

The Role of Pop Music in Socialisation: A Study of Selected Songs of Folarin Falana (FALZ)

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Abstract

This study explores the role of Nigerian pop music as an agent of socialisation, with a focus on Falz's album *Moral Instruction*. In a society where conventional protest mechanisms are increasingly seen as ineffective, music has become a powerful medium for influencing thought, shaping values, and encouraging civic engagement. Although various aspects of Nigerian pop music have been studied, its function in promoting moral and social consciousness remains underexplored. This research adopts a qualitative design, using purposive sampling to select songs from the album based on their thematic relevance to societal issues. Through textual and thematic analysis, the study investigates how Falz addresses key issues such as corruption, moral decline, and political injustice. Guided by the theory of socialist realism, the research views the artist not just as a performer but as a socially responsible figure who uses his music to challenge societal ills and advocate for change. Findings reveal that Falz employs satire, Afrobeat influences, and indigenous language to deliver messages that foster critical thinking and responsible citizenship. The study concludes that *Moral Instruction* exemplifies how Nigerian pop music functions as a tool for socialisation, capable of promoting awareness, shaping public values, and contributing to national transformation.

Keywords: Socialisation, Pop Music, Falz, Moral Instruction, Socialist Realism, Nigerian Society

Introduction

The term “pop music” is presented by Onyeji as “a genre of music, encompassing several styles, that is readily comprehensible to a large proportion of the population; its appreciation requires little or no knowledge of musical theory or technique” (24). Shuker similarly defines it as a commercially driven genre intended for widespread appeal, prioritising accessibility over alignment with specific subcultures or ideologies (215). In essence, pop music, by its nature, fosters open performance and audience engagement, with the content and style of musical production largely shaped by audience preferences, underscoring its strong ties to the socio-cultural experiences of ordinary people.

Globally, pop music has evolved as a dominant cultural force, often reflecting and shaping public sentiment on political, social, and personal issues. Its spread through media and technology has made it an effective tool for both entertainment and influence. In Africa, pop music draws from rich oral traditions, indigenous rhythms, and postcolonial identity struggles, often serving as a mirror to societal realities. As Ogude and Nyairo observe, African popular culture—including music—is “that part of African creativity that is not elite, unofficial, and urban” (7). Within this framework, Nigerian pop music emerges as a vibrant and politically conscious genre that blends elements of folklore, religious music, and urban influences to reflect the complexities of contemporary life. Nigerian pop music is deeply rooted in the popular traditions of society and often blends elements of traditional folklore, religious music, and modern urban influences. As Englert notes, beyond audience taste, environmental factors such as urbanisation also contribute to the development and dissemination of popular music (28). The dense population and social diversity of urban centres offer fertile ground for musicians seeking to communicate with and influence a broad demographic, particularly the youth.

In contemporary Nigeria, pop music extends beyond its entertainment value to become an important channel for interrogating social realities. It plays a growing role in shaping public discourse around national concerns such as corruption, governance, injustice, and civic responsibility. With the rise of digital platforms and widespread youth engagement, this genre now offers a space for both cultural expression and political critique. Among the new generation of Nigerian artists, Falz stands out as a deliberate and strategic voice who channels the potential of pop music into a form of social commentary. His 2019 album *Moral Instruction* exemplifies the capacity of music to reflect and challenge prevailing social norms. Through lyrical narratives rich in satire, intertextual references, and moral argumentation, Falz addresses some of Nigeria’s most urgent socio-political issues, including institutional corruption, police brutality, inequality, and civic apathy.

This body of work, which draws both aesthetic and ideological inspiration from Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, positions itself as a call to consciousness. The songs—“Child of the World”, “This is Nigeria”, “Talk”, “Follow Follow” and “Paper”—serve not merely as cultural texts but as tools for engaging the public in critical reflection on national values and identity. By foregrounding the lived experiences of ordinary Nigerians, these compositions facilitate the transmission of values and the shaping of public attitudes in a way that aligns with broader processes of civic education.

Given the album’s thematic coherence and activist intent, it offers a compelling case for examining how contemporary pop music functions as a mechanism of socialisation in Nigeria. Rather than focusing solely on artistic merit or commercial success, this inquiry foregrounds the ideological role of music as a pedagogical instrument in modern society. The analysis is grounded in the theoretical

framework of Socialist Realism, which prioritises the social function of art and its potential to contribute to collective awareness and transformation. In applying this lens, the study seeks to illuminate how musical texts can embody both aesthetic and educational value, mobilising listeners toward social consciousness and ethical engagement.

The Concept of Socialisation

Since birth, humans have relied on various forms of communication, as their very nature is fundamentally social. Human existence is sustained within a social environment, made possible through interaction and coexistence with others. Its existence is only possible in a social environment, in cohabitation with other peers. Ursula asserts that human development and identity are fundamentally shaped and influenced by socialisation, which facilitates social integration. He posits that “people live side by side with each other as human individuals and not as simple objects, and society does not appear as a mere sum of the individuals that make it up, but as an organic whole of the individual components” (83).

The human need for community reflects an inherent aspect of human nature, as individual existence outside social groups is inconceivable. Socialisation is a gradual learning process, beginning at birth and advancing from simple to complex forms of social understanding. A newborn child does not learn all the things about social life at once. It proceeds from simplicity to complexity. During the early stages of life (infancy and childhood). As the child grows, their world expands, bringing new experiences and demands for adjustment. Central to this development is the internalisation of social roles. To perform any role effectively, a child must also understand the roles of others within the same social system. Thus, socialisation involves learning both personal and relational roles. This process is integral to personality development, as each stage of socialisation introduces the child to a complex system of interrelated roles, shaping their social identity and behaviour.

According to Surette, socialisation through music is possible with the effects of the mass media. The mass media, which are television shows, movies, popular music, magazines, websites, and others, influence our political views, our tastes in popular culture, our views of women, people of colour, and many other beliefs and practices. He also noted that “in the General Social Survey (GSS), about 28% of respondents said that they watch four or more hours of television every day, while another 46% watch 2-3 hours daily. The mass media certainly is an important source of socialisation, unimaginable a half-century ago” (9). This survey shows the extent to which mass media have become a vital tool of socialisation for children, adolescents, and even adults.

Mass media play a vital role in the construction and reconstruction of ideas and opinions, and in reframing the various understandings of every individual

throughout life. Every passing day, the world is socially revolutionised. Individuals have great influences from different sources of communication, performing a very strong role not only in the development of mature persons' thinking but also in youngsters. Most people watch TV, use the internet, listen to the radio and get exposure. There exists a considerable number of young people who draw inspiration from the contents of media material (Hendry 37). Mass media as an agent of socialisation has a deep effect on viewers of all ages. In support of this, Miles opined that regardless of the actual time young people spend watching television and using other media, there is no doubt that the mass media have played and will continue to play an important role in structuring young people's lives in some shape and form in a period of rapid social change. (20)

One aspect of mass media that has become a tool for socialisation amongst others is music. Sharan Paul, in his article *Literary Values in Contemporary Music Lyrics: How Much is it Worth?* quotes William Shakespeare: "If music be the food of life, play on, give me excess of it" (12). We are surrounded by music every day of our lives. New digital technology, in the form of iPods, smartphones, and computer downloads, has made it more efficient to acquire large amounts of music in any genre. The inherent value of music is the emotional reaction each song evokes. We listen to music when we are happy or sad. There is music that makes us dance, as well as music that puts us to sleep. But music is more than just pretty sounds to entertain us or make us feel something. Although the literary value in music is often overlooked, it remains that words from song lyrics are quoted more often than world leaders. Historical value can be placed on the content of these lyrics in that they portray major historical events and in the story itself. (Townshend 9)

The value placed on music in contemporary Nigerian society has reportedly grown beyond historical. Music has become a part of society, as many desire to listen to and repeat lyrical lines more than read literature. Its impact on society has given credit to its need in society. Notably, among its many functions is its role as an agent of socialisation. This is noted in Ewen's assertion that "the idea of Africa without music is unthinkable. However modern the interpretation, African pop is rooted in a musical continuum that accompanies every formal and informal moment of life" (8). Among the various genres of music that have affected socialisation in Nigeria is our contemporary pop music.

According to Hall, historically popular music's rise as commercial dance music at the end of World War II is one of the landmarks of the modern period in Yoruba musical history (84). He cautions that popular culture (including popular music) is neither "the popular tradition of resistance nor forms that are superimposed on and over them, and it is the ground on which there are transformations." The change in social-cultural setting from the rural village to the urban. The town, with its proliferation of businesses, industries, and offices, created a demand for new forms of

entertainment. Popular music is more subject to change than any other genre of music, for it is not ceremonially or socially bound to specific ethno-national institutions. Collins argued that nineteenth-century sociologists agreed that a “social system inevitably moves in one direction, that is, from primitive to modern” (230).

Innovations and alterations in popular music are generally not prohibited by traditions. Schneider stressed the fact that recreational music in Africa is more amenable to innovation and alteration than the music that is associated with traditional religious and political systems. (101) Thus, it may be changed by outside influences, individuals within society, and integration with other societies. Popular music is also social entertainment and dance-oriented and draws its core clientele from urban dwellers; these characteristics lead to its being favoured more by the youth than by adults. In Nigeria, popular music genres include highlife, juju, apala, sakara, akuko na egwu, dadakuada, reggae, rock ‘n’ roll, bongo music, soul, disco, electronic, and jazz. All these rely heavily on Western musical instruments.

According to Igwebu, music is a multifaceted art that is strictly dependent upon the traditions of its performance; the mode of performance and the features it portrays determine the type of genre or the name the music goes with (105). Popular music exhibits a peculiar culture or characteristics that distinguish it from the host of other music types. Many writers have described it as the music of the masses whose greatest appeal lies within the domain of youths and youth at heart. Its span in urban centres is without prejudice, principally because of the popular culture it propagates. In discussing the effect of Nigerian music on socialisation, Muhammad and Bushra mention that music plays an important role in the socialisation of youth. They further noted that listening to popular music is considered by society to be a part of growing-up experiences. (3) Idolor contends that “no phenomenon void of utility survives in a society: an indication that the presence of music in almost every African society has a formidable role to play” (22). This viewpoint suggests that human beings have always used music to meet certain societal needs in different circumstances. Contemporary Nigerian musicians use their lyrics to reflect on happenings in society. As such, they become chroniclers of events, recreating the history and culture of their people, commenting on aspects of societal values that have diverged from historical reports, and suggesting ways by which society could be restored to the normal order. In so doing, the musicians sometimes act as social critics, employing the tool of satire to deride the prevalence of social ills in a bid to correct them and instil morals in society. This brings to the fore the didactic function of music. Idolor explains:

The didactic function of music is affected by the logical organization of lyrics and performance practice. Some lyrics are presented in direct or indirect satire through such speech figures as simile, metaphor, alliteration, allusions, and even short anecdotes to

convey an observation or/ and opinion to a witness-audience. In other situations, other activities in performance teach both viewers and participants the coded lessons (65).

Artists can also be seen as those who satirise social foibles to make human society and living worthwhile. Since music is “an integral part of culture, it inevitably reflects the general structures and values of the society and uses its lyrics to preserve such values” (Merriam 1964:250). Music is seen as a symbolic reflection of cultural meaning, such as cultural behaviour and values (Agnew 56). As Brown puts it, the symbolic representation of music goes hand in hand with the function of enforcing conformity to social and cultural norms. He also argues that pop music has been described as affirming societal conformity. Contemporary pop music is such a vital tool in socialising members of society.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is socialist realism. According to Pavel, socialist realism is a style of idealised realistic art that was developed and adopted in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries as the official style between 1932 and 1988 (after World War II) (71). It is characterised by the glorified representation of communist values, particularly the emancipation of the proletariat. Despite being termed realism, the artistic figures within this style are often idealised, especially in sculpture, which frequently draws from classical artistic conventions.

While socialist realism shares similarities with social realism, the two are conceptually distinct. Social realism seeks to depict the realities of social conditions with a focus on social concern, aiming to portray how societal issues can be addressed to maintain a just and equitable society. Socialist realism, in contrast, is more prescriptive and ideological, presenting a vision of society not merely as it is but as it ought to be under socialist ideals. The study, therefore, examines the social effects of pop music, especially as no music artist writes or sings in a vacuum; rather, their work interacts with and influences the society in which it exists. Falz, through his songs, functions as a social realist. He actively engages with the various ills plaguing Nigerian society, such as corruption, hypocrisy, inequality, and civic irresponsibility, while aiming to critique and correct these through his music. Thus, socialist realism provides an apt theoretical lens for interpreting his work, as it frames music as a potential agent of ideological, moral, and political transformation.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design and employs purposive sampling to select five representative songs from Falz’s *Moral Instruction* album. These songs were chosen based on their alignment with the themes of socialist realism, such as

corruption, social injustice, exploitation, and civic responsibility. The primary data consists of the selected songs, which were accessed through Spotify for audio content and Musixmatch for their lyrics. The researcher listened to each track multiple times to understand the tone, message, and delivery. The lyrics were sourced online and cross-verified with official music videos and interviews to ensure textual accuracy. The selected tracks—“Child of the World,” “This is Nigeria,” “Talk,” “Follow Follow,” and “Paper”—were chosen for their strong socio-political commentary and thematic relevance to socialist realism. The secondary data includes books, journal articles, internet sources, and other relevant academic materials that provide theoretical grounding and contextual insight. Data analysis was conducted using thematic content analysis, which involved identifying and interpreting key themes in the lyrics related to social issues and public consciousness. The findings are presented thematically to show how Falz’s music serves as a medium for social critique and ideological socialisation in contemporary Nigerian society.

Data Analysis and Discussions

This section seeks to analyse selected songs from Falz’s album *Moral Instruction* to show its socialising effects on society. The songs chosen for analysis include “Child of the World”, “This is Nigeria”, “Talk”, “Follow Follow” and “Paper”. Through these songs, Falz explores several themes to stimulate awareness to correct the ills of society.

Song 1: Child of the World (Falz)

This song brings to the fore that HIV/AIDS is still out there, even though people have suddenly become careless about who or what they sleep with. The awareness seems to have, over time, been relegated to the background. Lyrically, the song tells a story; all the lines are perfectly interrelated. In stanza one,

Apple of her mother’s eye
she be a trophy daughter
Mummy raised her
Daddy never dropped a dollar
Daddy ran away, didn’t want a child
Mummy wasn’t ready
still remember how she cried.
(Falz, “Child of the World”, 2017)

i. Condemnation of Sexual Abuse

The artist talks about a woman, Mama Sola, who was saddled with the task of raising her daughter, Sola, alone after the man who

her absconded. Mama Sola raised Sola in a godly way, and she loved her daughter so much. Intelligent Sola graduated with a first-class in Law at the University of Lagos.

She just collect Lawdegree for Unilag
'First class' in the bag
make her mummy to dey brag"
(Falz, "Child of the World", 2017)

While on an internship at her uncle's company, her uncle raped her. Thus, she cruelly loses her virginity:

she went to be an intern for her uncle
just a little hustle before she go Law school ...
But uncle Peter abgaya alainitiju
One late night became wild in the sitting room
Uncle please stop...shhh, be silent
Uncle didn't stop till he broke the hymen.
(Falz, "Child of the World", 2017)

These lyrics show the damage done by the uncle. Through these, Falz criticises many men who take advantage of young girls sexually. Through this, she became wild and went into prostitution.

i. Consequences of Prostitution

Following the first stanza in the pre-chorus:

Am I a fool?
Shey I don go astray?
Am I a victim of my circumstance?
(Falz, "Child of the World", 2017)

Here, the artist says, "once used to be good girl." Sola has now allowed the rape incident to determine and dictate her lifestyle. After she was raped, she saw it as a tangible motive to start prostituting. However, the artist asked people who are victims of circumstances a question: if they have become foolish and gone astray because of the harm beyond their control that was inflicted upon them. These questions serve as a means of instructing youth not to use any bad circumstances as an excuse for youthful exuberance. In the chorus,

Oh ohoh, oh ohoh
I be Child of the world
I don become a child of the world
(Falz, "Child of the World", 2017)

The artist says that if you allow circumstances around you or the harm inflicted upon you intentionally or intentionally to control your life negatively, then you have become a child of the world; immoral just like in the case of Sola. In stanza two, the excerpt:

She don dey look for that thing
She dey resist before
She never had a daddy figure
So she need the love
Uncle Peter don create beast
He can't tame the stuff
(Falz, "Child of the World", 2017)

Here the artist talks about how Sola always kept her sexual desires in check but after the rape, she became sexually uncontrollable. She started making a lot of money and was more into sugar daddies, politicians:

Now with sugar daddy loving every
She don dey get the pay...
She is in deep her whole life don deteriorate.
(Falz, "Child of the World", 2017)

The more sugar daddies she slept with, the more her money, and likewise, the more she was exposed to sexual diseases. She and her friends turned prostitution into a full-time business and named it Aristo Plc, and she was a stakeholder in the business. She terminated many pregnancies:

Many belle she don be get she don terminate...
Somebody tell am say the consequences no dey likely
Until she tested positive to HIV.
(Falz, "Child of the World", 2017)

She continued in her sexual escapades until one day, she was diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. This made her suicidal; she recounted a series of traumatic experiences that left her emotionally broken and hopeless. The artiste encouraged people who have been raped or have encountered any hurtful situation to voice out rather than commit suicide since it was not their fault.

In stanza three,

She promised not to disappoint
I guess she broke her vow

She let herself go
She let her mummy down

But she go fight to defeat that depression
As long as she's alive she can still find redemption
She getting people sensitized about the virus,
She is now hoping that her story might inspire us.
(Falz, "Child of the World", 2017)

The artist narrates that Sola experienced a turning point, choosing to speak out about her illness and caution others against sexual immorality to prevent them from facing a similar fate. She overcame her depression, found a path to self-redemption, and embraced the belief that as long as one is alive, there is still hope.

ii. The benefit of a Righteous Path

Generally, when the word "worldly" is used, it connotes that one is fascinated by the things of the world; in essence, the person is materialistic or ungodly or fleshly, all of which may end up in the destruction of one's soul, depending on how the person goes about it. It is more like seeking wild pleasure at the expense of one's life. So "Child of the world" may mean a person who does all manner of immoral things for cash just to survive in the world.

In the context of this song, "Child of the World" is about a girl that went astray after she was raped. She was a victim of a circumstance that was beyond her control, and the circumstance controlled her lifestyle by living waywardly. She was living a wayward life because of what happened to her; she became a victim of circumstance. Through the song, Falz imparts moral lessons to society, urging the older generation not to exploit the youth and encouraging the younger generation to avoid seeking fleeting pleasures that could jeopardise their future. The song ends with Sola's poignant advice, urging others to learn from her mistakes:

Don't be like me help me tell the young ones
Don't come to realize it after you have long gone
Please don't be a fool now
Don't go astray
Don't be a victim of your circumstances.
(Falz, "Child of the World", 2017)

Song 2: This is Nigeria (Falz)

In "This is Nigeria" Falz delivers an important piece of social commentary highlighting many of the worst socio-economic issues in today's Nigeria, particularly

for the country's leaders. The song begins with speeches about Nigeria operating a "predatory neo-colonial capitalist system" which was founded on fraud and exploitation, which is bound to lead to corruption, which forms the main premise for the message of the song.

i. Criticism Against Corruption

Just because I'm on TV now
Person wey no get work is checking to see
If my watch is original
(Falz, "This is Nigeria", 2017)

Falz used this line to socialise the youths who are jobless but are always commenting on other people's wealth to get jobs and get focused on their lives.

Wey da Madam Philomena
Money Vanish from your office
36 milli you talk say na animal.
(Falz, "This is Nigeria ", 2018)

Back in February 2018, a sales clerk, "Madam Philomena" at the National University Admissions Board, JAMB, claimed a snake had swallowed 36 million naira of the board's funds. Falz used this critical line to capture yet another example of the absurdity of Nigeria's daily corruption.

Never ending recession o
When looter and killers and stealers are still contesting election o
Politician wey thief some billion and billion e no go prison o.
(Falz, "This is Nigeria ", 2018)

Falz condemns the inaction of political leaders and the culture of impunity that allows corrupt officials to embezzle public funds without consequence, only to re-emerge as candidates in subsequent elections. By referencing the economic recession of 2018 and the rising cost of living, he draws attention to the tangible effects of bad governance. Even in the seriousness of Nigeria's mounting insecurity issues, Falz again pokes fun at the absurdity of it all, referencing a Nigerian police station, which in 2018 said it had to close by 6 pm "for security reasons" in the following line: "Police station dey close by 6, security reason o". Falz also criticises religious leaders who use their altars as a means of getting rich with sermons of miracles. He also condemns their sexual assaults of female members in "This is Nigeria":

Praise and worship we singing now
pastor put his hands on the breast of his member
He's pulling the demons out.

At this point, Falz addresses stories of sexual assault by several pastors taking advantage of desperate people.

This is Nigeria
No electricity daily o
Your people are still working multiple jobs and they talk say we lazy o.
Falz, "This is Nigeria", 2018)

Nigeria's electricity failure is brought to the fore as Falz mocks the power failure in Nigeria. In the same breath, Falz raps about the infamous comments of President Buhari to the Commonwealth Business Forum in Westminster, portraying Nigerian youth as lazy.

ii. Theme of Insurgencies

This is Nigeria.
There is plenty wahala sha,
Fulani herdsmen still they slaughter
Carry people dey massacre.
Falz, "This is Nigeria", 2018)

Falz condemns Fulani herdsmen for killings, obviously symbolising the kidnapped Chibok girls and other crimes committed by the Fulani herdsmen. "Yahoo Yahoo don tear everywhere no and we act like it's so cool". Falz used this as a means of sensitising the youth and society to the acceptance of cybercrime. He condemns the act and criticises the fact that it is viewed as normal or acceptable. Falz also criticises pastors for their church-owned private universities, taking offerings from poor parishioners, then charging school fees which only their wealthy members can afford:

It is only in Nigeria were you take money from the church
Money contributed by members
You go and set up a University that the members cannot attend"
(Falz, "This is Nigeria", 2018)

If there was one recurring or underlying theme to "This is Nigeria" it is that we are all to blame for the criminality we condone from our leaders or peers or as he refrains, "Everybody be criminal!"

Song 3: Talk (Falz)

In this song, Falz explored and addressed most of the controversial issues plaguing Nigerian society. It is safe to say that he spoke the mind of Nigerians on this one. He started off the song by addressing people who took offence at his song “This Is Nigeria” and threatened legal action, but backed out when he indicated his willingness to go to court. He sings:

Brother Muric shout finish, we no see am for court
Eh eh, we no see am for court.
(Falz, “Talk”, 2019)

He then spoke about politicians only caring about the people when it is time for election, singing:

Election don dey come, they go need your support
Eh eh, need your support
(Falz, “Talk”, 2019)

i. Bad Governance as a Form of Society Degradation

Next on the list are fraudsters and internet scammers, popularly called “Yahoo boys”. He mocks them with his lyrics which go: “Since EFCC burst in, we no see you for club, Eh eh, we no see you for club, And you get legit work o, na wetin you talk, Eh eh, na wetin you talk”. He speaks on the topic of President Muhammadu Buhari and his absence for a considerable period of his tenure, the artist said:

Four year tenure, three year holiday
Eh Eh, three year holiday.
(Falz, “Talk”, 2019)

The artiste addressed the constant brawls at the National Assembly as he voiced:

Our senator, don dey fight kung-fu again
Eh eh, fight Kung-fu again,
Shey dem never tire they wan continue the race?
Eh eh, they wan continue the race
(Falz, “Talk”, 2019)

He touched on the matter of unpaid salaries and even advocated for the plight of Youth Corps members and their unreasonably low salaries as he sang:

Month don end, oga pay salary
Eh eh, oga pay salary
In 2019, Nineteen eight (N19,800) alawee
Eh eh, Nineteen (19) eight (8) alawee
(Falz, “Talk”, 2019)

He mocks lazy girls who are into prostitution, popularly called “Runs Girls”, and he says:

Instead of may you work, you dey find Alhaji
Eh eh, she dey find Alhaji
You come turn your body to cash and carry
Eh eh, she don de cash and carry
(Falz, “Talk”, 2019)

This serves as a means of socialising these girls against prostitution, on the other hand, encouraging them to work hard to earn a living. The artist goes further to speak on the sensitive topic of religious leaders living lavish lifestyles off the funds generated by their congregation, who cannot enjoy the same luxuries as their ‘spiritual fathers’. He sings thus:

Three private jet, you say you buy am for church
Eh, eh, say you buy am for church
But your congregation no dey follow fly am of course
Eh eh, dem no dey follow fly am of course”
(Falz, “Talk”, 2019)

He addresses tribalism in the Nigerian society, singing:

Why your people still dey carry carry eye for someone
Eh eh, dem dey carry eye for someone
Shey I no be person, Cause no be your tribe I come from?
(Falz, “Talk”, 2019)

Song 4: Follow-Follow (Falz)

As a means of socialising the youth, Falz adapted Fela’s song ‘Zombie’, which reflects the ignorance of copying the colonial master’s ways of life. In our contemporary society, Falz gives the subject matter another meaning. The song focuses on those most especially the youth, who always talk about and stalk celebrities. He emphasises the get-rich-quick fanatics among youth who want to live

like the celebrities they see, with an emphasis on following trends even when they cannot afford the lifestyle they seek.

i. The Theme of Youthful Exuberance

Falz introduces the song with Fela Kuti's chorus: "No brake, no job, no sense, quick march, slow march (zombie) left turn (Zombie)". Zombies are corpses said to be revived by witchcraft and therefore do not possess mental abilities on their own to make their own decisions. In comparing youths to zombies, Falz focuses on the senselessness of many youths who are carried away by a celebrity lifestyle. In portraying the height of youth's desire for societal recognition at all costs, Falz highlights the focus of many youths.

OG na God I take beg
Una no go fit to stop my fake flex
My phoenetics my complex, ...
Me I want to rock the latest
Shey you no dey fell my swag fey make sense?
(Falz "FollowFollow", 2019)

These lyrics show the shallow thinking of many Nigerian youths, whom Falz is trying to socialise about the true values in life. Their focus is on "fake flex", "swag, "and phonetics"; all these portray the double lifestyle of many youths in society. While others are thinking of how to make ends meet, many are on the run to impress others as seen in his next line:

I dey tell the boys of how I go take spend
Even when I know account dey red
My mates them dey reason how to make bread
Me I still dey wonder how to take blend.
I go need to talk for matter wey trend
Your dad or see he likes on top my Jpeg.
(Falz "FollowFollow", 2019)

Here, Falz condemns the youths who ignore work, making bread, only to focus on trends on social media and posting pictures—JPEGs. Using the word "likes on top of my JPEG", he reflects the many who are wholly concerned about how many people like or comment on the pictures they post on social media, all these because they wish to follow the crowd.

ii. Competitive Imitation

Falz next comments on several celebrities who have done significant things and how youths are trying to imitate them at all costs. He highlights Davido and Chioma, a reference to Davido buying Chioma an expensive car to engage her, which was his famous “assurance”. Next, he points out the high-class wedding of Banky W and Adesua Elomi, which took place in South Africa, and how many are trying to copy them even when they do not have the financial backing of the lifestyle they struggle to imitate.

...I go borrow pose na
I go be the talk of the town, I go take over
I need follower e dey important

They say person dey Lekki wey dey pump yansh
I need HBD I need congrats
I need mentions I need more...
Me still dey wonder how I go take blend
You for see the likes on top my Jpeg.
(Falz “FollowFollow”, 2019)

Falz also talks about the youth's strong desire to become important in society, they go to the extreme of increasing the private part – “they say person dey Lekki wey dey pump yansh”. He condemns their need for social media followers and thus tries to correct their thinking towards becoming responsible citizens rather than trying to follow celebrities. The song thus emphasises how people are obsessed with being the star of the show, losing the sense of things that matter.

Song 5: Paper (Falz)

“Paper” as the song title means money. Falz uses slang to refer to currency. The song centres on the dangers of get-rich-quick schemes and tendencies. This is appropriate in a society where cybercrime is the order of the day. Through the song, Falz tries to warn and socialise on the dangers of the get-rich-quick.

i. Theme of Ritual Killings

He comments on the reasons for such desires to be rich:

All because you want to live the faaji life
You ready to pay the price
Do the sacrifice
You ready to pay the price take your mama life
And even you no fit explain this your appetite

You want the benz. you no wan take the taxify.
You want order gold bottles. Enh maybe 35.
You wan halla private jet things when you catching flight
And you don dey shey weyrey losun
You don dey bark for night
Skeleton in your closet
Your murder to chow supper
All the wraps of powder you swallow to pass border.
(Falz, "Paper", 2018)

Falz list the reasons for the desired lifestyles, youth wish to own cars, – you want the Benz” They seek for “private jet” and want dollars. However, in highlighting these selfish desires, he focuses on the evil acts they sometimes have to engage in to get this wealth. Acts such as killing their mothers, barking at night, murdering, and wrapping themselves in diabolical powder, all to be rich. Falz calls these deeds worse than armed robbery and criminal acts.

These phenomena listed are seen in our current society with several incidents of ritual acts, killing and use of female body organs, and stealing of female underwear for ritual purposes, all to get money and live a lavish life in society. Through his song, Falz thus serves as a commentator who tries to urge the youth to pursue a better way of life, thereby making society a safe place free from too many crimes. Beyond the youths in the society, Falz also identify those of different age groups who also engage in illegal means to get money.

Ah all because they offer a little dollar
Na which kind foolish marriage wey you throw your daughter
Small girl pikin wey hero still be Dora
Small pikin dem wey never suppose leave the mother.
(Falz, "Paper", 2018)

Here he criticises parents who give out little children to men to marry just to get money in exchange for dowry. This situation is common in the Northern region of Nigeria, where young girls are given out to marry men old enough to father them. The musical artist condemns this act and calls such a union a “foolish marriage”. Next, he satirises politicians who embezzle, pursue funds and alter election results because of bribes.

You need to hammer; you need to chop national cake
You dey pray for contract
Dem give you Ghana must go make you change the number
voting never star you don dey say your congrats.

(Falz, “Paper”, 2018)

Not left out are the masses who collect bribes from electoral candidates to cast their votes for him or her. He pointed this out with the words: “Oh I hear your people collect rice for some vote”. This sensitises the masses to the need to utilise their constitutional voting rights rather than allow politicians to bribe them and, in turn, rule in a corrupt manner.

Falz ends this song by calling all those engaging in these deeds dirty. He sings:

No go use your dirty hand stain the white for my cloth...
Oga this one you dey do e pass are robber
throwaway moral because you want to chow dollar.

(Falz, “Paper”, 2018)

Those who throw away morals just to get rich are viewed as worse than armed robbers and are urged to desist from such acts.

Findings and Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal that Nigerian pop music, particularly Falz’s *Moral Instruction*, serves as a powerful tool for socialisation in contemporary Nigerian society. Through the analysis of selected songs from the album—“Child of the World”, “This is Nigeria”, “Talk”, “Follow Follow”, and “Paper”—it becomes clear that Falz employs music as a medium to critique societal ills and advocate for moral rectitude and civic responsibility. Each of the songs reveals a distinct thematic concern that reflects pressing issues in Nigeria, such as sexual abuse, prostitution, corruption, poor governance, cybercrime, materialism, and the erosion of societal values.

Falz’s “Child of the World” addresses the emotional and psychological consequences of sexual abuse while advocating for resilience and moral discipline. The song encourages victims of abuse not to be defined by their circumstances but to rise above them. This form of storytelling, rooted in realism, not only raises awareness but also educates the public on the dangers of silence and the importance of empathy and redemption. In “This is Nigeria”, Falz critiques systemic corruption, government inefficiency, insecurity, religious exploitation, and social inequality. By referencing real-life events and issues, the song functions as a mirror to Nigerian society, exposing the contradictions, hypocrisy, and decay within both leadership and the masses. The use of satire and direct language makes the song a clear example of music as a form of civic education and a catalyst for social consciousness. “Talk” furthers this civic engagement by confronting controversial topics such as internet fraud, irresponsible leadership, youth unemployment, prostitution, and the extravagance of religious

leaders. Falz voices the concerns of the average Nigerian, prompting critical reflection on the values and direction of the society. The use of humour and irony serves not only to entertain but to provoke a deeper understanding of national issues. In “Follow Follow”, Falz turns his lens on the youth, addressing the blind imitation of celebrity culture and the obsession with social media validation. This song underscores the dangers of youthful exuberance and identity crisis, which result from a lack of critical thinking and societal direction. By portraying youths as modern-day “zombies,” Falz warns against the loss of individuality and urges self-awareness and purpose. Finally, “Paper” critiques the dangerous pursuit of wealth through illegal and immoral means. Falz addresses cybercrime, ritual killings, child marriage, and electoral corruption, condemning the moral bankruptcy that underpins these actions. The song is a clear attempt to reorient both the youth and the larger society towards ethical living, hard work, and respect for human dignity.

In conclusion, the analysis of *Moral Instruction* demonstrates that Falz uses his platform not only for entertainment but also for education and moral reform. His music aligns with the principles of socialist realism, portraying societal issues in a way that stimulates consciousness, questions the status quo, and promotes civic responsibility. By addressing a wide range of moral and socio-political themes, Falz’s pop music contributes meaningfully to the socialisation process in Nigeria. It provides listeners, especially the youth, with a framework for understanding their societal environment and encourages them to become agents of positive change. Thus, Nigerian pop music, as exemplified by Falz, is a vital cultural tool for shaping values, promoting civic education, and fostering national development.

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