



Youth in The Music Industry. A Sociological Study of Eastern Freetown

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Abstract- Economic disparities lead to an increasing monetization of young people's relationships, driving them either into a fragile flux of multiple partners or out of intimate engagements altogether. Taking this 'dissonance' between sonic representations and social relations as a point of departure, in this work I explored the ways in which young Freetonians position themselves at the junction of desire and reality. I juxtaposed various life and love stories of youths with the fantasies they invest in love music. In so doing, I discussed the complex relationships between affect, exchange, deprivation and the strictures involved in attaining social adulthood. The proliferation of music in Sierra Leone is confined in youth's involvement in it. I argued that it is within the experiential gap between the consumption of a representation and the desire to live (up to) that representation that Freetown's youth rework their horizons of possibilities. A qualitative research tool was used to collect data, precisely an unstructured interview method, since the questions call for answers that the respondents must express their opinions. The research further highlighted the types of lyrics composed by these youth, types of listeners, educational status of artists and listeners, the challenges faced in the music industry, the transformation felt within the industry, contributions and perceptions on the new phenomenon. The general populace greatly benefits from industry. Youths use music to relieve tension and boredom, provide a creative outlet, help take control of their emotions or mood, form identity and as entertainment or distraction.

Keyword: Youth, Music, Song, Industry, Eastern Freetown, Involvement, Proliferation, Sociological Study.

I. Introduction

Music is an art form, and cultural activity, whose medium is sound. General definitions of music include common elements such as pitch, rhythm, dynamics, and sonic qualities of timbre and texture. Different styles or types of music may emphasize, de-emphasize or omit some of these elements.

Sierra Leone music is a mixture of native, French, British, West Indian, and Creole musical genres. 'The proliferation of music in Sierra Leone is confined in youth's involvement in it. The internet has encouraged the youth to introduce new styles of music. Many songs have political and social themes, informing the populace and checking the activities of politicians. The independent film - Sweet Salone – displays many of these artists, fans, and their music.

In many cultures, music is an important part of people's way of life, as it plays a key role in religious rituals, rite of passage ceremonies (e.g., graduation and marriage), social activities (e.g. dancing), and cultural activities. People may make music as a hobby, or work as a professional musician or singer. The Music Industry includes the individuals who create new songs and musical pieces, individuals who perform music, individuals who record music, individuals who organize concert tours and individuals who sell recordings, sheet music, and scores to customers, as well as music critics,



music journalists, and music scholars who assess and evaluate the piece and its performance.

A distinction is often made between music performed for a live audience and music that is performed in a studio so that it can be recorded and distributed through the music retail system or the broadcasting system. However, there are also many cases where a live performance in front of an audience is also recorded and distributed. Live concert recordings are popular in both classical music and in popular music form.

This work is limited to the study of Eastern Freetown – the ways and manners in which youths are involved in musical industry, including the benefits and challenges that are realized in the musical undertakings.

Music is known to be the ‘soul of the heart’. It provides solace, entertainment and education to the general populace. Eastern Freetown has many young musicians known as ‘coming-up artists. Many of them devote considerable attention to music.

It provides them with not only income and occupation but huge recognition, at least amongst their peers. Many of these youngsters are not very educated and most have no or very little formal training in music. They are mostly naturals, using their in-born talents to give news, views, entertainment and education through music.

Many of their songs have political themes. Many of these songs provide political education for other youths and provide a voice for youths speaking out against political ills or registering for politicians or political parties. Youth musicians often see themselves as spokespersons for their generation or the public in relation to burning issues. They also see themselves as pulse takers of the mood of young people about issues that range from love to ways of life, slang and morals.

Love songs are also popular in Eastern Freetown, and youths are very involved in producing them. However, a lot of love songs popular in Eastern Freetown are mainly of foreign origin. Many youth musicians see this as a big challenge, not only in terms of love songs, but in terms of all types of music.

Soccer, street outings, and area carnivals are quite popular in Eastern Freetown. These activities are usually carried out along with musical entertainment. Music is like a lubricant that oils many social activities in Eastern Freetown.

Youths in the Eastern Freetown produce what they call ‘beefing’ songs. They sing songs against other musical groups, or musicians or even gangs, in cases where the musicians are members of several gangs in the community. Beefing songs increase conflict in Eastern Freetown.

There is a great change in the music industry. This transformation is seen where young people have replaced adults in the production of music. Music has been described as ‘the science or art of ordering tones or sounds in succession, in combination, and in temporal relationships to produce a composition having unity and continuity’; or ‘vocal, instrumental, or mechanical sounds having rhythm, melody, or harmony.



The research proved that the youth are now the dominant category of individuals in this undertaking. This has been attributed to emergence of advanced technologies in the musical industry, which have beautified tones, sounds, lyrics and patterns of flow of songs.

II. Body of The Work

Background information on Youth's involvement in the music industry:

Youths are the dominant category of individuals in the music industry. There are many reasons for youth's involvement in the music industry. One significant reason for this statement can be seen as a natural gift from God. With this in-born talent, an individual may possess distinctive attributes that will be realized in the form of singing. They will therefore decide to involve themselves and contribute to the industry. There is another category of youths who found themselves in the music industry because of the admiration they have for the game.

Individuals with rich backgrounds may also move into the industry because of their affluence. An affluent youth may not be famous and with this, he may decide to produce songs that may provide them with fame. This may force them to move into industry. Another category of youth, especially the poor youths, may move into industry to make their status known to society, with the intention of seeking help.

There are different ways in which music is released. This involves the types, which the research provided the following that dominate Eastern Freetown: Afro, Zuk, dancehall, sentimental, and reggae. This part of Freetown is known for its creativity in the social world, and popular songs or types of music that dominate this region are the Afro and dancehall. These two types of music are worth knowing in Eastern Freetown because it constitutes sixty percent of people's liking. Sentimental, reggae and others gain less attention from people. Instances were made by Kracktwist and Samza, who play Afro and dancehall, and this makes them gain more follow and attention.

Analyzing the types of music listened to; individuals listen to songs on occasional basis. For instance, during elections there are many people listening to political songs and this subsides after elections. These political songs provide them with an insight into their political setups and also serve as checks on the activities of politicians. They can also listen to romantic or love songs when they are with their loved ones or when in lovely conditions.

Types of lyrics:

Taking into consideration of the popular lyrics found in this part of Freetown, there are several artists who produce love lyrics. Kay Man and Morris are examples of artists that produce love lyrics, and this type of lyric have a greater percentage among other lyrics in this region. Slang or catching words also form another type of lyrics.

Artists express their songs in this form by using plain words, connecting them to form meaning and producing songs.



Significant among these songs, there are few that deliver positive or educational themes to society. Individuals may lack the opportunity or chance to confront the government on national issues that they see inappropriate to them or their community/nation. They will therefore express their feelings through music. This way of singing has created a chance for all, even the lay people, to understand current national issues. Music has been very significant in promoting many social events. It has been very instrumental in educating the nation and providing comfort to the soul of individuals.

Types of music listeners:

The music industry comprises artists, dancers, promoters, listeners, engineers and CD sellers. Given the types of music listeners, there are different types of listeners. There are promoters: they are individuals that listen to a particular song of a particular artist and after gaining admiration for the song/artist they may decide to give a sponsor to the artist. Mic Controllers also constitute the music industry. They are there to play artists' songs on specific occasions and this will help to market an artist. Artists, the aged, and youths as well, form part of the music industry.

Educational status of music listeners:

The educational status is also worth mentioning in this discourse. The children do listen to music, almost with the pleasure of dancing to it. Other individuals of primary, secondary and tertiary learning institutions also listen to music. The non-educated people also form a portion of music listeners. To differentiate the rate at which music is listened to between children and adults, the research proved that youths consume more time in listening to music than children do. This is because of the knowledge they possess which enables them to not only understand the lyrics involved in a particular type of music but also the ability to comprehend the message a particular song may carry.

Specific songs carry meanings that are of more interest to adults than children, such as songs produced by artists in the 90s which were experienced by individuals who are still in existence and songs that also explain the events of war and a particular societal history.

Educational status of artists:

It is also worth considering the educational status of youths involved in the music industry.

There are many young musicians that are still attending school and at the same time singing. Some have taken their WASSCE exams; some are in possession of their university requirements but lack the financial capability to precede their education into tertiary institutions. Few are in universities while others are university graduates but still involved in the music industry for the sake of love.

Challenges faced in the music industry:

However, individuals are involved in producing these songs and as they devote considerable attention to producing these songs, one may wonder if they benefit from this undertaking. Youths use music in different ways: to relieve tension and boredom, provide a creative outlet, help take control of their emotions or mood, form identity



(e.g. music preference can be a way of finding a group identity), and as entertainment or distraction.

Music is a powerful medium. While that power can be beneficial, it can also have a harmful influence. As music becomes increasingly accessible through cell phones, online streaming services and other new technologies, it is important to understand its influence on today's youth. However, individuals in this routine pointed out that it involves a great challenge, especially at the initial stage when they start singing, thinking about management and sponsorship, and even supporting or following. However, they can only start benefiting when they move from community to community to perform their songs. While on the stage performing, if their performance gains the attention of the audience, a lot of money would be sent on the stage as support to them. From the little that is gained, there are close friends of the artist who may also want a share. In the end, little will be left with them that will not be sufficient to satisfy their needs.

Transformation in the music industry:

The research proved that youth's involvement in the music industry has led to a great transformation, that is, a shift from adults-singing to youth-singing.

The findings proved that there are some categories of people, especially the aged, who do not appreciate the youth's involvement in the industry- they totally frowned at it, claiming it to be an innovation that hinders moral teachings and gives no acceptable education or behavior to the upcoming generation.

But the research further proves that there are 5 percent of the aged that accept the idea. Another category, the youth, do accept and appreciate the transformation, counting it to be the best way of singing in this century.

To assess the rate at which people see this transformation, findings proved that youth's involvement is seen as more appropriate than the olden days, as even the aged are seen dancing to youthful songs. Asked whether the new generation is gaining any education from this transformation, the response was positive. There are educational CDs in many copies of which children are learning from at home. Leonus Junior, a 5-year kid popularly known in Freetown, is a prominent example to mention in this discourse. As a kid, he has released series of songs that deals with education for children. There are many copies of his CDs available in shops and marketplaces, his compatriots and older people listen to his songs as they pass on messages to the nation.

Contributions and perceptions on the new emergence:

There is a variety of individuals who participate in music production and marketing, and they have significant impacts on the development of the industry. Asked about the contributions of listeners in the music industry, whenever artists are performing their songs on a stage, the audience often throw money at them as a form of support- shouting 'let's support the artist' 'let's support the artist'. This often happens when the audience have developed love for a particular song/artist. Some influential individuals try to promote their artists by taking them to radio stations, other media, communities to perform under their sponsorship; or even sharing their songs on social media like



Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram. These often attract more following of a particular artist.

Listeners on the other hand benefit from the industry in some ways. Individuals in stressful situations can relieve themselves by listening to their favorite songs. Political songs teach people about their political setup and serve as check on aspiring politicians.

III. Conclusion

The main purpose of the research is to investigate youth's involvement in the music industry. The research proved that youths are the dominant category of individuals in the music industry. There are many reasons for their involvement in the music industry. One significant reason for this statement can be seen as a natural gift from God. With this in-born talent, an individual may possess distinctive attributes that will be realized in the form of singing. Admiration for a particular song or artist was also cited as another reason that forced youths into the industry. Individuals may catch feelings for certain songs- the ways and manners in which the lyrics are arranged may force an individual to move into the industry with the aim of providing his/her own songs that will gain public following, income and fame. Individuals with rich backgrounds may also move into the industry because of their affluence. An affluent youth may not be famous and with this, he may decide to produce songs that may provide them with fame. Another category of youth, especially the poor youths, may move into industry to make their status known to society, with the intention of seeking help.

The research further proved that different types of music are released by young people. They may include Afro, Zuk, love, politics and beefing songs. Different lyrics accompany these types to add more beauty to them. This led to different tastes of listeners because one good taste of a particular listener may not sound nice to the other. Some artists have secondary school education, others higher secondary while few have found themselves in universities. Even though they get some benefits from their involvement in the industry, like fame or recognition (both national and beyond), and income, they lack support from the government and most of them are faced with financial difficulty. This makes it more difficult for them to continue after commencement. Management was not satisfactory. Managers or sponsors often demand higher percentage from the benefits accrued in a particular launching of an artist's album.

The general populace greatly benefits from industry. Youths use music in different ways: to relieve tension and boredom, provide a creative outlet, help take control of their emotions or mood, form identity (e.g. music preference can be a way of finding a group identity), and as entertainment or distraction.

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