

NATIONAL ANXIETY AND REFLECTION MUSIC "WHICH WAY NIGERIA" ON THE NIGERIAN PSYCHE

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Abstract

Here, reflection music addresses national anxiety, focusing on Nigeria's complex socio-political landscape. Specifically, the music which way Nigeria by Sonny Okosun serves as a cultural artifact to examine the Nigerian psyche. Frantz Fanon's Theory of National Consciousness highlights how colonial legacies shape national identity crises and Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory addresses media influences and collective behaviour. Through a qualitative content analysis, combined with a historical lens, the study analyzes lyrical themes of disillusionment, hope, and collective action embedded in the music. Findings reveal that reflection music like which way Nigeria evokes collective national anxiety while offering a channel for societal introspection and potential reconciliation. Conclusively, the music functions not only as a critique of leadership but as a mirror reflecting public sentiment and encouraging discourse on Nigeria's future. The study recommends that contemporary musicians continue leveraging music as a tool for socio-political engagement, targeting youth activism while addressing collective anxieties in postcolonial societies.

Keywords: National anxiety, reflection music, which way Nigeria, Nigerian psyche

Introduction

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation and one of its largest economies, has long grappled with socio-political instability, ethnic tensions, economic disparities, and corruption. These challenges have contributed to widespread national anxiety, creating a pervasive sense of uncertainty about the country's future. This anxiety is deeply rooted in the collective psyche of Nigerians, shaped by decades of political mismanagement, military coups, civil unrest, and ineffective governance. As a result, questions of national identity, leadership, and progress remain central to the Nigerian experience. Music, as a cultural form, has historically been a powerful tool for expression and social commentary. In Nigeria, artists have often used their platforms to voice concerns about the nation's trajectory, and one of the most iconic examples of this is Sonny Okosun's which way Nigeria, released in the early 1980s. This music emerged during a particularly turbulent period in Nigeria's history, marked by political instability, economic decline, and widespread disillusionment with leadership. Which way Nigeria served as a reflection of the collective anxiety felt by Nigerians at the time, offering a poignant critique of the country's direction while also calling for introspection and action. Okosun's music poses a fundamental question that resonates with the Nigerian psyche: which way Nigeria? It reflects the nation's search for identity, stability, and purpose amid a myriad of challenges. The lyrics highlight issues of corruption, economic mismanagement, and social decay, while also expressing hope for change. Through its reflective tone, the music encapsulates the national anxiety that continues to define Nigeria's socio-political landscape (Olawale, 2023).

This study seeks to explore how which way Nigeria reflects and influences the Nigerian psyche, particularly in the context of national anxiety. Using the theoretical frameworks of Frantz Fanon's Theory of National Consciousness and Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, this research will examine the role of music as a mirror of societal anxieties and as a potential catalyst for collective reflection and action. By analyzing the lyrical content of the music and its historical context, this study aims to provide insight into the complex relationship between music, national identity, and psychological well-being in Nigeria. Ultimately, the research will investigate how reflection music like which way Nigeria can offer both a critique of national issues and a platform for collective healing, as Nigerians continue to navigate the uncertainties of their nation's future. This analysis contributes to the broader understanding of the role of cultural artifacts in shaping national consciousness and addressing the psychological impact of socio-political challenges.

Theory of National Consciousness

The 1963 Frantz Fanon's Theory of National Consciousness explores the psychological and cultural effects of colonialism on formerly colonized nations. Fanon argues that colonialism creates deep-seated divisions within the national psyche, leading to a crisis of identity as nations grapple with the legacy of domination and exploitation. In the context of Nigeria, this theory is particularly relevant. Colonialism's imprint on Nigerian society, from ethnic divisions to centralized governance structures, continues to influence the nation's socio-political instability. The music which way Nigeria reflects this ongoing crisis of identity, questioning the direction of a nation still struggling to define itself post-independence. As Fanon (1963) suggests, the postcolonial society is often marked by anxiety, as the populace seeks to reclaim national identity amidst systemic challenges. Okosun's music echoes this tension, emphasizing the unresolved national consciousness that Fanon describes.

Social Cognitive Theory

Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory highlights how people learn and adopt behaviours through observation, imitation, and modeling, with media playing a significant role in shaping public attitudes. Reflection music like which way Nigeria can be understood as a medium that fosters collective learning and behaviour modification by mirroring the socio-political conditions of Nigeria and suggesting paths for change. Bandura (1986) posits that exposure to media content can alter perceptions, encourage reflection, and drive collective action. In which way Nigeria, the music critique of leadership and societal decay offers Nigerians a reflective space to question the status quo and consider alternatives for the nation's future. Thus, it serves not only as an artistic expression but also as a form of social modeling, influencing public discourse and potentially fostering national consciousness.

Literature review

National Anxiety: National anxiety refers to the collective fear and uncertainty experienced by a population due to socio-political instability, economic challenges, and leadership crises. In Nigeria, this manifests through widespread disillusionment with governance, contributing to a sense of hopelessness (Nwosu & Ogbazi, 2023).

Reflection Music "which way Nigeria": Reflection music, such as Sonny Okosun's which way Nigeria, critiques socio-political conditions and invites societal introspection.



Figure 1 & 2: Passionate question to Nigerians, which way Nigeria?.

It captures national sentiments, questioning Nigeria's direction and urging action for change (Ajayi, 2023). It blends art and activism, shaping public consciousness through musical commentary.

Nigerian Psyche: The Nigerian psyche reflects the collective identity shaped by historical, political, and cultural forces. It is characterized by resilience amid challenges but is also burdened by disillusionment and anxiety due to persistent issues of governance and national instability (Adebayo & Fakoya, 2024).

Methodology

Qualitative Content Analysis: Qualitative content analysis is a method used to interpret the underlying themes and messages within texts, music, or media content. For analyzing which way Nigeria, this method is crucial for understanding the symbolic meanings embedded in the lyrics and how they reflect Nigeria's socio-political context. The lyrics, themes such as corruption, leadership, and national identity are identified and connected to the broader narrative of Nigerian anxiety, and this method allows the researcher to uncover how Okosun's music functions as a cultural artifact that critiques and mirrors the national psyche. Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, & Utriainen (2014) highlight that qualitative content analysis is ideal for interpreting complex, layered messages in media, making it suitable for analyzing reflective music like which way Nigeria.

Historical Contextualization: Historical contextualization is another key method that places the music within the socio-political and historical framework of Nigeria during the 1980s. By analyzing the political instability, economic decline, and leadership crises prevalent during the period when Okosun composed which way Nigeria, the researcher understands the music significance and its resonance with the national mood. This method involves reviewing historical records, news archives, and political events to provide a backdrop for the music's message. According to Mayring (2014), historical contextualization helps to explain how cultural products, like music, are both shaped by and contribute to the socio-political landscape of their time. This method enhances the understanding of how the music became a vehicle for expressing national anxiety and urging societal reflection.

Content and Lyrical Analysis of which way Nigeria

Lyrics of which way Nigeria

Which way Nigeria, which way to go

I love my fatherland, o yeah, I want to know

Yes, I want to know, I love my father land
Which way Nigeria is heading to,
Which way Nigeria, which way to go
I love my fatherland, o yeah, I want to know
Which way Nigeria is heading to,

Many years after independence,
We still find it had to start
How long shall we be patient still we reach the promise land
Let's save Nigeria, so Nigeria won't die
Which way Nigeria, which way to go
I love my fatherland, I want to know
Which way Nigeria is heading to.....

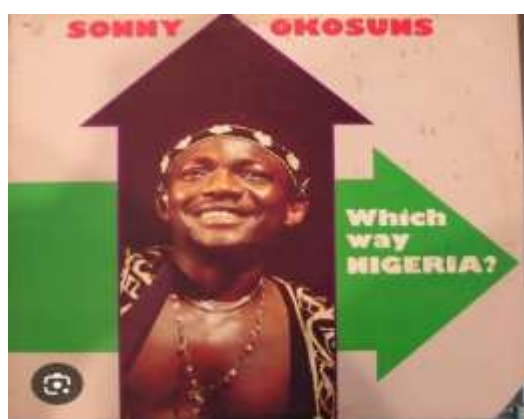


Figure 3 & 4: Sonny Okosun;



Passionate Nigerians protesting.

Sonny Okosun's which way Nigeria is a powerful reflection of the socio-political anxieties prevalent in Nigeria during the 1980s, a period marked by military rule, economic instability, and widespread disillusionment with leadership. The music serves as both a critique of Nigeria's political direction and a call for introspection, resonating with the collective anxiety that continues to shape the Nigerian psyche. The lyrics of which way Nigeria capture the essence of national anxiety by posing fundamental questions about the country's trajectory: "which way Nigeria? which way to go?" This repeated questioning reflects the uncertainty and fear shared by many Nigerians regarding the nation's future (Olawale, 2023). As Adedeji (2021) notes, music often functions as a mirror of societal concerns, and Okosun's lyrics articulate a deep frustration with Nigeria's governance, corruption, and lack of progress. The sense of hopelessness expressed in the music aligns with Fanon's (1963) Theory of National Consciousness, which argues that postcolonial societies often experience a crisis of identity as they navigate the legacies of colonialism and the pressures of self-governance. Okosun's music gives voice to this crisis, highlighting the unresolved issues of nationhood and leadership that continue to plague Nigeria.

In addition to articulating national anxiety, which way Nigeria serves as a tool for reflection. By urging Nigerians to consider their role in shaping the country's future, the music aligns with Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986), which posits that media can influence collective behaviour by modeling attitudes and prompting reflection. Okosun's lyrics emphasize the

responsibility of both leaders and citizens in navigating Nigeria's political landscape: "Many years after independence, we still find it hard to start; how long shall we be patient before we reach the promised land?" This call for accountability encourages Nigerians to reflect on their collective actions and the need for societal change, reinforcing Bandura's idea that individuals learn and adopt behaviours through observation and media engagement.

Furthermore, the music addresses the Nigerian psyche by highlighting themes of disillusionment, resilience, and hope. Okosun acknowledges the difficulties faced by the nation but also offers a glimmer of hope by emphasizing the possibility of change: "Let's save Nigeria, so Nigeria won't die." This mixture of despair and hope reflects the psychological tension that characterizes the Nigerian experience. As Adebayo and Fakoya (2024) argue, the Nigerian psyche is shaped by a complex interplay of resilience and frustration, with citizens continuously navigating the tension between national pride and disappointment. Which way Nigeria encapsulates the national anxiety that pervades Nigerian society, using music as a medium for reflection and societal critique. By analyzing the music through the lenses of Fanon's Theory of National Consciousness and Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, we gain insight into how Okosun's work not only mirrors the Nigerian psyche but also seeks to influence it, encouraging reflection and action in the face of national challenges.

Comparative analysis of two related music as a lesson to Nigerians

Bob Marley's Redemption Song (Jamaica): Released in 1980, Bob Marley's Redemption song speaks to the legacy of colonialism, oppression, and the pursuit of freedom. Marley's lyrics, "Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our minds," emphasize self-liberation and the need for mental and spiritual freedom in the face of systemic oppression. The music parallels which way Nigeria in its call for self-reflection and collective action. Marley encourages individuals to take charge of their destiny, just as Okosun's music urges Nigerians to examine their role in shaping their country's future. From Redemption song, Nigerians can learn the importance of self-empowerment and the need to break free from both mental and systemic limitations. Like Marley's call for mental emancipation, Nigeria's path forward may require addressing internal divisions and overcoming the legacies of colonialism and neo-colonial structures that still affect governance and national identity (Salewicz, 2009). Moreover, Marley's hopeful tone reminds Nigerians that while change is difficult, it begins with personal and collective commitment.

Marvin Gaye's What's Going On (United States): Released in 1971, what's going on was Marvin Gaye's response to the turbulent political climate in the United States during the Vietnam War, civil rights struggles, and rising social unrest. The music asks, "what's going on?" reflecting the disillusionment and confusion of many Americans at the time. Gaye's music expresses a deep sense of concern for humanity, calling for peace, unity, and understanding amid political chaos and societal decay. This aligns with which way Nigeria in its exploration of national disillusionment and the search for solutions to deeply rooted social problems. From what's going on, Nigerians can learn the power of compassion, unity, and dialogue in times of crisis. Gaye's message of peace and empathy across social divides serves as a reminder that Nigeria's future may depend on fostering understanding and collaboration across ethnic and political lines. The music also accentuates the importance of addressing social injustices and inequalities key issues that Nigeria continues to face. It calls for asking difficult questions about leadership and the role of citizens in promoting positive change. Nigerians can draw important lessons from both Redemption Song and what's going on. These music emphasize the need for self-liberation, unity, and empathy in times of national crisis (Olawale, 2022). Like which way Nigeria, they reflect on their nations' challenges while encouraging collective reflection and action. For Nigeria, these music offer examples of how music can serve not

only as a tool for critique but also as a source of hope and a rallying call for a better future.

Reflection questions to Nigerians

Below are reflection questions for every Nigerian regarding the way forward in the current state of the country:

Reflecting on your experiences and observations, what specific actions do you believe individuals and communities can take to contribute positively to Nigeria's socio-political landscape and address the challenges we face today?

In light of the current state of affairs in Nigeria, how do you envision your role in promoting unity and understanding among diverse groups within the country, and what steps can you take to facilitate this process?

Considering the feelings of disillusionment and anxiety that many Nigerians share, what personal values or beliefs can you strengthen or adopt to inspire hope and resilience in your community during these challenging times? The above questions are food for thoughts and quests for all hands to be on deck, for a better Nigeria of our dreams.

Findings

The investigation of national anxiety, reflection music, and its impact on the Nigerian psyche, particularly through the lens of Sonny Okosun's *Which Way Nigeria*, yields several general findings that illuminate the interconnectedness of music, identity, and societal challenges. These findings can be summarized as follows:

Expression of National Anxiety: *Which Way Nigeria* serves as a poignant expression of the collective anxiety felt by Nigerians in the face of socio-political turmoil. The music articulates widespread feelings of disillusionment, frustration, and uncertainty about the future of the nation. This reflection of national anxiety resonates with the populace, encapsulating their struggles and aspirations. The lyrics highlight key issues such as corruption, economic hardship, and ineffective governance, thereby creating a platform for collective introspection and dialogue.

Cultural Reflection and Critique: The music acts as a cultural artifact that critiques the prevailing socio-political climate in Nigeria. It reflects a historical context of political instability and challenges the leaders to be accountable to the people. Through its powerful messaging, *Which Way Nigeria* encourages citizens to question the status quo and consider the implications of their collective identity in shaping the nation's future. This aspect emphasizes the role of reflection music as a tool for societal critique, fostering awareness of the need for change.

Catalyst for Collective Action: Music like *Which Way Nigeria* has the potential to mobilize and inspire collective action among citizens. It not only highlights issues but also calls for unity and collaboration to address societal problems. The music fosters a sense of shared purpose, encouraging individuals to engage in activism and advocacy for positive change. This reflects Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which posits that exposure to media can influence behavior and inspire action.

Impact on National Identity: The music contributes to the ongoing negotiation of national identity in Nigeria. As citizens grapple with the complexities of their socio-political landscape, *Which Way Nigeria* provides a lens through which they can explore their collective identity and the legacies of colonialism. The interplay of hope and despair in the music reflects the psychological tension within the Nigerian psyche, highlighting the need for a cohesive national narrative that transcends ethnic and political divisions.

Resilience and Hope: Despite the underlying themes of anxiety and critique, which way Nigeria also embodies a spirit of resilience and hope. It encourages Nigerians to reflect on their roles in shaping the country's future, reinforcing the belief that change is possible through collective effort. This message resonates deeply with the Nigerian psyche, which is characterized by a blend of frustration and unwavering hope for a better future. Ultimately, the findings suggest that reflection music like which way Nigeria plays a critical role in shaping national consciousness, offering a platform for cultural expression and collective healing. As Nigeria navigates its complex socio-political landscape, the insights gained from this analysis emphasize the need for ongoing dialogue, engagement, and activism, fostering a renewed sense of purpose and identity among its citizens. By harnessing the power of music and reflection, Nigerians can collectively confront their anxieties, champion social change, and work towards a more unified and equitable future.

Conclusion

In summary, the findings surrounding national anxiety, reflection music, and the Nigerian psyche reveal a complex interplay between cultural expression and socio-political realities. Music like which way Nigeria not only articulate the challenges faced by Nigerians but also serve as a catalyst for reflection, dialogue, and action. By understanding these dynamics, stakeholders can better appreciate the role of music in fostering national consciousness and addressing the collective anxieties that define the Nigerian experience. In conclusion, the exploration of national anxiety, reflection music, and the Nigerian psyche through the lens of Sonny Okosun's which way Nigeria reveals profound insights into the challenges and aspirations of the Nigerian people. The music stands as a powerful cultural artifact that encapsulates the collective anxiety stemming from socio-political instability, corruption, and a crisis of national identity. It articulates a shared sense of disillusionment while simultaneously serving as a call to action, urging citizens to reflect on their roles in shaping the future of their nation. The interplay between national anxiety and reflection music highlights the capacity of art to address societal issues, fostering a space for dialogue and introspection. Which way Nigeria not only critiques the current state of affairs but also inspires hope and resilience, encouraging Nigerians to envision a brighter future. It emphasizes the importance of unity, collective responsibility, and active engagement in overcoming the challenges that continue to affect the nation.

Recommendations

Government and non-governmental organizations should promote music as a medium for social change by supporting artists and musicians who use their platforms to address socio-political issues. Educational institutions should integrate music, particularly reflection music, into their curricula to promote awareness of socio-political issues and cultural heritage.

Communities should organize forums, discussions, and listening sessions centered around reflection music to facilitate dialogue about national issues and collective anxieties.

Media outlets should leverage their platforms to raise awareness about the importance of reflection music in addressing national anxiety and fostering social change. By implementing these recommendations, Nigeria can enhance the role of reflection music in addressing national anxiety and promoting collective action, ultimately contributing to a more cohesive and resilient society.

Contribution to Knowledge

This analysis enhances understanding of how music serves as a cultural response to socio-political challenges. It illustrates the power of reflection music in articulating collective anxieties, promoting

national identity, and fostering societal critique. By linking musical expression to national consciousness, the study emphasizes the role of art in shaping public discourse and influencing social change. It provides insights into how reflection music can mobilize communities and encourage civic engagement. The investigation of the Nigerian psyche in relation to national anxiety highlights the psychological impact of socio-political instability. It underscores the importance of resilience and hope in the face of adversity, contributing to literature on mental health and national identity in postcolonial contexts. The findings emphasize the intersection of music and activism, demonstrating how artists can inspire social movements and collective action. This contribution expands the framework for understanding the role of music in political and social movements globally. Overall, this research enriches the academic discourse on the interplay between culture, identity, and socio-political dynamics, providing a nuanced understanding of the significance of reflection music in contemporary Nigeria.

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