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COMMUNITY MUSICAL PERFORMANCE AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT NEXUS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Youth as an important segment of many society form in larger part of the populace, and can only contribute greatly to the societal development if their strength is adequately directed. One of the means of reinvigorating youth to add value to the society is musical activities. This paper therefore examined community musical performance and youth empowerment nexus for sustainable development in Nigeria. In the paper, efforts were made to discuss youth, music in African community, forms of musical performance in the society, youth empowerment as well as some historical evidences for sustainable development with particular reference to Nigerian society. This paper concludes that the empowerment of youth musically will promote career empowerment for better life, social mix and cohesion, these in turn would boost the actualization of sustainable development in the locality. The paper recommends that the musically talented youth should be encouraged by philanthropists and group donors in the society in sponsoring their careers. Government should also create platforms for youth to showcase their musical talents which will eventually enhance the development of Nigerian society as they contribute through community musical performance of all sorts.

Keywords: Community Music, Empowerment, Musical Performance, Sustainable Development, Youth.

Introduction

Music is assumed as a universal phenomenon and an aspect of people's culture. Communities are known with a kind of music or the other, either as instrumental, vocal or mixed. It is thus, an indispensable art in human existence that form part of human life from birth to grave. Music create communities and promotes creative agency (Karlsen & Westernhind, 2010). This implies that the field of art express and apply human creative skills and imagination to convey a whole range of experiences in the environments and emotions. In other words, the arts, especially music, make people better and give them something positive to do and contribute to the community at large through musical performance. Among human categories that music engage in the society are youth. It influences their behavioural habits, moods, emotions and participations in various places in communities and the larger society.

The youth in no doubt, influenced by music in any society, are the engine of growth and development, because they provide the labour force for production of goods and services (Eugene & Eme, 2014). Youth constitute a larger percentage of the work force of any society where they are adequately equipped. Youth empowerment is a viable means of equipping youth members of a society to be productive with a view to improving their standard of living

and as well as sustain the development of their society. The musical empowerment of youth is achievable when the youth are actively involved in music empowerment programmes. Jegede, Irewole and Dada (2019) asserted that youth empowerment is indeed a key strategy to tackle the challenges created by rapid changing social, economic, technological and demographic environments in Nigeria.

A close examination of the identified Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) clearly shows that community musical activities could serve as an avenue for mobilization and act as a catalyst for economic growth and human resource development especially among the youth. A widespread of community musical activities through which youth can be empowered exists. For instance, Austrian Instrumental and vocal folk musical activities and their corresponding communities of practice, fall under the description of community music as music in the community and "communal music making" as expressed by Higgins (2012).

In African setting, in Nigeria to be specific, musical performances as the most universal of the performing arts can be found in the most diverse context and domains such as" sacred or secular, classical or popular, closely connected to work or entertainment, at rituals festival events or oral traditions. It can recount a community's history, singing the praises of those who play key roles in economic transactions. Thus, the occasions on which community music is performed are just as varied" marriages, funerals, rituals and initiations, festivals, all kind of entertainment, as well as many other social functions (https://ich.unesco.org/en/performingart.

Youth as a Concept

Youth as a word, has divers interpretations among people. There are several definitions of youth. For instance, according to Odufowokan and Bakare (2017), citing 'Encarta Dictionary', "youth" is the state of being young, an early stage of life of a human being; the period of human life between childhood and maturity. As regards African Youth Report (2009) by United Nations, youth is defined as people between 15 and 39 years of age. However, the Nigerian Youth Policy defines the youth as all young people of ages 18 to 35 years. Youth is the period of human development between childhood and adulthood.

Young people are most productive sector of any society. They are often referred to as future leaders. The extent of their vitality positively correlated with the development of their country (Nigeria Youth Policy, 2019 – 2023). Youth in a developing nation like Nigeria have vital roles to play towards community, social and sustainable development of Nigerian nation. According to Adeline and Eme (2015), the role of youth on national development is sacrosanct to the whole developmental aspiration of any society. The youth of a nation determine how viable it is. They are useful as agent of change and development of any nation. Indeed, youth holds a significant position in the socialization process from the traditional family institutions to the school, peer group and some other groups in the society where they play membership roles and leadership responsibilities. Any attempt to further define and describe whom youth are must look into the growing social structures and conceptualisation of social biographies of cultures with reference to age, norms and categorization of their citizenry. Youth in any case is a human entity with the strength to perform developmental tasks if well empowered adequately in any setting they belong.

Music in African Community

Music as a universal language has been variously defined in the context of musical arts. For instance, Nnanyelugo and Anja-Njoku (2015) have it that music is the fundamental component of human cultural existence. Every society determines what should be considered as music or not. Music's unique power is to reveal the elements of beauty which are not accessible by other means to humanity. One of the fields where creativity is well and often demonstrated is music. Rhythm and tone are parts of the varieties of musical raw materials used to demonstrate human skills and abilities for religious awareness, psychological, cultural and traditional believes. It is thus the product of people and societies which give life and identify to human societies through various cultural expressions. It can be inferred that music is a strong tool for socio-economic and cultural interaction.

In Africa, music from various background and cultures are demonstrated in form of dance, dramatization and musical compositions such music and songs are not uncommon in celebrations like ritual displays, funerals, birthdays and so on. Historical records revealed that cylindrical drums were footed in |Nigeria from the 10th to 14th century. Africans with its accompany music genre and singing use music as a tool of communication. For example, nursing mothers pet their babies with songs while crying. Songs is also used as a motivator to encourage babies as they learn to walk. As the mother are also busy at work coordinated sounds or rhythm are displayed along with dancing on occasions to instill peace and happiness in the babies. When Africans compose music, their minds are conveyed to the hearers in the cultural environment. There is no gainsaying in the fact that African music remains valuable in every respect, and indeed very significant to the development of the society and its culture.

Forms of Musical Performance in the Society

Musical performance is a reflection of human creativity and cultural expression in form of vocal, instrumental or combination of vocal and instrumental music. Vocal music is one of the popular areas of specialization in Nigeria music industry (Jayeola 2021). Vocal musical performance can be in form of vocal music with or without instrumental accompaniment which can be regarded as sacred or secular in nature. It can be individual or group performance, either as homophonic or polyphonic, which are multiple part singing commonly found in African music. Contemporary Nigerian society embraces instrumental music which combines both indigenous and Western musical instruments which are popular in some of Western Nigerian musical styles such as highlife, Juju music and in recent times, Fuji music which employs, some Western instruments such as keyboard, set drum and saxophone. There are some musical performances that are basically traditional and such are still maintaining, the use of indigenous musical instrument. These categories include court music and ritual music. Omojola (2006), affirms that the predominant category of performances in Nigeria consist of those in which voice and instruments are combined. This is extant in different musical expressions available in Nigeria either as religious or entertainment music.

Youth Empowerment and Historical Evidences for Sustainable Development

Youth empowerment is a practical process of equipping young members of a society in order to be productive members of their culture. It aims at improving living standard and sustainable development. Youth empowerment is achieved through active involvement of youth in empowerment programmes. Kolade, Towobola, Ayeni and Omodewu (2014) opined

that youth empowerment is broadly employed to explain effort aimed at providing skills and enabling environment for youth to lead decent lives and contribute meaningfully to national development. It follows therefore, that any nation that will flow with the waves of the 21st century tide of progress must engage its youth and empower its young talents. That is why there have been several initiatives and hands-on-skill programmes to empower youths in Nigeria. Such of which are organised by individuals, organisations or governments with the view of equipping the Nigerian youth for sustainable living. Such youth empowerment programmes which are otherwise known as youth empowerment strategies in Nigerian include: National Directorate of Employment (NDE). The YouWinProgramme (The youth Enterprise with innovation), National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), Post-Service Scheme, and the Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) among others.

A peculiar reference on youth empowerment is the musical group based in ancient city of Oyo, Oyo State named *Freedom For All Group* which was established to empower and engage children, youth and young adults in musical performance for sustainable development. Oyo is an ancient city in Oyo State of Nigeria. It was founded as the capital of the remnant of the historic Oyo Empire in the 1830's and had a dominant position in the medieval West Africa. Thus, the ruling elites of Oyo town are mainly Oyo clan of the Yoruba people. The musical group based in the ancient city is specifically located at Obanako Road, off Iyaji, Oyo, Oyo State, Nigeria. The group was founded by Reverend Ogbole Emmanuel in year 2000. The founder observed lots of moral decadence in the contemporary Nigerian environment. That is, moral world is collapsing daily and moral degeneration has ushered in youth restiveness. According to the founder of the group, youth restiveness is one of the global phenomena which is a concern to Nigeria stakeholders because of its alarming rate of increase, hence, the need for the youth empowerment group through music and musical performance.

The members of the *Freedom For All Group* are selected through talent display of all sorts as songs composition, dancing, singing, and playing of musical instruments and also empower interested members in those areas of musical engagement as stated. Till date, the group activities continue to be unfolding, and the scenario of its progress and sustainable development of its members and the larger society are noteworthy.

Also available literature pointed to Atlas Music Festival in Tunisia organized in the small town of Beni Mtir near the mountainous border with Algeria, with a view to exploring and redefining the possibility of musical creation and interaction as well as for empowerment. Rimmer(2017) in his claim reported that in identifying and solving youth problems, community music has been identified as a tool of empowerment. He buttressed that recent years have witnessed alignment between community music activity and youth taking place across formal domains and occurring within informal settings. Through community musical performances therefore, youth in the society are empowered for functional living and sustainable development.

Improvements in social organisations and interactions through community musical activities are prone to breed sustainable development. Sustainable development is the development without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs (Boyi, 2013). The term sustainable development is an offshoot of the United Nations General Assembly special summit that came up on 25 – 27 September 2015 in New York. In a global

context, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed upon by the United Nations including Nigeria are expected to be forstered between 2015 and 2030 among the member nations. Out of the seventeen SDGs, SDG1 – End proverty in all its forms everywhere, SDG 8 – Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all and SDG 16 – Promote peaceful and inclusive society for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels by implication, would be achieved through effective community musical performance. A close examination of the identified Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) clearly shows that community musical performance could become an agency for mobilization and act as a catalyst for desired growth and development in terms of economic and human resources, especially among the youth in the contemporary society.

Conclusion

Youth in the contemporary society can be empowered through community musical activities among many other avenues of empowerment practices. Nigerian society in recent times has been witnessing violence among the youth in many communities and this evil act is rampant. Be as it is, different countries all over the world are making use of community musical activities to keep youth engaged and productive which in turn would improve their living standard and at the same time contributing to the sustainable development of their societies. So far, music is part of everyone from birth to grave, it is the product of people and societies that give life and identify to human societies through diverse cultural expressions. In Nigerian society there are different forms of musical performances which include Highlife, Juju music, Fuji music, and many more. Empowerment of youth musically will promote career empowerment for better life, social mix and cohesion. Therefore, empowerment of youth through music and musical performance is inevitable towards sustainable development of Nigerian nation, as it breeds social interaction and productivity.

Recommendations

1. Parents should encourage their children who are interested in pursuing musical career.
2. Members of the society should be given adequate orientation towards community musical performance either as an artist or audience.
3. Well-meaning Nigerians that are financially boyant should establish foundations which will give room for talent hunts and sponsor youth in their musical career of choice.
4. Government should also create platforms for youth to showcase their musical talent on local government basis and further finance their musical career.

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