrespective of its nature. It has also been used as a means of documentation of a people or society's activity. This research examines the roles of musical artistes who use their songs as a tool for protest and activism against the government. This study is anchored on the theory of relative deprivation, which is defined as the perceived lack of resources required to maintain quality life in a society (Longley 2022). This research studied four songs namely: *Light up Naija (2010)* by Sound Sultan, *'Monsters you made'* by Burna boy and *'Jaga jaga reloaded'* by Eedris Abdulkareem. These artistes through their songs decried the social, economic and political problems still prevalent in the society. They sided with the masses, which they are a part of, by protesting and demanding for good governance. They also urge the people to 'rise up' as this is the only way they can be heard and not be suppressed. Despite protesting, these artistes also provided solutions to the problem faced by Nigerians. This study concludes that music has been successfully conditioned to feature as a tool of protest and the artiste can take up the role of an activist at any time.

Keywords: Protest, Music, Activism, Nigerian Government, Music Activism.

1. Introduction

The act of protesting has become a common feature of democracy. As disgruntled individuals/ citizens often resort to protesting either on the streets, social media platforms, etc to air their grievances against the government. During protests, citizens/ individuals gather in groups, especially those with common social, political or economic goals to better channel their grievances and get better response from the government or targeted agency. Simmons (2009) as cited by Kadupe (2022) describes protest as a social movement, which is a reaction to a social crisis. Protests act as a way of giving the masses their voice and also project the reason for the protest onto national

or global scene to be debated. Nigeria as a nation has witnessed several national protests against the government. Examples of such protest are: the Aba women riot of 1929 which was against the increase in tax by the British government, the June 12 post-election protest, which was against the annulment of the June 12 election and the imprisonment of the foremost candidate Chief M.K.O Abiola, and most recently, the EndSars protest, which was primarily against police profiling and brutality, but later turned into a protest against bad governance, etc.

Aside from taking to the street to protest, several methods have been employed in airing of grievances and the short comings of the government. One of the several methods employed and has become a major tool is music. music is primarily for the purpose of entertainment has served this purpose time and time again to decry the injustice suffered by the oppressed in society by various musical artiste. Music which embodies certain idea has been conditioned to feature in protest rallies. Example of such is Kendrick Lamar's 'Alright' which was almost instantaneously accepted as the anthem for the Black lives matter movement. Also, jazz music was birthed by African Americans as means of protesting against repression and also out of a need to express themselves and their culture. Just like its African American counterpart, Nigerian music industry and her artistes have not been left behind in using music as a tool for critiquing the ills of society. These artistes do not just protest against the ills of society but also take on the role of an advocate to advocate for better government and society and also sensitize the masses on their societal and political obligations. This method has helped to strengthen the democratic process, since protest and activism are part of democracy (Kadupe 2022). Some Nigerian artiste that have taken up the roles of activist in protesting, educating and advocating for better governance for the masses through their songs include: the legendary Afrobeat musician Fela Anikulapo Kuti, Majek Fashek, Eedris Abdulkareem, Bisade Ologunde popularly known as 'Lagbaja', Oritsefemi, Folarin Falana alias Falz the Bhad guy, Olanrewaju Fassai

alias Sound Sultan, Augustine Miles Okechukwu alias Tekno, Damini Ogulu alias Burna boy, to mention but a few.

Many literary scholars have attempted a study of protests from different perspectives and standpoints such as protest rallies and music as a medium of protest. Some of such scholars include: Akpakpan J.J, Nzoizwe Dhlamini, Kadupe, etc. many persons who listen to music do so because of the entertainment purpose it serves at that point in time with paying attention to its content and the message the artist is trying to pass through the song. As stated earlier, music has been used as means of protest and means for the masses to express their discontent at the government and most scholars have examined music as a means of protest, as a means of exposing the ills of society, as part of folklore but few attention has been paid to the artist as an activist who has taken the position of protesting and advocating for the masses. This is the area which has necessitated this study. This research will pay attention to how these artists portrays the social, political and economic realities of their society. This study investigates music as a form of protest and activism by investigating its nature and content, this research will focus on Nigerian songs within the last decade and how music artists have discussed the issues that plagued the country in the last twelve years. The last decade was chosen because after the return to democratic rule in 1999, the year 2010 was given as a target where Nigeria will be ushered into a period of economic stability with better government infrastructure but the last ten years Nigeria and Nigerians have seen and experienced some of the worse economic situations in Africa. Hence, this study focuses on songs that capture these social, political and economic situations reemphasized with more vigor by various artists. This research aims at examining how these issues have been discussed and presented by these artists in their songs and how they have called out the government and protested against the situation of things in Nigeria. This study will also help in expanding and contributing to the study of protest music and activism.

For the purpose of analysis, four songs have been selected; Eedris Abdulkareem's *jaga jaga* (2021) *reloaded*, Damini 'Burna boy' Ogulu's *monsters you made* (2021), and Sound Sultan's *light up Naija* (2010). Apart from these artists being popular, these artists were selected because they have been vocal in calling out the government and its corrupt practices and also urging the people to be more active in demanding for what is theirs. Their songs also capture the present reality of Nigerians and their society in the last twelve years. This study employs the qualitative

content analysis method. Qualitative content method can be defined as the research method that interprets data and its content (Hsieh and Shannon 2005). Cavanagh (1997) describes this research method as a flexible method of analysis that allows for the analysis of textual data.

Music according to Aduonum (1980), '...Music in Africa is the soul which is ultimately concerned with various customs and religious practices. The African is born, named, initiated, fortified, and buried with music. In Africa, music heals the sick, directs and guides the blind, it comforts the widow, etc. ...Finally music accompanies every single daily activity.' This simply means that music is a social reality and experience that is beyond words and closely associated with the behavior of humans and how they relate with their environment and one another. As stated earlier, almost, if not all African social activities are accompanied by music, therefore, the music that is produced is not manufactured from nothing but it is birthed based on activities and situations in its immediate environment and activities in it. According to Bebey (1999) music in Africa is beyond making rhythms and sound but aimed at transforming everyday experiences into living sound. It is therefore safe to say that music in its formation is aimed at depicting societal experiences whether personal or collective.

Protest literature refers to works that address real socio-political crisis and expresses objection against them (Odunowo 2017) this simply means that any work of literature aimed at unveiling the ills of society and calling out its perpetrators as a reaction to these ills can be called protest literature. This definition poses a problem, as it seems to lump up any literature that is focused on society irrespective of its central idea as protest literature. Trodd (2008) states that 'there is no common understanding of protest literature: the term has been used to mean virtually all literature or no literature. In trying to give appropriate definition of protest literature Adebola (2014) defines it as 'texts that not only criticize and protest society, but that suggest either explicitly or implicitly, a solution to society's ills. He goes further by stating that empathy and action are key elements of protest literature (Adebola 2014). These elements therefore enable its audience to respond to issues identified by such work and also take action. According to Akingbe (2012):

'Protest literature is considered as a sub category of literature in which the work espouse protest explicitly, either as a major theme a recurring motif, an overarching metaphor or as a structuring device. It is a literature which is characterized by the existence of a

clearly-defined viewpoint, strong moral convictions, an often-strident tone, a pronounced sense of outrage, a clear perception of the issues at stake and a usually optimistic belief

This implies that protest literature should be able to expose issues at stake in the society and also aid its readers to clearly understand these issues. Therefore, the aim of protest literature is to enlighten its reader/masses on societal issues and how it affects them and also to stir them into taking action through empathy.

Protest music on the other hand, is quite similar to protest literature in terms of its focus and aims. Just as protest literature is focused on baring societal issues with the aim of enlightenment and spurring its readers to action so does protest music. According to Denisoff (1972) "protest music/songs basically stress the lyrics or intellectual aspect of a song by attempting to convince its listener something is wrong and in need of alteration." This simply means that protest music seeks to enlighten its listeners of the issues plaguing its society and ask for immediate solution to it. Some of the aims of protest music according to Denisoff (1972) are: protest song attempts to arouse sympathy for a social or political movement. Secondly, it reinforces the ideology of this social movement. Thirdly, it creates and promotes cohesion, solidarity and high morale in an organization supporting its world views. Fourthly, the songs are meant or are an attempt to recruit individuals to join certain cause. Lastly, the songs invoke solutions to real or imagined social phenomena in terms of action to achieve a common goal. From the above aims, it can be deduced that music is an easy way for persons to be heard and also influence and spur people to take action because of its wide reach in terms of listeners and comprehension (understanding). More often than not, people who use songs as a means of protest and the artistes who sing about these social issues like: police brutality, racism, the state of the nation, neo colonialism, etc have experienced these issues firsthand. Hence, the ability to enable their listeners takes a critical look at such situation since they too can relate to it. Hansen (2007) therefore, defines protest music as music that objects to the ills of society, whether socially, economically, politically or racially engineered. The singer/artiste aims to educate and spur the people into taking action.

Activism can be defined as the doctrine or practice that emphasizes direct vigorous action especially in support or opposition to one side of a controversial issue. Activism, also is an action by individual(s) against the government, specific agencies, individuals

etc with the hope of bringing about social, political, economic, and environmental change or justice for individuals who feel slighted by the law. Therefore, music activism can or may be defined as activism feared towards achieving a specific goal, social, political or economic with music as its tool for expression. According to Kadupe (2022) the use of music in this regard has been established by literature because of identified literary devices in these songs. He goes further to explain when he cites (Rejaj and Phillips 2001) who claimed that issues like racism, anarchism and democracy have been expressed throughout history using music. Music activism has been pivotal in the creation of several musical genres like rap, afro-beats, hip-hop, rock, jazz, etc.

The origin of these aforementioned music genres has been tied to activism. For example, hip hop/rap came about in the 1970s in the United States of America. It grew out of the traditional of battle rap, dee-jaying, et and was quickly adopted as a means of expression by African Americans against racism, police brutality and the paucity of opportunities that could improve lives (Taylor and Taylor 2007). Hip-hop, rap and rock music have been employed to address issues like racism, police brutality, quest for liberation, etc in the diaspora. The Nigerian music space is not left out as the legendary Fela Anikulapo Kuti who is credited to be the pioneer of the afro-beat genre of music also employed music as tool for activism addressing issues like corruption, military dictatorship, religious hypocrisy, etc. music activism in Nigeria has grown from a stage from infancy into a major musical force in the nation today. Despite the fact that some of the issues advocated and protested against by pioneer artistes, recent artistes have expanded the issues to include LGBTQ rights, environmental issues etc. their influence has also been largely due to the coming of the internet and social media platforms.

2. Theoretical framework

The discussion of protest and music activism against the ills of society will be anchored on the theory of Marxism, proposed by Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895). This is a social movement theory that states that the struggle between social classes, i.e the bourgeoisie (capitalists) and the proletariat (workers), define economic stratification in a capitalist nation and will ineluctably lead to a revolutionary communism. Marxism analyzes society in terms of class struggle between the oppressed and the oppressor; this is why "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" (The Communist Manifesto, 1848). Marxist literary criticism holds the view that a piece of art or literary

work is shaped by social institutions and prevailing discourse of his time. It does not regard writers or artists as autonomous individuals. According to Cohen (2017) Marxist theory often draws on the critical work of labeling, social construction (...) it is clearly distinct from these positions in prioritising the structural dynamics of capitalism (46). Dovetailing this assertion on "dynamism" is Kulkarni and Pune (2024) who opine that the Marxist criticism has taken different forms of inquiry like post-colonialism and cultural studies. This study takes up a postcolonial trajectory in the analysis of selected songs. Hence, this theory was selected because it takes into account the protest undertones of selected singers and interpretes their songs by placing them within a historical context and analyses them through social stratas.

3. Bio-data of Selected Artistes

3.1 Burna Boy

Damini Ebunoluwa Ogulu popularly known as Burna Boy was born on 2 July 1991 in Port-Harcourt, Rivers State to Mrs. Bose Ogulu who worked as a translator before becoming her son's manager and Mr. Samuel Ogulu who managed a welding company. His maternal grandfather once managed the legendary Fela Kuti. He has a degree from the University of Sussex in media technology (2008) and also a degree in media communications and culture from Oxford Brookes University in 2010. He launched his music career after a one-year successful internship at rhythm 93.7fm. He came into the lime light in 2012 after releasing '*life of the party*', which later became a hit track in his first studio album titled '*L.I.F.E*' the following year. He has won many awards over the years with his Grammy win in 2021 topping them all. Burna boy is also a producer and songwriter. He is well versed in musical genres like: pop, reggae, afro-beat, and dance hall. Because of his unique voice and style of performance, he is often likened to the legendary Fela Kuti. Burna boy since his emergence into the Nigerian music industry has always been vocal about the plight of his people and the state of the nation, hence the reason he was chosen for this study, some of these songs include: *Yawa Dey*, *Soke*, *Monsters you made*, *20:10:2020* (through which he sympathized with the victims of the Lekki toll gate massacre by government forces), etc.

3.2 Sound Sultan

Born Olanrewaju Abdul-Ganui Fassai popularly known as 'Sound Sultan' on November 27, 1976 in Jos and died on July 11 2021 in America after a long battle with cancer. He was born to Mr Laidi Alapere Fassai

and Mrs Adeyinka Fassai. He was the fourth of six children. He attended Federal Government College, Ogbomosho from 1988-1993 where he obtained his West African Examination Certificate. He graduated from the University of Lagos in 1999 with a bachelor's degree in geography and regional planning. Until his death he was an award winning singer, songwriter, producer, actor, rapper and actor. He is regarded as one of the pacesetters of modern Nigerian hip-hop music. He had over seven studio albums. Sound was quite popular and vocal and also active in pursuing the cause of the Nigerian people. This he aptly demonstrated in his songs where he spoke against poverty, corruption, bad governance, etc.

3.3 Eedris Abdulkareem

Eedris Turayo Abdulkareem Adjenifuja popularly known as Eedris Abdulkareem was born on December 24, 1974 in Kano. His father was from Ilesha, Osun State and his mother from Ogun State. He was born into a polygamous home. He lost his father at the age of two and as time went by he lost eight of his siblings. He attended Army day secondary school in Kano. He started his music career in 1996 and later got signed by Kennis music with other artistes like Innocent Idibai (Tuface), Tony Tetula, etc. he is popular for his style of rap which is Nigerian pidgin. He is also popular for being a fearless critic of the government and advocating for the masses. He released his first studio album in 2002 titled 'pass', which contained 'Mr. Lecturer' where he tackled the issue of sexual harassment of female students by male lecturers in universities. In 2004 he released his most popular song '*jaga jaga*' which generated a lot of controversy from both the government and the people. This eventually resulted in the ban of the song by the administration of president Olusegun Obasanjo whose government was at the center of this song. In 2005, he created his own label called '*Lakreem Music*' under which he released a different version of his hit song '*jaga jaga*' titled '*jaga jaga reloaded*' which was also a direct attack on the present administration of president Buhari.

4. Protest and Activism in Selected Songs

'Light up Naija' (2010)

The song 'Light up Naija' cannot be understood unless we examine the historicity of events prior to 2010. 2010 ushered an era where Nigeria would cease to be a third world country and move on to be a major power house in Africa and the world. Prior to 2010 was the youth initiative of the light up Naija campaign, which was basically a demand for better electricity across the

country. 'The vision 2010' dream was initiated by General Sani Abacha. He proposed that by the year 2010 Nigeria will become an economic powerhouse. To this, he set up a committee on 27th November 1996 to design a development blueprint that will usher Nigerian in a politically stable and economically prosperous nation (Kadupe 2022). According to Ujah(2019) as cited by Kadupe (2022), the committee was led by former interim head of state late Chief Ernest Shonekan and 248 person from different sectors of the country which included foreign experts were also selected. The single goal of this committee was to make Nigerian Africa's economic giant (Ujah 2019) and as key part of this vision was electricity which is the bedrock of industrialization. Therefore the 2009 #lightupnaija campaign was a reminder to fulfill its promise of stable electricity to Nigerians the coming year. Sound Sultan decided to lend his voice to this campaign when by 2010 the light up naija vision was not actualized. He chose to do this via music. In the song, he did not just emphasize on the provision of electricity by the government but also on other issues like corruption, bad governance, etc that were affecting the people.

Sound sultan in the opening verse of the song draws the people attention to the promise of the government to provide stable electricity to all Nigerians. Since it is the year 2010, they should ask the government where the electricity they promised is.

When we ask our government
When dem go give us light [when will they give us steady power supply]
Dem say na 2010, [they said 2010
We don dey wait 2010 since then
[we have been waiting for 2010 since then]
But now the waiting must end
Cuz 2010 don show oh oh oh [because 2010 is here]

These lines reinvigorate the Marxist ideology behind Sound Sultan's song, "Light Up Naija" from the framework which bestrides selected songs, we see the persona revolt and speak against the harrowing situation of the country carried out by the bourgeoisie (the government) against the proletariat (the masses). The song alludes to the power protest and music as a subgenre of poetry used to command and advocate change. He goes further by making a biblical allusion to Moses in the bible that God used to free the children of Israel from captivity *lines 7-8*, but he is afraid of the government because the likes of Fela who had tried to open the eyes of the people to rise up are all dead. He sings:

I want to be like Moses, eh
Show my people to dem to the promise land

But then I notice something
People wen try am don de underground
I see dem I ja

This simply means that the people ought to stop waiting for activist like musicians to lead protests against the government because the miracles of Moses may not be possible. In the last verse of the song MI Abaga, who was featured by sound sultan, decries the constant looting of the national treasury by the government at the people are left to live in penury. He refers to the government as 'locust' who eats up the green (national treasure). The locus is a very destructive pest who leaves nothing on the grain field when it invades any farm land. As a result of this evil act, the masses wallow in poverty and hunger. Therefore, he urged the people to rise up as a people and a nation against the government that it is only in doing so the government won't be able to suppress them. Apart from protesting against the failure of the government to provide stable electricity, he also touched on a number of issues like corruption, paper based election, etc.

As the title of the song implies, the artiste paints an ironic image of the epileptic power sector in Nigeria which has been a constant problem since independence. Electricity is key in the development and industrialization of any country but in Nigeria reverse is the case. Prior to the release of the song in 2010, previous government administrations had promised that by 2010, Nigeria's electricity problem will be a thing of the past because they would enjoy steady power supply but as at 2010 and even till date the government has still not lived up to its promise of steady power supply which has only gotten worse. The song 'light up Naija' serves as a reminder to the government on its failed promises and the hopeless state of Nigerians as regard getting better Electricity distribution. The opening lines of the song enforces the above summation.

When we ask our government
When dem go give us light
Dem say na 2010
Right now, 2010 don show

The artiste goes further by making allusion to Moses in the Bible who God sends to Pharaoh to free the children of Israel from captivity. This is captured in the lines 'i want to loke Moses/lead my people them to the promise land', but unlike Moses who succeeds in his assignment, he quickly withdraws after discovering that those who had attempted to saviours of the Nigerian people are all dead courtesy of the Nigerian government 'then I notice something/people wey try am/ don dey underground'. This withdrawal

from embarking on a rescue mission like Moses was not out of fear but as a result of the brutal treatment he had seen meted out to his predecessor as captured in the lines 'i see them i jah/me i fear this government people'. This harsh treatment of revolutionary voices that had stepped up before him reinforces the treatment of the masses by the ruling class of the Nigerian society.

Sound Sultan explores the hopelessness of Nigerians in the nation which have dams like Kainji dam, Ikere dam, Shiroro dam, Jebba dam, etc, all of which are hydro-electric and primarily for the purpose of generating electricity are not functional. Thus, Nigerians are left in darkness most of the time. It is also ironic that Nigeria supplies the natural gas used for generating 25% electricity in Ghana which has a steady supply of electricity but cannot generate electricity for herself (Faruk 2023). Also, the recent move by the NERC (Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission) and the Ministry of Power to categories Nigerians into different bands according to their usage and to hike electricity tariff by over 231% has dented any hope of the average Nigerian of getting stable and constant electricity supply because they cannot afford it given present economic realities (Ekpe 2024). In the closing lines of the song 'shey na today (na today)/we dey wait (we dey wait)' the artiste uses repetition to emphasize the state of hopelessness and nonchalant attitude of Nigerians towards promises made by the government and has gone on to look for solutions for themselves as evidenced in the line '...go buy candle (go buy candle).

'Monsters You Made' by Burna boy

The song "Monsters You Made" by Burna Boy and Chris Martin draws from a repertoire of Marxist tradition. It addresses the theme of resistance and its root causes. From the title of the song 'Monsters you made', the mind of the reader is drawn to the fact that monsters are not birthed but created and this creation is as a result of the conditions such a person has been subjected to. Therefore the song follows the trajectory of a cause and effect chain, where every action draws a reaction. This is delineated in the opening lines:

Calling me a monster, calling us fake
No way, no way, no way
Calling me a monster just 'cause we said

We see from these excerpt that insigation of a cause and effect chain where the oppressor forges monsters out of the oppressed because they clamour for better treatments; these are residues of Marxist underpins and it is then only proper for people to give in to

resistance after years of suppression and oppression and this idea is repeated throughout the song. The songs opens with a brief introduction from an unknown speaker: "If the government refuse to develop the region and continue the marginalisation, and injustice, the youth that's the people coming after us, will be more brutal, than what we have done." The above statement foreshadows a bleak future for the country and the Niger-delta region if the government do not stop neglecting the region and its people. In the lines: "where we create barricades/'keep opposition away', the artiste identifies a class divide between the rich and the poor which has not only fostered hatred from the people but has also contributed in the push for resistance by the people. The tension between the oppressors and the oppressed clearly reflect the Marxist idea that the history of society is the history of the class consciousness. The artiste goes further to create a vivid image of what is life on the other side of the divide looks like from line 7- 21, the Burna Boy addresses the issues of survival, kidnapping, pains that are hidden behind fake smiles, pollution from gas emission from oil multinationals into the atmosphere which turned the 'sky grey' and blocks out the light of the day. The sky turning grey is a reflection of the resultant effect of environmental pollution, n, the effect of consistent gas flares that has destroyed the eco system. The colour grey is used as a synecdoche for smoke and soothe. To further buttress that the sky turning grey has nothing to do with night time, the song writer asserts that "it took the light from the day", an allusion to the fact that cities in the Niger Delta region, especially those close to areas where oil is extracted usually experience soot which usually covers the sky when falling. The oppressed are therefore angry at their predicament as "they've been working like slaves/ to get some minimum wage" which is not sufficient to cater for their needs. The government, on the other hand accuses the people of destroying the region and bringing the country to its knees economically for taking up arms to fight for themselves and what they believed is their entitlement. This is contextualised in the following line of the song where Burna Boy justifies violence as a form of resistance to marginalisation and oppression. The government "blame/ them for their anger and rage/ and the response of the government is to 'put them in shackles and chains/ because of what they have become." The government therefore responds to their anger and violence by using the machinery of the state to suppress the people as represented by words "shackles" and "chains." The song writer continues to justify the violence as he asserts that "we are the monsters you made." The Marxist leaning of this song is also in the "push back" narrative that this song embodies, especially as seen in the title "Monsters you

Made.” The Marxist theorist believes in revolution, in fighting back against those who sit as oppressors in oppressive systems and the chant for revolution is evident in the song. The fight back against the oppressors is in form of dissent and violence, a way to break the hegemonic hold on violence that the government seems to possess. The artiste acknowledges that in the face of brutality, even the calmest people will take to arms to defend their right for survival. They will fight back against oppression by employing the tools of oppression used to oppress them. At a time when silence is the order of the day and the government has come to be known as one aimed at bullying the citizens, the emerging of monsters is unexpected. Change in any society must come as a result of the oppressed challenging the oppressors and completely refusing to remain as second-class citizens in their own country.

The song also critiques imperial oppression, which started with colonial education and the rewriting of African history to portray Africa as reliant on Europe for civilization. The songwriter draws parallels by analyzing the present situation through the historical lens of colonialism, where the distortion of truth began with the misrepresentation of African history by outsiders who knew little about Africa and wrote from a place of superiority. This is captured in the extract below:

And skip them classes in school
 Because the teacher dem teachings
 What the white man dem teaching dem
 European teachings in my African school
 So fuck dem classes in school
 Fuck mongo park and the fool
 That said they found river Niger
 They've been lying to you
 Ain't no denying the truth

The term "white man" here represents more than just the literal figure who rewrote African history, disregarding its cultures and traditions during colonial interactions. It also symbolizes neo-colonialism. Just as white is positioned against black, with black seen as inferior, neo-colonial powers position themselves above the masses (former colonies) with a false sense of superiority. Education therefore was used as a tool to indoctrinate the minds of the 207olonized, feeding them “nonsense” to manipulate their thinking which has made many detest their African roots and heritage. The artiste, therefore calls for the abandonment of these educational practice which is also a form of resistance. “Monsters You Made” is a deeply political and socially conscious song. Burna Boy uses this song to shed light on the historical and present-day injustices that Nigerians and Africans face. Through

the song, Burna Boy has painted a vivid picture of how systemic violence, exploitation, and neglect create “monsters” out of people who are forced to survive in a world that continues to oppress them.

Also, he warns the government in the introductory part of the song *Monster You Made* that if adequate measures are not taken to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor, the generations to come might be more ‘brutal’ than the current. This is a reiteration of the saying of Mallam Aminu Kano ‘Nigeria will know no peace until the son of a nobody can be somebody without knowing anybody’, and also the saying of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, who warned the elites when he said the children of the poor you failed train will never let your children have peace (Ogbeni, 2020). Burna boy take up the role of an activist by agitating for better governance, better economic conditions, and against the wrong use of the military arm of government to repress the people.

‘Jaga jaga’ reloaded by Eedris Abdulkareem

Jaga Jaga Reloaded (2021), by Eedris Abdulkareem ft. Mr. Raw and Queen Madarocka The song Jaga Jaga Reloaded examines the dystopian character of the Nigerian society, as characterised by portrayals of rancid lawlessness, rudderless leadership, socioeconomic inequality and historico-political absurdities that should not be present in a working polity. The song's tone admixtures the vitriolic and the pessimistic, especially as the song title suggests a "reloaded" or remixed rendition of a blockbuster original released in 2004; and hence, a rehashed social-realist lamentation. It is therefore not surprising to hear the tone of indignation that underlies the lyricism of the April 2021 remix, indicating that since its original 2004 release, socio-developmental indicators have been worse. The statistics around the the time of the 2021 remix release, that foreground the lyricism and tonality of the song are quite damning. On the 2020 Global Terrorism Index published annually by The Institute for Economics and Peace (headquartered in Sydney, Australia), to measure the impact of terrorism on nation states, Nigeria was ranked the 4th most terrorised country in the world (with an index score of 8.314), evincing a higher volatility than nations like Syria (7.778; 4th), Somalia (7.645; 5th), Yemen (7.581; 6th), and Pakistan (7.541; 7th). Nigeria's ranking in the 2021 global Corruption Perceptions Index tanked to 154th position among 180 countries — its worst performance on the index since 2012 — from 149th in the previous 2020, and even more downward from the 136th maintained between 2014 and 2016 (GTI, 2020). The Corruption Perceptions Index is a ranking based on how corrupt a country's public sector is perceived to be, by Statista,

a world-renowned German statistics platform that specialises in data gathering and visualisation sourced through surveys and analysis.

In the 2021 Rule of Law Index, published by The World Justice project, an independent multidisciplinary organisation founded as a presidential initiative of the American Bar Association in Washington DC, Nigeria ranked 121 out of 139 countries (World Justice Project 2021). The Rule of Law index is a yearly global ranking of countries, factored by constraints on government powers, absence of corruption, open government, fundamental rights, order and security, regulatory enforcement, and civil and criminal justice. Also, according to the 2021 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Multidimensional Poverty Index (measured against a 2017 purchasing power parity of \$2.15), 16.6% of Nigeria's population were vulnerable to multidimensional poverty, 18.1% were already living in severe multidimensional poverty, and another 30.9% earned income below the poverty line. Likewise, according to the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS), about 133 million Nigerians suffer from multidimensional poverty, amounting to a staggering 63% of the national population, or an approximate ratio of 6 out every 10 persons. In March 2021, the Bureau also reported that Nigeria's unemployment rate had risen to 33.3%, translating to at least 23.2 million people — being the highest in 13 years of reporting the country's unemployment figure, and the second-highest rate globally, at the time (NBS, 2023). *Jaga Jaga Reloaded* in the light of the indices above, prefigure such resignation and listlessness, that the song is chorused by a dystopian clarion: "Jaga Jaga eeehh / Everything scatter scatter / Poor man still dey suffer suffer / Kosa kosa, gun shots inna the air". The vernacular adjective "jaga jaga" describes a scattered state of things, a perpetual upheaval that foregrounds the dystopian everyday reality of the Nigerian nation. The "jaga jaga" lexicon also frames the anarchy and pessimism that underscores the Nigerian sociopolis, within which its citizens manage both their aspirations for a better life, and their disdain for the status-quo. The lyrics of the song does not offer remedial discourse to the Nigerian condition, instead maintains a brash and almost condemnatory pessimism throughout. The social, political and economic state of the country as lamented in the song in its 2004 initial release, earned the disapprobation of the then President, Olusegun Obasanjo, who banned it from public airplay after perceiving it as dissent. This demonstrates the power of music as a socio realistic tool that documents the mood of the citizenry and the pulse of the nation. In the 2021 remix, the lyricism was no different, provoking an awareness of national

issues such as insecurity, infrastructural decay, unemployment and rule of law. Over a decade straddles the initial release of the song in 2004 and the "reloaded" version in 2021, and issues such as political violence and assassination have remained: "It's been twenty years / Nigeria's still jaga jaga." The utter departure from the utopian imagination foregrounds for the song, a hapless tone two decades into Fourth Republic democracy: "This na democracy military / Government don send soldiers out / kill plenty Lagosians wey come protest for Toll gate [...] / Army shoot people papa/ Police dey kill people mama." The song captures the systemic suppression of dissent in Nigeria's sociopolitical space, evidenced by the government's draconian reaction to civil protests. The #EndSARS protests of October 2020, is particularly implicated in the song, and the lyrics criticise severe economic and social regimentation, as well as the fascist suppression of opposition in favour of a centralised political metanarrative. The song alludes to the lack of accountability and politicisation of casualty figures that followed after the tollgate shootings on the night of October 20, 2020, that left even the international media shocked at the brazen aggression of the Nigerian Army against unarmed youths:
 First of all, dem tell us say nobody die for the tollgate
 Second of all, they lie to us, two people die for the tollgate
 All of a sudden, the military say na the governor invite them
 Governor accepted, him invite them but he nor tell them make them shoot
 Who order the shooting o?

Much of the gripe with the nation's governance system — as the song highlights — stems from the shoddy operation of Nigeria's federal structure, where resources and political agency are unequally distributed amongst the regions and states. Coup d'etats and election violence, the 1967-70 Nigerian Civil War and chaotic resource-control legislations since Independence, have all been reactions to the imbalance of the country's federal ethos: "Federalism na im we want / Your ojoro too much / religion and nepotism na na problem wey you get. *Jaga Jaga Reloaded* intensifies this political critique by inserting secessionist rhetoric into the song's Marxist dialectic of the centric versus the margined, the elite versus the plebeians, and the bourgeois betrayal of the commonwealth: "Pharaoh should let my people go (tufiakwa) / No single main road dey for Southeast / me I doubt it /say our Governors na our mouthpiece / The same people wey hide palliatives / when we dey hungry." The song's title metaphorises the gloom, helplessness, abuse of authority, lawlessness, corruption, infrastructural collapse and

disillusionment that are all too familiar to the Nigerian citizen. The fact that the song is remixed two decades after its original release and that issues that were mentioned in the original 2004 release were still very dominant in 2021 Nigeria (and even currently), shows that not much progress has been made, and the singers' frustration are manifest

Some of the literary devices and poetic devices employed by the artiste in composing and in deliverance of his intended message include: allusion: the biblical allusion to Moses in the bible in sound sultans light up naija. Rhetorical question: 'who gave the military/the order to shoot at protesters' in jaga jaga reloaded. The songs were all written in blank verses. The artistes made use of rhyme: 'Fela don go/after the doe/mini mani mo also, kelebe, olele, skelebe, etc. various themes were also identified in the songs: corruption, police brutality, insecurity, poverty, etc.

5. Conclusion

The role of music in society cannot be overemphasized as it is documentation of events around us. Musical artistes also, cannot be ignored as they occupy a vital role in society because they function not just as entertainers but as social commentators and activists in decrying the deficiency of the government in providing the necessary amenities for her citizens. These artistes lend their voices and support for the masses through their songs by advocating for them, telling their pains and urging them to stand up and fight for what is theirs. Music as a tool for activism and protest has continued to thrive due to the fact that social, economic and political problems protested against by previous artistes like Fela over two decades ago are still very prevalent and relevant in today's society. Through the use of the theory of relative deprivation, this study has been able to identify the economic hardship and the lack of basic amenities created by the government and how this gap has led to protest from these artistes and even members of the society. These artistes in their songs have also provided possible ways in which the government can solve the problem of the masses. Music activism and as a tool of protest has witnessed great success due to the internet, as it has created awareness and served as a tool for mobilization for the masses. It has also generated a lot of debate both locally and internationally. The international community, not just its leaders but also its citizens have been made aware of the treatment of the Nigerian people and many have lent their voice in support of the cause of the masses as was done during the Endsars protest.

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