

**MUSIC AS A CHANNEL OF SOCIETAL REGENERATION IN SELECTED
SONGS OF FALZ AND TIMAYA**

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CERTIFICATION

I certify that this study was carried out by **Ewoma Constance AGBAJINEKE** in the Department of English and Literature, University of Benin, Benin City, under my supervision.

Professor Adeleke, E . B.
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Date

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my parents J. O Agbajineke and Mrs. F Agbajineke for their love, guidance, affection and support to me.

Also, to my brother and my sisters, for all their prayers and cares. They are wonderful in their unique ways.

Above all, I dedicate this project to the Almighty God for giving me the two phased wisdom, the one that comes from above and the other that springs from beneath. The former inspired by the truth light of nature and the later by divine revelation. God has promised me more and I love him so.

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ABSTRACT

This essay examined the place of music as a tool for social awareness and societal regeneration. The work adopts the Marxist theory in the qualitative analysis of 15 songs by two popular Nigerian Artists, Falz and Timaya, in a way of depicting the representation of issues in the Nigerian socio-political Scene from 2010 to 2022. The findings reveal that the songs of these artists raise awareness on societal ills like corruption, exploitation, oppression, hypocrisy, and moral decadence in order to bring about resistance and hardwork in the pursuit of social change. The work contributes to knowledge by providing specific insights into how the Artists utilize distinct musical styles and lyrical content to address social issues in Nigeria

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Purpose of Study

This study investigates the role of music as a channel for societal regeneration, with a focus on selected songs by Falz and Timaya. It aims at examining how Marxist theory can be applied to uncover the societal ills addressed in these songs, and how they can be used to raise awareness and promote positive change in the Nigeria sociopolitical landscape.

1.1 Scope of Study

This study focuses on selected songs by Nigerian musicians Falz and Timaya, examining their lyrics and messages through a Marxist theoretical model. The scope is limited to songs released between 2010 and 2022, allowing for an analysis of contemporary societal issues in Nigeria. Specifically, this study analyzes a total of [8] songs by Falz and [7] songs by Timaya, chosen for their thought-provoking commentary on pressing issues like corruption, exploitation, oppression, and hypocrisy, making them ideal case studies for exploring music's potential in sparking societal regeneration.

1.2 Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach, as suggested by Leedy and Ormond (13), which involves interpreting and analyzing non-numerical data. This approach is particularly suitable for exploring the thematic content of songs and their potential impact on societal regeneration.

The data collection process involved the researcher playing and listening to selected songs by Falz and Timaya. The lyrics of these songs were then transcribed as excerpts. A Marxist theoretical framework was applied to analyze and extrapolate the points raised in the lyrics, uncovering themes and messages related to societal regeneration, corruption, exploitation, oppression, and hypocrisy.

The selected songs were categorized based on the societal ills they addressed. Falz's songs, for instance, included "Amen" (critiquing religious hypocrisy), "Hypocrite" (condemning societal double standards), "Johnny" (highlighting police brutality), "This is Nigeria" (addressing corruption and societal decay), "E No Finish" (lamenting the struggles of the common man), and "Follow Follow" (satirizing mindless conformity). Timaya's songs, on the other hand, included "Pity for Us" (bemoaning societal neglect), "Gragra" (celebrating resilience in the face of adversity), "Something Must to Kill a Man" (decrying the harsh realities of life), "Telli Person" (encouraging personal

responsibility), "God I Beg" (seeking divine intervention), "Don Dada" (asserting individuality), and "Light" (offering hope and inspiration). These categorizations facilitated a nuanced analysis of the artists' engagement with societal issues and their potential contributions to regeneration.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the Marxism critical theory as its theoretical model. Marxism is a theory founded by a German political, revolutionist, economic, and philosophical theorist, Karl Heinrich Marx(1818-1883). The Marxist literary theory is a theory that analyses how literature mirrors and criticizes the social and economic structure of society. It explores the themes of class struggles, exploitation, and the role that ideology plays in maintaining or preserving power imbalances. Karl Marx posits that "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle"(Marx and Engel 30).

According to Gregory Castle;

Marxism is a form, it holds that all social realities are fundamentally material, that they have their origin and being in specific forms of labor and production, and that the history of society is the history of dialectical transformations in the

relationship between labor and production. For Marx, there were two social classes, the capitalist and the proletariat(108).

He also opines that the "Marxist theory is predicated on the idea that literature is a product of social forces, and ideology"(108).

M.A.R Habib states that "The tradition of Marxism has provided a powerful and sustained critique of capitalist institutions and ethics"(208). He also goes further to say "According to Marx's notion of ideology, the ruling class represents its interests as the interest of the people as a whole"(209). According to him, Terry Eagleton, the most prominent Marxist critic in Britain "insists that there are two fundamental premises in Marx form which any Marxist criticism must begin. In the first place, all forms of consciousness- religious, moral, philosophical, legal, as well as language itself have no independent history and arise from the activity of men. Secondly, class struggle is viewed as the central dynamic of historical development"(232).

Also, Richard D. Wollf notes that Karl Marx "discovered that the reason why capitalism failed to realize liberty, equality, fraternity and democracy, was that its own structure and social effects were themselves obstacles to realizing those lofty goals"(1). Also, "Engels argued that the downgraded conditions of the English proletariat, generated

by their industrial exploitation, would eventually mold it to a revolutionary political force"(Habib 527).

According to Wolff, "Capitalism, Marx said never went beyond those economic models where a few dominate a majority. Capitalism just replaced the dichotomies of master/slave and land/serf with a new one. A dominating and exploiting minority was still there, but it had a new name: employee"

This essay examine selected songs from the two aforementioned artists with focus on the abuse of power and exploitation of the working class or proletariat.

1.5 Review of Related Scholarship

Considering the fact that Falz and Timaya are renowned music artists, it is expected that several studies on their music already exist. Falz's consistency in trying to mirror Nigerian society through his music attracts the attention of literary critics who see him as the younger version of Fela, the legendary Afrobeats artist who made strong comments on the social and political state of Nigerian society in the 190s.

Music is a universal thing that appeals to everyone irrespective of race, colour, age, or gender and has been used several times to satisfy societal needs. The issue of music being an instrument for societal change is a widely researched topic and different

Scholars around the globe have contributed to the knowledge of it, using different songs and artists. However, not enough research has been done on the selected songs that will be examined in this long essay concerning the social and political influence that music can have on the society.

One of the notable scholars is Idolor who contends that "no phenomenon void of utility survives in a society; an indication that the presence of music has a role to play"(qtd. in Adegaju 4:2). This statement indicates that music has always been used to satisfy one societal need or the other.

Another scholar, Samuel Alaba Akinwotu observes that Falz "employs his music as a tool for socio-political reformation driven by the utilitarian ideology"(61). The utilitarian ideology is an ideology that argues that whether an action is right or wrong depends on the kind of consequences it invokes. Akinwotu goes further to say that "Falz assumes the position of a moral reformer to advance this theory in his songs by criticizing and condemning actors and actions that tend to negatively impact on the general good and well-being of the society"(61). These actors are divided into five categories of social actors; "individuals, civil/public servants, professionals, leaders/leaderships, groups/bodies(76). He deduces that these categories of people in society have different

roles and if they are not well played and it affect the society badly, then it is wrong, and this is what Falz tries to portray through music.

In comparing Falz to the legendary Afrobeat artist Fela, Destiny Idegbekwe, and Augustine Aikoriogie point out that "while the lyrics of Falz can be seen as not mentioning specific instances of the poor nature of Nigerians amid plenty, it amplifies in many ways, the image Fela creates"(69). In his music, Falz does not specify the poor states of the average Nigerian but his music goes a long way in making clearer, the picture that Fela has always tried to paint concerning the Nigerian society with his music.

Also, Martins Isaac Mojeoluwalope observes that just "like the late Nigerian Afrobeat Music Legend, Fela Anikulapo, who incorporated elements of protest and displeasure in his songs, Falz expressed his displeasure with the socio-political and economic issues plaguing Nigerian citizens in his song..."(35).

From the above statement, it will be right to assume that Falz has taken over Fela's music legacy which involves criticizing the bad nature of Nigerian society.

Idegbekwe and Aikoriogie also note that "when it gets to name calling, using perceived public opinions, Falz leans on the existing tradition of the genre in Nigeria to create a link with the audience. Fela was also known to have a critique of government and private officials making astronomical wealth whereas most of the people in their

immediate environment remained poor". Still comparing Falz to Fela, they go further to say "another area that Falz and Fela criticize and which can be relatable on an intertextual level is the religious exploitation of Nigerians by both the Christian and Moslem leaders"(70).

In appraising Fela's music, Olufemi A. Olaleye and Doris C.Osuagwu observed that "Fela's music instilled patriotic and nationalistic feelings in the society and his lyrics helped in the control and articulation of government programmes"(144). This is what Falz hopes to achieve with his songs. They go even further to refer to Fela as the "harbinger of social conscience"(146).

Ogaga Okuyade notes that "Throughout Nigeria, music is now considered a legitimate and potent medium to pass messages across to people, especially socio-political messages, on occasions when government tries to shield the realities of situations from the ruled". In this situation, the music artist assumes the role of the informer who arouses people's consciousness through music. He refers to Timaya's music as having "an ethnic and regional temper which exposes the asymmetries in the distribution of resources in Nigeria telling the Niger Delta predicament to other Nigerians, who may refuse to examine the plight of the micro minorities today in the Niger Delta"(83).

In tackling the unasked question of why only a few musicians have taken up the legacy of Fela, Chinazor Roseline Okpokwasili wrote that "Musicians avoided being involved in the political and social commentaries, partly due to an ingrained fear of persecution from powerful political class just like Fela witnessed". She said "The urge to fight back by Nigerians was there but always suppressed. And she goes further to say "Musicians were looked upon to step in just like in the past but this time, the response has been muted. Until the Nigerian renowned lawyer who embraced music as a career Folarin Falana(Falz) entered the scene in the 2000s. The rapper surfaced as the inevitable evolution of Fela's activism"(204).

1.6 Justification of Study

Having reviewed these previous works on the impact of music on social change in Nigeria, there exists a scholarly gap in the treatment of music as a tool for creating awareness to social maladies and how these could be remedied in a way of societal regeneration. This is the social point of the study using Falz and Timaya's songs as tools for analysis.

1.7 Thesis Statement

Falz's and Timaya's songs help to create awareness to societal ills in order to bring about societal regeneration.

CHAPTER TWO

AWARENESS TO SOCIETY ILLS

As direct products of the Nigerian society, Falz and Timaya feel the need to advocate for change both in the societal structures that aid the exploitation of the working class people of the country and in the attitude of Nigerians to socio-political issues. Nigerians appear already used to the term "suffering and smiling" as a result of the exploitation that they have been made to go through. The artists understand that it is difficult for people to stand up and fight for themselves or seek change if they do not know the dangers and repercussions of their social and political slumber.

Since entertainers are the most followed on social media, and their fans see them as demigods, he decided to use his platform to educate the masses about the danger of being negligent and expecting change to come to them. Olaleye and Osuagwu posit that "Music is one of the society's weapons of offense and defence"(146). For Falz and Timaya, music is their instrument of awareness and a sword of defense with which they hope to wake the people up and educate them on the threatening dangers around them. By doing this, the artists assume the role of a town crier using their musical platform to alert the people awakening their consciousness to societal issues.

2.1 Religious Hypocrisy and Moral Decadence

Falz's song "Amen" is a scathing critique of religious hypocrisy, particularly within the context of Nigerian society. The track delves into themes of moral decadence, exploitation, and the commercialization of faith, exposing how some religious leaders manipulate their congregants for personal gain. Through sharp satire, vivid storytelling, and biting commentary, Falz challenges listeners to critically examine the practices and ideologies perpetuated in certain religious institutions. This analysis explores how "Amen" addresses these issues through its lyrics, imagery, and thematic elements.

1 Religious Hypocrisy as a Central Theme

At its core, "Amen" critiques the disconnect between the purported spiritual mission of churches and the materialistic pursuits of some pastors. Falz highlights this hypocrisy by juxtaposing biblical teachings with the lavish lifestyles of clergy members who exploit their followers' piety for financial gain. For instance, he sings:

Pull up in a Rolls-Royce Ghost / My bodyguard armed /
Oga don't come close / I get bread, bakery dey my condo
/ But I dey feed five thousand with only one loaf. (*Amen*
by Falz)

Here, Falz uses irony to mock the ostentatious wealth flaunted by some pastors while claiming divine favor or miraculous provision. By referencing the biblical miracle of Jesus feeding 5,000 people with five loaves and two fishes, Falz underscores the absurdity of comparing genuine acts of faith with self-serving displays of opulence. This contrast reveals the moral decay at the heart of such hypocrisy—where the focus shifts from serving God to amassing earthly riches.

The chorus further amplifies this critique:

If you don't put your offering and tithe in the bowl /

Blessing on your life go slow. (*Amen by Falz*)

This line mocks the coercive tactics employed by some religious leaders to extract money from vulnerable congregants under the guise of divine blessings. Instead of fostering genuine spiritual growth, these practices reduce religion to a transactional relationship where monetary contributions determine one's access to grace. Falz exposes the emptiness of such rhetoric, emphasizing how it exploits the gullibility of believers.

2 Moral Decadence Among Religious Leaders

Another key theme in "Amen" is the moral decadence exhibited by some religious figures. Falz paints a damning picture of pastors who prioritize personal enrichment over communal welfare. He describes a scenario where:

Pastor house na him dey fine pass / My people them
dey stay for poor surrounding. (*Amen by Falz*)

This stark contrast between the pastor's luxurious lifestyle and the poverty-stricken conditions of his congregation illustrates the systemic inequality perpetuated by corrupt religious leadership. Rather than addressing societal inequities, these leaders exacerbate them by siphoning resources meant for community development. Falz points out that this behavior not only undermines the church's credibility but also erodes public trust in religious institutions.

Moreover, the song critiques the commodification of faith, where religion becomes a tool for profit rather than salvation. Falz laments:

You sell hope / You sell faith / You sell dreams to get paid. (*Amen
by Falz*)

These lines highlight the exploitative nature of prosperity gospel teachings, which often promise unrealistic outcomes in exchange for financial offerings. Such narratives prey on the desperation of individuals seeking solace, trapping them in cycles of dependency and disillusionment. Falz suggests that this practice reflects a profound moral failure, as it prioritizes material wealth over spiritual enlightenment.

3 Satire and Social Commentary

One of the most striking aspects of "Amen" is its use of satire to deliver social commentary. Falz employs humor, sarcasm, and exaggeration to expose the flaws in contemporary religious practices. For example, he ridicules the exorbitant cost of offerings during church services:

Then they started the offering / At a thousand dollars / And then they
said / If you don't got cash / Then we got ATM machines. (*Amen by Falz*)

This hyperbolic depiction of greed serves as both a critique and a call to action, urging listeners to question the legitimacy of such demands. By framing these practices as absurd, Falz encourages critical thinking and skepticism toward institutions that exploit faith for profit.

Additionally, the song incorporates spoken-word segments that recount real-life experiences of disillusioned churchgoers. One member recounts:

He raises funds in the church / And keeps the money in his
purse / Without giving to the church authorities. (*Amen by
Falz*)

These anecdotes humanize the broader critique, illustrating the tangible impact of religious corruption on individuals and communities. They also reinforce the idea that accountability and transparency are essential for restoring integrity to religious organizations.

4 Resistance to Criticism

Despite its clear message, "Amen" acknowledges the resistance faced by those who dare to challenge religious authority. Falz notes:

Person wey I fight for / Go turn around to fight me. (*Amen by Falz*)

This observation reflects the backlash often directed at critics of organized religion, highlighting the entrenched power dynamics that protect corrupt systems. However, Falz remains undeterred, using his platform to amplify marginalized voices and spark dialogue

about reform. His willingness to confront uncomfortable truths demonstrates courage and conviction, qualities necessary for driving societal change.

Summary

Through "Amen," Falz masterfully combines artistry and activism to address pressing societal issues. The song serves as a mirror reflecting the moral decadence and hypocrisy prevalent in some religious circles, urging listeners to reclaim their agency and demand accountability. By applying Marxist theory to analyze the song, we see how it critiques the exploitation of the working class (in this case, the congregation) by those in positions of power (religious leaders).

Ultimately, "Amen" transcends mere entertainment; it functions as a catalyst for societal regeneration. It challenges individuals to engage in critical discourse, reject manipulative doctrines, and advocate for justice and equity. In doing so, Falz exemplifies the transformative potential of music as a tool for positive change—a testament to its enduring relevance in addressing Nigeria's socio-cultural challenges.

2.2 Political Oppression and Corruption

Political oppression and Corruption are one of the major diseases that have plagued Nigerian society since her independence. Notable music artists, the likes of Fela and Eedris Abdulkareem have at a point in history fought against it with their music.

The song "E Nor Dey Finish" serves as a scathing critique of political oppression and corruption in Nigeria, drawing heavily on themes of inequality, exploitation, and systemic injustice. Through its raw and unfiltered lyrics, the artist highlights the persistent issues that have plagued the nation for decades, echoing the sentiments of legendary Afrobeat pioneer Fela Kuti. The title itself—"E Nor Dey Finish" (meaning "It is not over")—suggests an ongoing struggle against entrenched corruption and oppressive governance, emphasizing the urgency of addressing these problems.

1. Introduction: Setting the Context

The opening lines of the song set a somber and accusatory tone:

Ahn corruption and indiscipline

With no regard for the life of a citizen

Mtchew so sickening

I hope you greedy motherfuckers is listening. (*E Nor Dey Finish* by Falz)

These verses immediately establish the central theme of political oppression and corruption, framing them as deeply embedded issues that continue to undermine the well-being of ordinary Nigerians. The use of strong language reflects the frustration and anger felt by many citizens who witness firsthand how their leaders prioritize personal gain over public service. By calling out "greedy motherfuckers," the artist directly confronts those responsible for perpetuating this cycle of exploitation.

The phrase "no regard for the life of a citizen" underscores the dehumanization of ordinary people at the hands of corrupt officials. This lack of empathy is further emphasized throughout the song, as the artist details the ways in which systemic failures impact everyday lives.

2 Corruption: A Systemic Problem

One of the primary focuses of "E Nor Dey Finish" is the pervasive nature of corruption within Nigerian society, particularly among political elites. Lines such as:

You carry million Dollar keep put for house

When many brother never see food to chop

And many sister come dey prostitute around

Just to make sure they keep something in account (*E Nor Dey
Finish by Falz*)

highlight the stark contrast between the extravagant lifestyles of the wealthy elite and the dire poverty faced by the majority of citizens. While politicians and businesspeople amass fortunes through illicit means, ordinary Nigerians struggle to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, and education. This disparity underscores the exploitative nature of the current system, where wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few at the expense of the many.

The reference to prostitution ("many sister come dey prostitute around") illustrates how economic desperation forces individuals into harmful situations. It serves as a poignant reminder of the human cost of corruption, showing how systemic failures lead to moral decay and societal breakdown.

3 Political Oppression: Violence and Suppression

In addition to corruption, the song critiques the oppressive nature of Nigerian politics, particularly the government's treatment of dissenting voices. Verses like:

Say the government still dey shoot on youth

Animal dem still dey put on suit and agbada (*E Nor Dey Finish by Falz*)

directly address the violent suppression of protests and activism. The imagery of animals wearing suits and traditional attire (agbada) symbolizes the hypocrisy of leaders who present themselves as respectable figures while engaging in brutal and immoral acts. This duality—of appearing civilized while acting savagely—is a hallmark of political oppression in many authoritarian regimes.

The mention of shootings targeting young people evokes memories of real-life incidents, such as the 2020 EndSARS protests, where peaceful demonstrators were met with lethal force. These events highlight the lengths to which some governments will go to silence opposition and maintain control, reinforcing the idea that political oppression remains a pressing issue in contemporary Nigeria.

4 Nepotism and Unemployment: Barriers to Progress

Another key theme in "E Nor Dey Finish" is the prevalence of nepotism and unemployment, which exacerbate existing inequalities. The artist laments:

Unemployment and nepotism

Ori mi gbono ema do mi si

Ejo e je kin soro ton

Sho li gba ti gbo gbo le gba jo ni si (*E Nor Dey Finish* by Falz)

Here, the Yoruba phrases add depth and authenticity to the narrative, emphasizing the cultural context of the struggles being described. Nepotism ensures that opportunities are reserved for those connected to powerful individuals, leaving talented but less privileged citizens marginalized. This exclusionary system stifles innovation and progress, trapping countless Nigerians in cycles of poverty and despair.

The line "I no know how long we go dey recession" captures the sense of stagnation felt by many. Economic recessions disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, deepening the divide between rich and poor. Meanwhile, promises of reform and development often prove hollow, as evidenced by the repeated refrain:

Nothing wey dem talk dem never talk before. (*E Nor Dey Finish* by Falz)

This line suggests that political rhetoric has become predictable and ineffective, offering little more than empty words without tangible action.

5 Fela Kuti's Legacy: A Call to Action

Throughout the song, the artist invokes the spirit of Fela Kuti, one of Nigeria's most iconic critics of corruption and oppression. Phrases like:

Baba Fela talk am

But e no finish e no finish e no finish oh oh

When e go finish? (*E Nor Dey Finish by Falz*)

serve as both homage and indictment. On one hand, they celebrate Fela's enduring relevance as a voice for justice and equality. On the other hand, they lament the fact that his warnings and calls to action remain unheeded decades later. The repetition of "e no finish" emphasizes the unfinished business of addressing Nigeria's deepest challenges, urging listeners to take up the mantle of change.

By referencing Fela, the artist also taps into a broader tradition of protest music in Nigeria. This connection reinforces the idea that the fight against corruption and oppression is not new but rather part of an ongoing struggle that spans generations.

6 Consequences of Inaction: Sorrow, Tears, and Blood

The final verses of the song underscore the devastating consequences of continued inaction:

Wey dey still dey cause sorrow tears and blood

Big thief talk my people je applaud (*E Nor Dey Finish by Falz*)

These lines paint a grim picture of a society where corruption goes unchecked, leading to widespread suffering. The juxtaposition of big thieves receiving applause highlights the absurdity of a system where criminals are celebrated while victims endure hardship. This reversal of values contributes to a culture of impunity, where perpetrators face no accountability for their actions.

The artist concludes with a plea for awareness and action:

Sometimes I look and say Fela where you dey oo

Come and see oh. (*E Nor Dey Finish by Falz*)

This call echoes the earlier references to Fela, inviting him—and by extension, all Nigerians—to bear witness to the current state of affairs. It suggests that meaningful change requires collective effort and renewed commitment to justice and fairness.

7 Conclusion: A Vision for Change

"E Nor Dey Finish" is more than just a critique of political oppression and corruption; it is a rallying cry for transformation. By highlighting the interconnectedness of these issues, the song demands that Nigerians confront uncomfortable truths about their country and its leaders. It challenges listeners to move beyond resignation and apathy, encouraging active participation in creating a better future.

Ultimately, the message of "E Nor Dey Finish" is one of resilience and hope. While acknowledging the depth of the problems facing Nigeria, the artist insists that change is possible if people refuse to accept the status quo. In doing so, the song carries forward Fela Kuti's legacy, inspiring a new generation to speak truth to power and work toward a more equitable and just society. The recurring refrain—"E Nor Dey Finish"—is a testament to the enduring struggle for justice and the belief that, despite setbacks, the fight for a better Nigeria must continue.

2.3 Misconduct of the Law Enforcement Agents

The Nigerian police act states; "The police shall be employed for the prevention and detection of life and property and the due enforcement of all laws and regulations with which they are indirectly charged and shall perform such military duties within or outside Nigeria as may be required of them by, or under the authority of this or any other Act" (Abiodun et al. 51). It is quite unfortunate that the police and other armed law officers have abandoned the reason why they were created in the first place, and instead of protecting the people, they have turned to their tormentors.

The misconduct of the law enforcement agents in Nigeria led to the EndSars and EndPoliceBrutality protest that took place in the year 2020, in Nigeria. The protest became the last resort for the youths who were fed up with being continually harassed at

different checkpoints and stations in Nigeria, especially when they refused to give the armed officials money. Some are falsely arrested and made to pay huge amounts of money for bail and those who are unfortunate, are killed. Falz who is also a youth, uses his music to protest against the inhumane treatment of the people, especially the youths, in the hands of armed law agents.

The song "Johnny" by Falz is a poignant critique of misconduct within law enforcement agencies, particularly in Nigeria. Through its narrative structure and emotive lyrics, the artist sheds light on systemic issues such as trigger-happy policing, corruption, and extrajudicial killings. The story of Johnny serves as a microcosm for broader societal problems, highlighting how innocent individuals are often victims of unchecked authority and institutional failure.

The opening lines of the song introduce Johnny, an ordinary young man whose life is cut short due to the reckless actions of a police officer:

J.J.D J.J.D

J.J.D J.J.D J.J.D Johnny just drop! (*Johnny by Falz*)

This refrain sets the tone for the rest of the song, emphasizing both the suddenness and senselessness of Johnny's death. The repetition of "Johnny just drop" underscores the

gravity of what transpired, drawing attention to the fragility of life when faced with unchecked authority. Johnny represents countless Nigerians who find themselves at the mercy of law enforcement officers who misuse their power.

1 Trigger-Happy Policing and Corruption

One of the central themes of "Johnny" is the excessive use of force by law enforcement officers. The verse:

Before dem talk one he say 'shut up! Small boy!

Who dash you liver? talk more I go cork gun'

Small time he don pull trigger ah!

He don kill am o! (*Johnny by Falz*)

highlights the dangerous culture of trigger-happy policing prevalent in some parts of Nigeria. In this scenario, Johnny and his friends were merely driving home after celebrating the completion of his national youth service. When stopped by police, instead of engaging in dialogue or resolving the situation peacefully, the officer resorts to threats and violence. This lack of restraint results in Johnny's untimely death.

Another significant theme explored in the song is the role of corruption and extortion in law enforcement misconduct. The line:

All because dem no oblige you

When you ask for some cash (*Johnny by Falz*)

Reveals that Johnny's death may have been motivated by greed. The officer demanded money from Johnny and his friends, and when they refused—or were unable—to comply, the situation escalated into tragedy. This highlights how corruption undermines the integrity of law enforcement agencies, turning them into tools of oppression rather than protectors of justice.

The practice of demanding bribes from civilians is unfortunately common in many Nigerian states. Officers exploit their positions of authority to extort money from vulnerable citizens, often using intimidation tactics to ensure compliance. When resistance occurs, as it did in Johnny's case, the consequences can be fatal. The song challenges listeners to question why such practices persist and calls for reforms to eliminate corruption within law enforcement ranks.

2 Societal Impacts and Call for Change

The emotional weight of Johnny's death resonates deeply throughout the song.

Verses like:

This motherfucking trigger happy nigga

Just cause unnecessary sorrow for him family sha

(Johnny by Falz)

Express the anger and grief felt by Johnny's loved ones and the wider community. His family mourns not only the loss of a son but also the shattered dreams of a young man who aspired to become a doctor. The line *"Him family die for the same floors wey him blood pour"* poignantly connects Johnny's death to the cycle of violence and injustice experienced by so many Nigerians.

The song also touches on the broader societal impacts of law enforcement misconduct. When innocent lives are taken unnecessarily, trust between communities and law enforcement erodes further. This breakdown in relationships fuels resentment and distrust, making it even harder to address underlying issues effectively.

Despite its somber tone, "Johnny" ends with a call for change. The final refrain—"Eyan melo lo ma ku!"—translates to "Enough is enough!" in Yoruba, signaling the urgent need

for reform. The artist challenges listeners to demand accountability from law enforcement agencies and advocate for policies that prioritize civilian safety over authoritarian control.

The line "If Johnny continue to drop" warns of the dire consequences if nothing changes. Each life lost contributes to a growing sense of despair among citizens, who feel increasingly unsafe under the current system. To prevent further tragedies, meaningful action must be taken to address the root causes of law enforcement misconduct.

Ultimately, "Johnny" is more than just a lamentation for one young man's death; it is a rallying cry for justice and reform. Through its vivid storytelling and emotional resonance, the song exposes the misconduct of law enforcement agencies and the devastating impact it has on individuals and communities. It challenges listeners to reflect on the systemic issues perpetuating this cycle of violence and to take action toward creating a safer, more equitable society. As long as stories like Johnny's persist, the call for reform will remain louder than ever.

2.4 The Citizens' Hypocrisy

The purpose of Saving this for the last is to emphasize the fact that the hypocritical attitude of the common people or citizens in the society is also a societal ill.

In his song "Hypocrites", Falz condemns the citizens' hypocritical behavior of electing corrupt people into power and rising later to complain and lament about them.

What about even you voters

Wey dey act like say you only see two joker's

Recycle the same corrupt me

Later you complain, you say you hate government (*Johnny by Falz*)

In the song, Falz feels that the people are aware of who the politicians are because these politicians have exercised some political power at a point in time so he expects the citizens to be aware of their capabilities and flaws yet whenever two corrupt officers come out for governmental elections, the citizens ignore the new face in the other political parties, acting as if there are only two political parties in the country. The two dominant political parties in Nigeria are the People's Democratic Party" and the "All People's Congress" but aside from these groups, we have the "Labour Party" and so on. Whenever the citizens want to vote, they ignore the other political parties, acting as if the country has only two parties, and forgetting that these two parties contain the same set of people who can easily crossover to another political party, if the present one does not

favour them. The last line "Later you complain, you say you hate the government" reveals the actions of the citizens when the new government fails to perform well, forgetting that this set of people got into power through their votes. By raising this topic, Falz feels the citizens need to be conscious of their contradictory actions and behaviors which involve "recycling the same corrupt men" so that they can make better decisions. In a functioning democratic society, corrupt politicians should not be allowed to contest for government offices but since it is allowed in Nigeria, it is left for the citizens to cast their votes against them.

In "Talk" Falz portrays the reaction of citizens towards public theft and petty theft as hypocritical; "Small man thief for market, you set fire for em body/Big man thief money, we dey hail am like dummy". In the first line, the artist in an accusing tone introduces the concept popularly known as "jungle justice" to the listeners. Jungle justice is a harsh punishment that involves setting fire to anyone caught stealing. The second line reveals the citizen's attitude or reaction towards affluent individuals who embezzle public funds. These two lines reveal that the citizens unconsciously treat those who starve them through embezzlement of public funds, better than a poor hungry citizen who is struggling to survive.

The concerns of Falz find expression in the lyrics of another musician, Timaya. In Timaya's song "Pity 4 Us", Timaya encourages people to search their conscience and see if they are morally upright;

As we dey for here, we dey complain our own full our body

Search your conscience

We self we no good o

Make we live right

We sef we no dey try o (*Johnny by Falz*)

Individuals are products of the society they live and grow up in. This means for society to regenerate, the regeneration needs to start from the grassroots, this is what Timaya is trying to bring to the people's conscience. The repetition of "o" in two of the lines helps the artist to emphasize the need for self-reflection on the part of the citizen.

With these, Timaya and Falz wish to draw the people's attention to the quota that they contribute to problems pervading society.

2.5 Summary

Knowing full well that the people need someone to nudge them in the right direction, Falz and Timaya decide to take up the task, using their music as a platform for societal regeneration. To improve, one needs to know where he or she is at fault, and that is what is established in this chapter. Timaya and Falz act as moral informers who defied the consequences of rising or speaking against the government, and politicians, to spread information that would wake the spirit of change in the hearts of their listeners. They achieve this by educating the citizens on the problems pervading the society. Their songs also contain the danger of allowing them to be exploited and oppressed. By criticizing the young and old, these artists emphasize that everybody must come together in the pursuit of change to achieve desirable results.

CHAPTER THREE

TOWARDS SOCIETAL REGENERATION

3.0 Introduction

History has shown that a peaceful dialogue or mere complaints do not solve issues when it comes to those in power so the two artists whose songs are studied in this research urge the people to take another direction in the pursuit of societal regeneration. Falz and Timaya educate their listeners and the society that repeating the same mistakes over again and complaining about them will not ease the burden, nor will it do anything to purge the society of its ills, only resistance and hard work can do that. The two artists have lived in Nigeria for years and have witnessed different methods fail, repetition of the same mistakes, and the unimportant priority of the people, especially the youths in the society but they know that resistance and hard work do not fail. Megbowon and Iwah posit that "...any desired social change can be achieved through the utilization of relevant means or tools, which includes African Literature, that speaks to and against societal ills, and educate, train or create awareness for social change"(12). Frantz Fanon also notes that;

"For if the last shall be first, this will only come to pass after a murderous and decisive struggle between the two protagonists. That affirmed the intention to place the last at the head of things, and to

make them climb at a pace (too quickly some say) the well-known steps that characterize an organized society, can only triumph if we use all means to turn the scale, including, of course, that of violence"(28).

This means to change the status quo in society, the people or the proletariat is expected to try everything possible and violence is not an exemption.

Falz and Timaya are two unapologetic educators who try to arouse the spirit of resistance and hard work in the hearts of the people. For them, a lackadaisical attitude towards societal problems will not produce any solution or change, so everyone irrespective of gender or age must resort to resistance and hard work as an approach to societal regeneration.

3.1 Resistance

When the heat of oppression on the oppressed becomes too much, the oppressed are expected to rise and fight back because, at this point, they will lose more if they do not fight back. Falz makes us understand that although we try to preserve our lives by keeping quiet, there will be nothing worth living for eventually if things continue the way they are. Through his songs, Falz therefore creates awareness and calls on the people to resist their oppressors.

In his song "Amen", Falz featured a scene where the scale has fallen from the eyes of religious fanatics and they rise and take action against their corrupt leaders.

Having succeeded in driving away the pastor

Some of the members spoke

On what could have caused the show of shame

He raises funds in the church

And keeps the money in his purse

Without giving to the church authorities. (*Amen by Falz*)

In the above excerpt, the people realize the fraudulent activities of church leaders and how they've been exploited and they decide to take action by driving them away which is described as a "show of shame", a metaphor for a disgraceful event.

Also, in his song "Johnny" which mirrors the habitual killing of Nigerian youths or civilians by the Nigerian police force, Falz through the use of rhetorical questions delivers a powerful message at the end of the song which reflects the mindset of the people and also conveys the message of resistance:

If Johnny continues to drop

Èyàn meloo Lo ma ku?

Èyàn meloo Lo ma ku?

Èyàn meloo Lo ma ku? (*Johnny by Falz*)

The Yoruba question in the excerpt is translated into the English language as "How many more can you kill?". Through the use of this rhetorical question, Falz makes a threat and at the same time, a call for resistance. The fact that this question is repeated three times emphasizes the gravity of the situation and the gravity of the future consequences if the perpetrators do not stop. He threatens the perpetrators of the act with resistance while arousing the spirit of resistance in the hearts of his listeners. This song and some other things which include the frustration that the youths have gone through at the hands of the armed forces led to the Endsars, EndPoliceBrutality protest that took place in October 2020 in Nigeria. The protest which started as a form of resistance against the abuse of power by armed officers soon spread like wildfire across the country. Citizens occupied and blocked all the major roads in the country, protesting with their voices echoing the same message; a reformation of the armed forces.

In his song "Talk", Falz presents the transition from self-denial due to fear of oppression, to acceptance and resistance. Initially, the personnel complains about societal problems but denies ever saying them; "Na you talk am o (talk am o)/no be me talk am o" but in the last stanza of the song, the tone switches from that of denial and fear to anger, frustration, and resistance. The personnel is now ready to stand up, resist the oppressor, and face the consequences.

We dey suffer, we dey smile, we dey fear to talk

My people no get chop, my people no get work,

These days, we no know if authority dey for office

Cause the yawa wey we see no be the security wey you promise

And the cup e don full, we Don tire for all the rubbish

All the punishment!

Na me talk am o! (*Talk by Falz*)

Firstly, the artist highlights what the proletariat in Nigeria is fond of doing, which is "suffering and smiling" but being too afraid to speak up. This part acts as the climax in the song and also signifies the state of the people who are tired of being too scared "to

talk", "suffering and smiling", hunger, unemployment, and insecurity, and are now ready to fight back.

This is the kind of attitude that Falz wants the people to adopt. He wants everyone to drop their passive attitude, stand up, and resist those who have made society sick, and impoverished the common people.

3.2 Youths and the Issue of Hardwork

The youths are future leaders but what happens to the future of a country whose youths are too lazy to work hard? Issues like corruption and exploitation will become a norm. Falz and Timaya have noticed that Nigerian youths are obsessed with money and material things but do not want to work hard, they're always looking for shortcuts to wealth. To put an end to this circle of corrupt and oppressive practices, the youths need to know and acknowledge the value of hard work, work hard, and seize power from the oppressors because only then can we ensure or work towards societal regeneration. This is also one of the few ways that their voices can be heard in a country that tries its best to suppress the voices of the poor.

Falz's song "Follow Follow" is sarcastic and it satirizes the average Nigerian youth who is obsessed with the rich lifestyle and misplaced priorities but sees hard work as an enemy. Falz uses the metaphor of a "Zombie", a lifeless, mindless creature that has no

sight and is easily controlled by external forces, to describe the youths who slave after the glamorous lifestyle and will do anything to make sure they belong. Anything except hard work. Although the title and part of the lyrics were borrowed from Fela's song "Zombie", they address two different issues. While Fela's song "Zombie" addresses the Nigerian army, Falz uses his song to mock the folly of youths and urges them to work hard. To emphasize the theme of the song, Falz uses repetition, rhymes, and alliteration throughout the song. He uses the metaphor of "My mates dem dey reason how to make bread/Me, I still dey wonder how I go take blend(zombie)" to describe the activities of working hard to earn a living instead of looking for dubious shortcuts to wealth.

Timaya on the other hand has always been known as one who sees himself as a role model for the youths. He makes it his duty to educate the youths on issues concerning hard work. In his song "God I Beg", he educates the youths using his own life story as an example, being someone who rose from grass to grace through hard work. He talks about the temptations he faced on his way to success such as "I nearly join Yahoo Yahoo them talk say". By doing this he informs the public that "Yahoo Yahoo" which is a Nigerian term for internet fraud, should not be an option or a path to success for the youths. The line "So I decide to sell plantain/Every time I Waka before na so I dey shame" implies how low he started, something that most youths these days will never do, today he is rich and his success is the evidence of his hard work.

Also, in his song "Gra Gra" he mocks those who refuse to work but expect to get whatever they want on a platter of gold. Timaya feels that in a world or society like Nigeria, working hard can go a long way to fostering national development. He uses "manna" falling from "heaven", a biblical allusion to when God fed the children of Isreal in the wilderness, to refer to those who do not want to work hard but expect to get whatever they want. To him, most youths in Nigeria refuse to work but they complain about government, policies, actions, exploitations, and embezzlement without working hard to change their status quo,

"I say you no wan work, you want to chop oo

You no wan strive, you want to flex oo

The thing wey dey worry you dey for your body

Person we dey fail na like to dey complain

You no wan work, you say chukwu Biko

You go expect manna to fall from heaven o

Person wey dey carry last too dey complain

The thing wey dey worry you dey for your body ee eh eh" (*Gra Gra by Timaya*)

. In "Something Must to Kill a Man" he urges the youths to take their attention from less important things and focus on the things that are more important to society, such as,

Pay your rent before you ball

Look for work oo don't be dull

Landlord knocking on your door (pom pom)

Build your house before Dubai"

He educates them on the deceitfulness and vanity of money gotten through illegal or deceitful means;

"Everything you see is a fallacy

Everything you see looking flashy o

I don't give a fuck about their credit o

(I want to work hard for it) (*Something Must to Kill a Man by Timaya*)

The title of the song "Something Must to Kill a Man" is an idiom that is used in the song to emphasize people's lackadaisical attitude towards hard work because they feel that whatever they do or no matter how hard they work, everyone is destined to die one way or the other but Timaya encourages the people to work hard to build legacies and live well in the future. He says;

Something Must to Kill a Man

Something Must to Kill a Man

E no mean say man no go plan

E no mean say you go fall your hand (*Something Must to Kill a Man by Timaya*)

He feels that just because everyone is going to die does not mean we should leave our lives to fate because by planning and working hard, we can go a long way in changing things in society, like how we live, how we treat others, how we are treated in return, who is allowed to exercise governmental powers and whether or not we can be exploited.

In his song "Telli Person" he uses the metaphor of "when the time is right" to depict the day of judgement and tribulations to those who refuse to listen, those who refuse to work, and those who spend whatever they earn on unimportant things, emphasizing that there

will be consequences for their actions and when the day comes, nobody will inform them because they will realize their mistakes by themselves;

"Yetunde every night and day

You like to samankwe

Brother Nnamdi all your friends

Dey work your own na samankwe eh

I tell you you no gree (madam)

I advise you you no hear(madam)

I tell you you no gree

Your friends dem talk put you no gree

You say all na story

Dem tell you you no gree(madam)

Mother beg you you no hear eh

When the time is right my brother eh

Telli Person telli Person o

Dem no dey telli person

When your eyes go clear o

Telli Person Dem no dey telli person (*Telli Person by Timaya*)

Through this song, Timaya enlightens the youths by informing them that hard work pays off and that there are consequences for their laziness and spendthrift attitude.

Similarly, in his song "Don Dada", Timaya sees himself as a role model for the youth. He emphasizes the importance of investing in oneself and avoiding spending money recklessly on unimportant things such as clubbing.

On the issue of the relevance of the youths' importance to society, Okoro and Nwamara argue that "Youth restiveness is a social phenomenon with a negative influence on national development and security. This is because the Youths are potentially the greatest investment for a society's sustainable development"(194). The artists know this and that is why they make the youths one of their main targets in the fight for societal regeneration.

3.3 Summary

Falz and Timaya are two music artists who have acknowledged the problems of Nigerian society, shared their knowledge, and suggested solutions to them. This chapter explored the artists' trusted solutions in response to the plight of the common people living in the country. When an activity or behavior is criticized, it makes an individual aware of the gaps in their understanding and it can provide distinct routes for improvements. Falz and Timaya have exposed the gaps in society and they believe that resistance and hard work are keys to societal regeneration.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

Falz and Timaya employ their songs to illuminate societal ills, engaging the public in a dialogue that can contribute to societal regeneration.

Falz and Timaya are two prominent Nigerian musicians who have used their music to address social issues and advocate for positive change. Falz, known for his witty lyrics and conscious style, often tackles topics like corruption, police brutality, and social injustice. Timaya, with his energetic dancehall vibe, frequently addresses issues of poverty, inequality, and the struggles of everyday people.

Through their music, Falz and Timaya contribute to societal regeneration by raising awareness about critical issues, challenging the status quo, and inspiring hope for a better future. Their songs serve as a platform for social commentary, encouraging dialogue and reflection on the challenges facing Nigerian society. By using their voices to speak truth to power, they empower individuals to question the existing systems and demand accountability from those in authority.

Falz and Timaya's music also promotes a sense of unity and collective identity among Nigerians. Their songs often celebrate the resilience and strength of the people, fostering a sense of pride and belonging. By highlighting shared experiences and struggles, they

create a sense of solidarity that transcends social and cultural divides. The four findings on music as a channel of societal regeneration in selected songs of falz and timaya are:

1. **Raising Awareness:** Falz and Timaya's music tackles critical social issues like corruption, police brutality, poverty, and inequality, bringing these problems to the forefront of public consciousness.
2. **Challenging the Status Quo:** Their songs question existing systems and power structures, encouraging listeners to think critically about the challenges facing their society and demand accountability from leaders.
3. **Promoting Unity:** By highlighting shared experiences and struggles, their music fosters a sense of collective identity and solidarity among Nigerians, transcending social and cultural divides.
4. **Inspiring Hope:** Despite addressing difficult topics, their music ultimately offers a message of hope and resilience, inspiring individuals to believe in the possibility of positive change and a better future.

This study contributes new knowledge by providing specific insights into how Falz and Timaya utilize distinct musical styles and lyrical content to address critical social issues in Nigeria. This study goes beyond simply identifying social commentary in music.

It delves into the specific concept of 'societal regeneration' and how it is framed within the selected songs. The analysis demonstrates, Raising Awareness, e.g., that their music primarily aims to raise awareness rather than advocate for specific policy changes, or that it fosters a sense of collective identity as a foundation for regeneration. This nuanced exploration of 'regeneration' within the context of Nigerian music offers a valuable contribution to the existing scholarship.

To the end, Falz and Timaya's music serves as a powerful tool for societal regeneration in Nigeria. Through their thought-provoking lyrics and infectious rhythms, they raise awareness about critical issues, challenge the status quo, and inspire hope for a better future. Their songs contribute to a national dialogue on social change, empowering individuals to question the existing systems and demand accountability from those in power. By promoting their music fosters a sense of collective identity and inspires a shared vision for a more just and equitable society.

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