

# YORÙBÁ FOLK SONGS AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR COMBATING MORAL DECADENCE AMONG THE YOUTH IN THE SOCIETY



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## **Abstract**

This study explores the use of Yorùbá folk songs as an instrument for combating moral decadence among the youth in the society. This study looks at various forms of moral decadence among youth such as truancy, examination malpractice, drug abuse, violence, indecent dressing, smoking, alcohol drinking, dishonesty, sexual misconduct and verbal aggressiveness and factors responsible for moral decadence which ranges from poor economy and political instability, to media, greed, peer influence, lack of parental guidance, lack of affection and care, societal influence, lack of teaching on Yorùbá folksongs, quest for materialism, poor parental upbringing, and the roles of Yoruba folk songs to correct the menace among the youth. The research design adopted was survey and quasi-experimental. The participants were randomized into two groups (Experimental group and Control group). The experimental group was taught various Yorùbá Folk songs while foreign dancing was used for the control group. The findings revealed that the mean score for control group is ( $\bar{X}$  = 14.48) whereas the mean score for experimental group is ( $\bar{X}$  = 18.07). This shows that the influences of Yoruba folk songs are significant at .05 level of significance. Through observation, those in experimental group had a change in their behaviour while there is no or little change of behaviour in those in control group. It is therefore recommended that government should enact laws that support the teaching of Yorùbá folk songs at school and ensure that music teachers are employed to effectively teach Yoruba folk songs

**Keywords:** Yorùbá Folk songs, Moral decadence, Youth

### **Background to the Study**

One of the global issues among youth nowadays is moral decadence. Nigeria is not exempted from the degeneration of the moral among youth, which have led into various vices in the society. The moral decadence in our society has been controversial because of the confusion about what seem to be morally right or wrong. According to Odeh (2013), moral decadence is seen as failure to uphold sound morality of the society. Meaning that there is a system of normality, principle and judgement that are based on religious, cultural, philosophical beliefs, and concept that determines if actions are right or wrong (Lukman, 2021). Morality is expected to shape an individual's behaviour into the accepted values in the society. Therefore, any behaviour that negates acceptable norms of the society is regarded as moral decadence. Moral decadence appears to be a slip in the moral standard of the society. It seems to be deterioration, fall or a collapse in upholding our societal values, beliefs, norms and ethical standards.

In Nigeria society today, moral decadence can be seen in all facets of our being. It is so ubiquitous that through observation children learn such behaviour from the adults and the vicious circle goes on. It is found in schools, homes, on the streets, at work places and even at religious gatherings. This phenomenon has enormously affected national development and had led to the bad reputation of the country overseas (Lukman, 2021). In addition, Moral degeneration is a universal occurrence, which is negatively affecting many societies, including Nigeria. The Nigerian society, with specific reference to family, school and public life is experiencing serious moral chaos. The media is constantly reporting cases of moral breakdowns, which are evident in social ills such as a general lack of discipline, violence, promiscuity, vandalism, corruption, theft, high crime waves and the likes. Not a few seems to be wondering about the causes of this moral decay, and its negative effects on the Nigerian society (Dick, Ede and Chiaghanam, 2020)

Previous researchers revealed that causes of moral decadence among youth are not far-fetched, the decline in parental authority and domestic values, influence of science and Technology, media influence, materialism, poverty, greed, the collapse of discipline in school have been indicted as the major causes of moral decadence in our society. There are various typologies of

moral decadence among youth. These behaviours have been studied from a number of different perspectives, including anthropological, evolutionary, sociological, psychological, and biological perspectives. Research from each of these disciplines provides a unique perspective for understanding the course, causes, and most effective interventions for individuals who show severe immoral behaviours (Frick and Viding, 2009). According to Slattery and Meyers (2014) moral decadence among youth can be classified as covert and overt moral decadence. The formal which is also known as sneaky behaviours is regarded as disruptive behaviours that are not violent and are committed with the intention of not being observed by authority figures (e.g., stealing or vandalism), whereas overt moral decadence refers to behaviours that are violent and confrontational.

Another classification by Moffit, 1993 in Eme (2016) was dual taxonomy of moral decadence in human, namely Life course persistent and Adolescent Limited moral decadence. The formal has been described as moral decadence that has roots early in life and was likely to be caused by inherited or acquired neurobiological and neuropsychological variation. These behaviours might not being displayed by the adolescents but they make them vulnerable, and show the behaviours whenever situation calls for it, whereas Youth limited moral decadence are caused by desires nurture by adolescents for autonomies. Youth Limited moral decadence is considered also to engage in behaviour as a result of a maturity gap (between biological development and access to adult privileges) and also the imitation of the Life course persistent moral decadence (Morgan, 2012). Other classifications of moral decadence include those behaviours such as negativistic, hostile, deviant, disobedient, and noncompliant, argumentative, destructive, deceitful, norm violating behaviours which have been subsumed under oppositional deviant disorders by American Psychiatric Association (2013)

Music has been a powerful medium of communication, correction, instruction and entertainment (Adedeji, 2017). According to Elegbe and Fadipe, (2017) music is an important part of the cultural heritage of Yoruba used during different religious festivals, as well as royal, marriage, and naming ceremonies. Also, music plays significant roles in communal life, socio-religious activities and also in fostering social relationships. Through

music, the Yoruba people express their empathies, philosophies, rebuke, correct and show reverence to their various deities (Olaleye, 2012).

The Yoruba are a song loving people. No aspect of their life is devoid of song. In joy or in sorrow, time of meeting and departure, time of exhortation or rebuke and so on. There is always song to express the situation. In fact songs are seen as a powerful channel through which the Yorùbá people express their mind. Songs encompass their daily lives and inspire them while at work. Songs among the Yoruba is a reflection of people's feelings and those feelings center especially around their world view. That the Yoruba enjoy expressing part of their world view through music shows the appealing nature of music in their society (Olagunju, 1997:24 - 25). Kennedy (1980) defined folksongs as songs of unknown authorship passed orally from one generation to another, sung without accompaniment and often found in variants (of words and tunes) in different parts of a country. Folksongs used to be predominantly found among peasants or country dwellers, but have since spread to towns and urban cities where they chronicle the people's lives in terms of design, melody and rhythm; hence they have become traditional among them (Samuel, 2003).

In addition, folk literally means to people from a particular place or class that have a tradition or common way of life. Folk family comprise of folk art, folk dance, folklores, folk music, folksong, folktales, etc. Folk music therefore means people's music or the traditional music of a people. Agu (1990) defines folk music as 'the music of the people which evolves as a communal experience' (p. 80). In the Nigerian context, Okwilagwe (2002) describes folk music as music that 'derives its origin and versatility from oral tradition or the folk lore of the different ethnic groups that make up the Nigerian nation' (p. 105). According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2019) folk music is defined as 'music in the traditional style of a country or community' (p. 576). Accordingly, folk music can be referred to as the expression of the totality of a people's way of life, their tradition, indigenous practices which are peculiar to them without the interference of other cultures.

According to Bolaji (2013), Yoruba indigenous cultures have various certain occurrences that are unique. This includes norms, tradition and belief

system, folksongs, cultural philosophy, religion and literature. The Yoruba traditional folksongs are embedded in cultural value, identity and historical antecedents of Yoruba, which are transmitted and preserved orally from one generation to another. This makes Yoruba folksongs useful in every phase of life and they are applicable in addressing social aberrations or vices in the society. Meaning that, the incorporation of folksongs could be seen conspicuously from different stages of life span of the youth.

In education goals and philosophy in Nigeria, the quality of instruction at all levels has to be geared towards inculcating among others values, the moral, and spiritual principle in intra and inter- personal and human relation (Republic of Nigeria National Policy of Education, 2004:8). Learners at certain stages of their development are exposed to various cultural practices of the community to cultivate in them their moral obligations to the society and the right attitude to life at later age. Agu (1990) observes that folk songs serve as a pivot on which the impact of education rotates, plays a vital role in the process of cultural transmission. This process teaches youth right and wrong, obedience, civil responsibility, respect, values and sexual behaviour. Supporting the previous point Okafor and Ng'andu (2003) infers:

Children learned through the folktale, the dos and don'ts of their community. They also learned about the character of the people and animals ... proverbs, codes and maxims ... were attractive to children because through the vehicle of the songs they learned easily without mental stress ... even to compose words, and use their language beautifully (p. 180).

It is a celebrated fact that the traditional system of education in Africa lays a lot of emphasis on character formation. Folk songs are used to inculcate into every learner the right attitude to life; it enhances the moral concept of a learner and enables a child to grow into a morally sound individual.

However, with the richness of the traditional education and its concepts, there has been a moral decadence among generation Z. Numerous approaches had been adopted to address this menace with little or no effects on the moral behaviour of the youth. Therefore, this study is designed to use

the teaching of Yoruba folksongs as means of combating moral decadence among the Youth.

### **Scope of the study**

The scope of this study is mainly on the application of Yoruba Folk songs as an instrument for combating moral decadence among the youth in the society, using Itesiwaju Local Government area of Oyo State as case study.

### **Statement of Problem**

Despite the richness of Yoruba traditional education in teaching Youth values, the moral, and spiritual principle in intra and inter- personal and human relation, there has been an increase in moral decadence among youth. This study is designed to use folksongs as tools for addressing moral decadence among Youth.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical anchorage for this study is derived from social learning theory. This theory postulated that we are not mindless robots responding mechanically to others in our environment. Rather Youth think, reason, imagine, plan, expect, interpret, believe, value and compare. Bandura and Walter (1986) are the main designers of the contemporary version of social learning theory that was labelled cognitive social learning theory. Bandura believed much of our learning occurs by observing what others do through observational learning [also denoted modelling or imitation or vicarious learning] we cognitively represent the behaviour of others and then possibly adopt this behaviour ourselves. For example, youth may observe the music teachers humility and respect; when observed with his peers, the youth style of interaction is highly commendable showing the same characteristics as his music's behaviour. Social learning theorists believe we acquire a wide range of behaviours, thoughts, and feelings through observing others' behaviours. These observations form an important part of our development. For adolescents, the peer group is most prominent in influencing behaviour and is more influential than parents and other significant models such as teachers.

## **Folk Songs**

Folk songs can be defined as grassroot songs of any community. It is the country music that people grow up with, or adopt through the means of oral tradition. Folk songs are very important in our community and they are part of our society. They play important roles in educating people; in teaching morals, in child rearing; in making our traditional festivals and ceremonies jubilant. According to Okafor (2017), the Nigerian folk song has always lived because of its consanguinity with the culture, its social statement, its fluidity and the kinship between artists and audience, music and life. Folk song is a song that originates among the people of a community or area transmitted by oral tradition from generation to another generation, often existing in several versions and marked generally by simple, modal melody and stanza, narrative verse written by an unknown composer. Okafor (2017) further describes folk songs as songs, which people have found as an integral part of their culture. It is a composition that has grown with a race or nation or even a community and whose authorship is enshrined in the midst of antiquity, that is, whose origin is unknown but which can claim community authorship because of the generations of the race, the community or the nation that has grown with it and added to it. Mao (2013) describes folk song as the one that bears the testimony of the past. Events like war, relationship of the community, seasons, rites and rituals, belief system, moral norms, occupational behavior, leisure times, or the total cultural and social milieu of the people are preserved and kept alive in the form of this genre of oral tradition.

According to Odejobi (2014), the Yoruba are a song loving people. No aspect of their life is devoid of song. In joy or in sorrow, time of meeting and departure, time of exhortation or rebuke and so on. There is always song to express the situation. In fact, songs are seen as a powerful channel through which the Yorùbá people express their mind. Songs encompasses their daily lives and inspire them while at work. Songs among the Yoruba is a reflection of people's feelings and those feelings center especially around their worldview. That the Yoruba enjoy expressing part of their worldview through music shows the appealing nature of music in their society (Olagunju, 1997:24 - 25)

### **Moral Decadence among the Youths**

Youths are considered the backbone and leaders of tomorrow in every society and are seen as the leaders of tomorrow. However, youths have remained at the center of immoral acts and other vices, which are capable of destroying their future. Many Nigerian youths today have been lured into accepting dangerous life styles, involving the acts of smoking; cultism and other vices (Sofadekan, 2016) Energetic youths have continuously been involved in both religious and political violence, leading to the deaths of many and the destruction of property worth millions of naira. Adebisi (2018) argued that; “In the world today, shame and shamelessness are rewarded with encomiums and emphasized recognition, clothedness is now directly proportional to your fame and acceptance, skimpy dresses are now tickets to classy events, songs that have intimate talking in them sell faster than the meaningful ones” (p 192). Therefore, moral decadence has continued to replace core values in the society.

Youths now are not concerned with how their tomorrow will be better through innovations but rather focus on enriching themselves by any means necessary at a tender age (Afuye, 2013). Similarly, Adebisi (2018) explained that many youths have today engaged in numerous ways of accumulating wealth and enjoying the good things of life. Idensi (2010) also opined that, moral decadence thrives in different societies around the world, and these immoralities such as drug abuse, school violence, sexual abuse, killings, among others are common among youths and children. Adebisi (2018) opined that the belief that was proved by researchers indicated that a large percentage of Nigerian youths that are involved in anti-social vices are products of practices that do not conform with the decent and moral acts transferred to the present generation of parents by the previous one. Hence, the parental irresponsibility shown today is alarming and capable of destroying Nigeria’s tomorrow.

According to Alimba et al (2010), the conditions of the youths are frustrating to the extent that leaders do not take it seriously, as their children are not involved. This Nigerian youths thus, no longer uphold societal norms and values like hard work, honesty, respect for elders, cooperation, self-reliance, decent dressing, among others (Adebisi, 2018). A significant number of youths have imbibed the culture of immorality for their selfish gains. The



result of which does not only affect the perpetrators and or victims, but the whole society as well (Lukman, 2021).

### **Impact of Folk Music on Moral Development**

In the philosophy and goals of education in Nigeria, the quality of instruction at all levels has to be oriented towards inculcating amongst other values, the moral and spiritual principle in inter-personal and human relation (Federal Republic of Nigeria National Policy on Education, 2004:8). Children at certain stages of their development are exposed to various cultural practices of their community in order to inculcate in them their moral obligations to the society and the right attitude to life at later age. Such moral obligations can be personal, ethical or social values. In the cultural setting, moral education is best channeled through folk music because it is a wonderful medium for sharing idioms and values and a veritable means of expressing and transmitting the people's culture, norms, duties and obligations of the different groups of people in the community. Agu (1990) notes that folk songs, serving as a pivot on which the impact of education rotates, plays a vital role in the process of cultural transmission. It is this process that teaches the adolescents right and wrong, obedience, civil responsibility and sexual behavior. Buttressing the above point Okafor in Okafor & Ng'andu (2003) infers

Children learned through the folktale, the dos and don'ts of their community. They also learned about the character of the people and animals ... proverbs, codes and maxims ... were attractive to children because through the vehicle of the songs they learned easily without mental stress ... even to compose words, and use their language beautifully (p. 180).

It is a known fact that the traditional system of education in Africa lays a lot of emphasis on character formation. Folk music inculcates into a child the right attitude to life; it enhances the moral concept of a child and enables a child grow into a morally sound individual. Idamoyibo (2010) points out that

Knowledge gained through music stays in memory for so long, often until life terminates. Not only does it stay through man's longevity, nor function as an aid to memory-recall, but that it provides every needed information

contained in its organization in sequential order when recalled (p. 86).

Folk music imbue in the children from their early stage of life with those values, behaviors, attitudes, speech, action and traditions that are considered necessary in the making of a person in a given society (Emeka, 2002). Folk music according to Okafor & Ng'andu (2003) 'still have a high appeal for the young, whose minds quickly grasp the images and forces behind the verbal message and those motor muscles and creative minds can turn almost anything sometimes beyond the ken of adult into musical art' (p.189).

### Notation of Folk Songs

*Omo to mo Iya re loju and Iya ni Wura* are examples of moral folk songs for motherhood which Yoruba people use to educate the people as per cultural values and ideals about motherhood. This is a symbol of a precious possession in the life of a child among the Yoruba.

#### Omo to mo iya re loju

O mo to mo ya re lo ju o e bi nio na o'mo na pa\_\_\_ O mo to mo ya re lo ju o

7 e bi nio na o'mo na pa\_\_\_ i ya to ji ya ni to ri re i ya to ji ya ni

12 to ri re O mo to mo ya re lo ju o e bi nio na o'mo na pa\_\_\_

### Text in Yoruba

*Omo to mo iya re loju, osi ni o ta omo na pa/2x*

*Iya to jiya po nitori re/2x*

*Omo to mo iya re loju o, osi ni o ta omo na pa.*

**English Translation**

The child that disobeys his/her mother will be poor throughout his lifetime  
/2x

The mother that suffers because of you /2x

The child that disobeyc his/her mother will be poor throughout his lifetime  
/2x

***Iya ni Wura (A Mother is Precious)***

The song speaks volume of how precious a Mother to a child. The pains a mother went through the period of pregnancy, delivery and at the raising period of the child when the mother took care of the child. This affirms that a Mother has done so much for the survival of a child.

**Iya ni wura****Text in Yoruba**

*Iya ni wura Iyebiye ti a ko le f'owo ra*

*O loyun mi fun osu mesan, O pon mi fun odun meta*

*Iya ni wura Iyebiye ti a ko le f'owo ra*

**English Translation**

Mother is a precious gold that money cannot buy

She carried my pregnancy for nine months

And she backed me for three years

Mother is a precious gold that money cannot buy

### Text in Yoruba

*Ki ni n o f'ole se laye ti mo wa*

*Ki ni n o f'ole se laye ti mo wa*

*Laye ti mo wa, kaka ki n jale*

*Ma kuku d'eru*

*Ki ni n o f'ole se laye ti mo wa.*

### English Translation

What will I do with stealing

What will I do with stealing

In this world, instead of stealing

I will be a slave

What will I do with stealing.

### Text in Yoruba

*Omo rere lemi yan o*

*'Maa je' omoluabi to n mu 'nu obi re dun*

*Omo rere lemi yan o.*

### English Translation

I choose to be a good child

I will be a responsible child that makes his/her parent happy

I choose to be a good child.

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