

**Community musical arts intervention for socio-economic development of youths in contemporary Nigeria**

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**Abstract**

Available records reveal that different areas of community musical arts have been employed in different countries of the world to engage youth collaboratively and curtail youth misdemeanor with a view to promoting social interactions, cohesion and development. It is however evident from literature, which studies on community music have not been widely explored in Nigeria by researchers and stakeholders in the field. This study therefore, examined community musical arts intervention of “Freedom For All Group” for socio-economic development of youths in contemporary Nigeria. The study employed ethnographic research design. Thirty Freedom For All Group members were interviewed using the semi-structured key informant interview Guide. The Non-participant Community Musical Group Observation Schedule was also used for data collection, and qualitative approach was used for data analysis. The findings of the study revealed that “Freedom For All Group” was established to engage teenagers and youth to curb youth restiveness, and it is a strong means of individual empowerment. The study concluded that community musical activities remain avenue that engages children, youth and adults in all forms of musical genre and talents for socio-economic development of youth in the locality. The study recommended that community musical activities in form of intervention programmes should be targeted on the growing up youth and funded by the government in the country on local government basis. Also community musical groups should look for means of enlightening and sensitizing the public on the relevance and significance of their group to the social and economic needs of the nation among others.

**Keywords:** community; musical arts; Freedom For All Group; socio-economic development

## **Introduction**

Music is an art and integral parts of both ancient and modern civilization. It is a medium through which people express their culture, existence, history and overall human values for socio-economic development. In his conceptual clarification of music and its characteristics as an art, Claudia (2020) conceived music as a collection of coordinated sounds, put together in purposeful ways to create a specific atmosphere to express ideas or emotions. Music remains a form of communication of artists' feelings to their audience/viewers through signs and skills in words and practice. Hurwitz (2021) remarked that music, being emotionally evocative has traditionally been a potent tool in the theater artists' plate. He buttressed that music can reveal the inner-emotional life of a character foreshadow a vicious attack or budding love or comment on the action on stage. From this view, music is perhaps the most universal of the performing arts and is found in every society.

One central theme in contemporary discussions regarding the role of music in the society is community music. According to Veblen and Olsson (2002), internationally, community music concerns people making music. In the available report of the International Society of Music Education (ISME) on community music Activity Commission Conference of 2002, Community music is recognised as an important and regular funded feature of music-making and teaching in the United Kingdom today, and a leading movement in the contemporary practice of community arts. Community music encompasses both informal and formal contexts of music activities (Veblen, 2007). These musical activities are carried out within a community and the larger society.

The music industry today locally and globally contributes significantly to youth employment and empowerment. Its current values does not represent social cohesion only, it is also a significant tool for economic development. In order to corroborate the contributions of music industry, a study carried out in the United State by the Recording Industry Association of America, reported that the music industry contributes about \$170 billion to the US GDP annually and supports about 2.5 million jobs across the core music activities like recording, streaming, and live performance. In addition, a study conducted by Statista in Nigeria revealed that the music sector's revenue grew from about 26 million US dollars in 2014 to about 34 million US dollars in 2018. The figure according to the research and projection by Statista, is expected to grow to about 44 million dollars by 2023 (Obinwa & Adeniyi, 2021). The statistics from those study showed that music industry possesses the capacity to support millions of teeming youths as well as considerable revenue for the economy.

Veblen (2016) had long declared that positioning community music as a field of research, and identifying professional practices, or a unifying idea is still unfamiliar to many. Perhaps this is why research and literature are meager in the field of community music, especially in Nigeria. Thus, it becomes significant to consider community music in the contemporary quest for socio-economic development in Nigeria context. A peep into extant literature based on global research efforts and practices on the concept of community music reveals that it was established in Germany, and projects and research

on community music are picking up (Hill & De Banffy – Hail, 2017). However, the United Kingdom (UK) and New Zealand, among many others have long histories of supporting community music initiatives, while the United State, Canada and much of Europe have many types of community music organisations and networks. In Portugal, Japan and South Africa, community music programmes are emerging to meet the needs of different populations. In some regions (e.g the Middle East, part of Africa, and parts of Asia), community music efforts have not been chronicled (Veblem, 2007). It is, therefore, not out of place to explore community musical arts of a targeted group as focused in this study and its nexus to the subject of socio-economic development.

From the vantage point of the writers, community music accommodates people of different ages, cultures, ability levels, religious belief, socio-economic classes, the disadvantaged or marginalised people, the young (youth) and the old (adult), and so on. In the Nigerian context, and as stated in this paper, the youth constitutes an important category of a community and their survival in social, education and economic terms, is very essential. The youth globally are referred to as potential leaders of tomorrow on the socio-economic front; they are indispensable human capital on which the development of any nation rests (Ajufo, 2015).

Youth intervention programmes are obviously community-based service work with young people. It empowers young people for the labour market demand and for social functioning. Where the youths are not engaged adequately through intervention programmes, restiveness is likely to set in. Yusuf (2010) observed that restiveness among youth has become one of the global phenomena and those in Nigeria have been on increase unprecedentedly. As the most valuable segment of the society, when their energies are misdirected into wrong behaviours, they get involved in criminal activities. Hence, the thrust of this study which focused on community musical arts intervention for socio-economic empowerment of youths in Oyo Town, Nigeria was conceived.

### **Statement of the problem**

While different areas of music as an art have received a lot of research attention in developed and developing nations of the world and have been measured in many ways, reports, literature and online resources available made it evident that the phenomenon of community musical activities has largely been a neglected area of research by academics.

Scholarly writings that focus specifically on community music are rare (Huib & Brydie-Leigh, 2013). The construct (community music) has not been widely explored, and it remains a challenging construct in Nigeria. In addition, observes that there are many youths in society who are idle and are thus susceptible to social vices, and that they could be engaged through community musical activities that have implications for personal and community's development.

### **Objectives of the study**

The general objective of this paper is to examine community musical arts intervention of Freedom For All Group for socio-economic development of youths in Oyo town, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. identify the purpose of establishing Freedom For All Group in Oyo town;
2. discuss the modus operandi Freedom For All Group;
3. examine how Freedom For All Group contributes towards socio-economic development in Oyo town; and
4. identify the challenges confronting the Freedom For All Group.

### **Research questions**

1. What is the purpose of establishing Freedom For All Group in Oyo town?
2. What is the modus operandi of Freedom For All Group?
3. How does Freedom For All Group contribute towards socio-economic development?
4. What are the challenges confronting Freedom For All Group?

### **Scope of the study**

The study is limited to community musical arts of Freedom For All Group in relation to the subject of socio-economic development in Oyo town. The founder of the group, unit co-ordinators/leaders and other group members are also within the scope of this study.

### **Study Design**

The study employed ethnographic research design which focused on those associated with Freedom For All Group in its location. Ethnography is a research methodology concerned with describing people and how their behaviour, either as individuals or as part of a group, is influenced by the culture or sub-cultures in which they live and move (Draper, 2015). This particular methodological approach lent itself well with the descriptions of activities about a group, the dynamics of their practice, and the broader outcomes arising from their setting. This implies that ethnographic research takes a cultural lens to the study of people's lives within their communities. Higgins (2006) supports the focus of this ethnographic research in his assertion that ethnographic strategy and method unmask the trait of community music in action.

### **Research population and study participants**

Freedom For All Ministries International (FRAMINT) has a population size of one hundred (100) members. But the study focused only on the Freedom For All Group, which is one of the four folds groups of FRAMINT. Freedom For All Group has thirty (30) members (thirteen males and seventeen females), and these were the participants purposively selected for this study. Out of the thirty (30) members, twenty five (25) are singers and five (5) are instrumentalists; their age range is between 11 years and 22 years.

### **Research instruments**

Non-participant observation, note-taking and interview guide were the main research instruments used. The interview guide was a semi-structured Key Informant Interview Guide (KIIG). The structured interview covered the focus of the research questions. Also, the non-participant observation schedule used was tagged “Community Musical Group Observation Schedule” (CMGOS).

The validity of the two research instruments (that is Key Informant Interview Guide (KIIG) and the non-participant Community Musical Group Observation Schedule (CMGOS)) were validated by three experts who reviewed the content of the research instrument as appropriate, and adjudged them suitable for their study.

### **Data analysis**

Qualitative approach was used for data analysis. Qualitative method of data analysis implies collecting and analysing non-numerical data; these are concepts, opinions and experiences of the participants, which were appropriately coded by using key words that were paraphrased from answers to the research questions.

### **Results and discussion of findings**

The findings of this study are presented in accordance with the research questions: What is the purpose of establishing Freedom For All Group in Oyo town?; What is the modus operandi of Freedom For All Group?; How does Freedom For All Group contribute towards socio-economic development of Oyo town?; and What are the challenges confronting Freedom For All Group?

Research Question 1: What is the purpose of establishing Freedom For All Group in Oyo town?

What informed the establishment of the group in year 2000 was the observation made by its founder (Ogbole Emmanuel) that there has been an unprecedented increase in the rate of moral decadence among the citizenry, especially the immediate environment, where acts of ungodliness and moral collapsing are adjudged to be rampant. The Freedom For All Group has thirty members comprising twenty-five singers and five instrumentalists. Members join the group voluntarily through public enlightenment and awareness through clubs, talent display night as they see their peers displaying their talents and varieties of natural gifts like singing, dancing, drama and instrumentation. The group is self-financing, although, occasionally, awards and financial assistance help.

Research Question 2: What is the modus operandi of Freedom For All Group?

The modus operandi of Freedom For All Group are the principles guiding its community musical activities so as not to lose focus of its vision for empowering its member for moral, spiritual, social and economic empowerment. Thus, the principle of Freedom For All Group is to guide towards ensuring that the objectives of the group are maximally achieved.

Research Question 3: How does Freedom For All Group contribute towards socio-economic development of Oyo town?

The study gathered that there are benefits of Freedom For All Group to its members, the community and the entire society. Through the group association, the members have been able to improve their spiritual development and avail them the opportunity to showcase their talents through talents display for human capital development. Some of them have acquired knowledge and skills in some areas of talents display, and are fast growing to become independent instrumentalists, music composers and dance dramatists, among others. As they play instruments based on invitation, they get money independently, and some even receive financial gratification from singing with the group or having their music being produced. Members are given opportunity to showcase their talent and strengthen their capabilities in community musical practices and growth. Part of the groups' modus operandi is to foster worthwhile moral value which would encourage its audience to live peacefully among citizens in various communities.

Research Question 4: What are the challenges confronting Freedom For All Group?

The interviewees responded that the group has a number of lingering challenges which often affect the progress and development of the group. Such challenges include funding, human factor, poor societal orientation towards the group, physical infrastructures and material needs. There is lack of adequate funding that could aid group members to take their talents to higher ground. Inability to get sponsorship to help the group in making recordings and release of their songs is also a challenge. There is also the issue of poor perception of the society about Freedom For All Group *Talent Display* where by some community people express a wrong notion that talents are natural gifts, as a result, the slogan at times is “freely received, freely give”.

Furthermore, the study also found out that there is lack of enough committed members in the group. This manifests absenteeism, lack of co-operation with unit heads and abuse of opportunities given them to display their musical talents. Physical infrastructure is also a major challenge. The founder's school compound is used as their location for consultation and booking of the group; renting of halls for musical performances always attract huge financial cost. Finally, the group grapples with the lack of adequate material resources such as musical instruments and costumes that would enhance the tone/quality of their performance, and thereby being deprived of the concomitant positive results.

### **Conclusion**

The study, which examined community musical arts intervention of Freedom For All Group, has brought to the fore that community music holds a significant place in the society, and it needs to be given much attention in the quest for socio-economic development of the society. The ethnographic approach employed has helped to explore the activities of the group studied in their cultural environment, what they do, the resources they use, their challenges and the arising benefits, among others. The viability of the group in term of the economic relevance and empowerment of members as well as a means to eschew juvenile violence among youths of the Nigerian community make the study noteworthy.

The Freedom For All Group, through the community musical activities showed that it is an avenue that engage children, youths and adults in acquiring skill in various forms of musical genres, and the talent to promote social interactions and economic development.

### **Recommendations**

Arising from the findings, this study recommends a number of measures that could adopted towards enhancing the performance of Freedom For All Group. First, community musical activities in form of intervention programmes for youth empowerment should be funded on local government basis.

Second, existing community musical groups should look for effective means for publicising their groups so as to enlighten and sensitise the communities about their relevance and significance to the social and economic needs of the nation.

Third, philanthropists and group donors in the society are enjoined to assist community musical groups sponsoring their concert and talents displays for musical skills acquisition and empowerment.

Finally, monetary donations for community musical groups for the purchase of musical instruments, production of their music, purchase of costumes, among others, should be seen as a responsibility of the well-to-do stakeholders in society.

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