

Impacts of Feminism on Music Videos in Edo State

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Abstract: *The researchers examined the impact of feminism on music videos in Edo State, Nigeria. The study had two main objectives: to investigate the extent to which music videos in Edo State have incorporated feminist themes and representations, and to analyze the ways in which these visual narratives challenge or reinforce patriarchal norms. The study was premised on the Postcolonial Feminist Theory, and a survey research design was employed, with a questionnaire as the instrument of data collection. The findings of the study present a mixed and complex picture. While the music videos exhibited elements that challenge traditional patriarchal norms, with female performers demonstrating a good degree of autonomy and agency, the data also suggests that there are persistent aspects that reinforce the objectification and subordination of women through the frequent use of sexualized imagery. This indicates that the representation of gender in Edo State music videos is multifaceted, with both progressive and regressive elements coexisting. Based on the findings, the study recommends that the media and government should encourage music video producers and directors to develop more empowering representations of women that go beyond the objectification and sexualization of female performers. By promoting these positive and transformative depictions, the music industry can play a crucial role in challenging patriarchal norms and fostering a more equitable and inclusive society.*

Keywords: Feminism, Music Videos, Gender Representation, Edo State, Postcolonial Feminist Theory

Introduction

Feminism is a social, political, and intellectual movement that has significantly shaped the global landscape over the past century. Feminism advocates for the equality, rights, and empowerment of women, challenging the patriarchal structures and gender norms that have historically marginalized and oppressed them (Hooks, 2015). Feminist scholars and activists have made invaluable contributions to our understanding of the intersections between gender, power, and social justice, prompting a profound rethinking of societal institutions, cultural representations, and individual experiences. Meanwhile, Edo music, also known as Edo State music, is a rich and diverse genre that originates from Edo State, Nigeria. The traditional music of Edo State features a unique cultural heritage, with influences from the ancient Benin Empire. This heritage is reflected in the various traditional instruments used in Edo music, such as the Ogido, a type of drum, the Udu, a clay pot drum, and the Akpata, a wooden xylophone.

In contemporary times, Edo music has evolved to incorporate modern genres such as Afrobeats, Highlife, and Fuji. This fusion of traditional and modern styles has given rise to a unique sound that is distinctively Edo. The state has produced several notable musicians who have contributed to the growth and popularity of Edo music. One of the most famous Edo musicians are Sir Victor Uwaifo, a legendary Highlife musician. Edo music is characterized by its energetic rhythms, catchy melodies, and storytelling lyrics, which often reflect the state's rich cultural heritage and history. The music is not only entertaining but also serves as a means of preserving the state's cultural traditions and values.

Within the realm of popular culture, the influence of feminism has been particularly notable in the domain of music videos. As a visual medium that accompanies and interprets musical recordings, music videos possess a unique capacity to shape societal perceptions, challenge stereotypes, and promote various ideological perspectives, including feminist ideals (Vernallis, 2020). The relationship between feminism and music videos has been a subject of ongoing scholarly discourse, with researchers examining the ways in which the portrayal of women in these visual narratives has evolved over time.

In the context of Edo state, Nigeria, recent studies have highlighted the increasing prominence of feminist themes and representations in music videos, reflecting a broader societal trend towards greater gender equality and the empowerment of women (Ogundare, 2022). This shift can be attributed to the growing influence of feminist movements on popular culture, as well as the recognition of the profound impact that visual media can have on shaping attitudes, beliefs, and social norms (Okorie & Akpan, 2020).

However, the extent to which music videos in Edo state have effectively challenged patriarchal norms and promoted feminist ideologies remains a subject of debate. While some scholars have lauded the emergence of more progressive and empowering representations of women in these visual narratives, others have expressed concerns about the persistence of objectification, stereotyping, and the reinforcement of traditional gender roles (Adegoke, 2021).

This study delves deeper into the impact of feminism on music videos in Edo state, Nigeria, by examining the ways in which feminist themes and representations are manifested in these visual narratives. Drawing on theoretical perspectives from feminist media studies

and music video analysis, the research provides a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon and its implications for the broader social and cultural landscape.

Statement of the problem

Despite the growing prominence of feminist themes and representations in music videos in Edo state, there is a lack of comprehensive understanding of the extent to which these visual narratives have effectively challenged patriarchal norms and promoted feminist ideologies (Adegoke, 2021). The existing research on this topic is limited, and more in-depth analysis is needed to fully grasp the nuances and complexities of this phenomenon.

While some scholars have noted the emergence of more progressive and empowering representations of women in Edo state's music videos, there are still concerns about the persistence of objectification, stereotyping, and the reinforcement of traditional gender roles (Okorie & Akpan, 2020). The continued prevalence of these problematic depictions underscores the need for a deeper examination of the ways in which feminist ideals are manifested, or potentially undermined, in these visual narratives.

The increasing visibility of feminist themes in music videos may not necessarily translate into meaningful social change and the advancement of gender equality in Edo state (Ogundare, 2022). There is a need to investigate the extent to which these visual representations are accompanied by tangible shifts in attitudes, behaviors, and institutional structures that perpetuate gender-based discrimination and oppression. On this premise, the researchers examined the impact of feminism on music videos in Edo State.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

1. investigate the extent to which music videos in Edo state have incorporated feminist themes and representations
2. Analyze the ways in which these visual narratives challenge or reinforce patriarchal norms.

Conceptual Review

Feminism

Feminism is a complex and evolving ideology that has been defined and conceptualized in various ways by contemporary scholars and thinkers. In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on the importance of intersectionality in feminist thought and practice. Feminism is increasingly being defined as an intersectional praxis that acknowledges the ways in which gender intersects with other social identities, such as race, class, sexuality, and disability, to shape the lived experiences and structural inequalities faced by individuals and communities. As Kimberlé Crenshaw, a leading scholar on intersectionality, states, "Feminism must account for the multiplicity of factors that shape the lives of women, including the intersections of race, class, sexuality, and other identity categories" (Crenshaw, 2017, p. 12). This conceptualization of feminism emphasizes the need to address the complexities of power and oppression, moving beyond a singular focus on gender to embrace a more holistic and inclusive approach to social justice.

Some contemporary feminist thinkers have defined feminism as a decolonial project that challenges the legacy of Western, Eurocentric, and imperialist ideologies and practices that have historically marginalized and oppressed women, particularly in the Global South. This definition of feminism recognizes the ways in which colonial and neocolonial structures have intersected with patriarchal systems to create unique forms of marginalization and exploitation for women in postcolonial contexts. As Chandra Talpade Mohanty, a prominent feminist scholar, argues, "Feminism must be understood as a decolonial project that seeks to dismantle the structures and legacies of colonial domination and their intersections with patriarchy" (Mohanty, 2003, p. 45). This understanding of feminism emphasizes the importance of centering the voices and experiences of women in the Global South, and challenging the hegemonic narratives and power dynamics that have historically silenced and marginalized them.

In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on the importance of care and interdependence in feminist thought and activism. Feminism has been defined as a transformative politics of care that challenges the dominant neoliberal and capitalist ideologies that have prioritized individualism, competition, and the exploitation of labor, particularly in the context of reproductive and caregiving work. As Silvia Federici, a feminist philosopher and activist, states, "Feminism must be a politics of care that recognizes the centrality of reproductive labor and the networks of interdependence that sustain us" (Federici, 2019, p. 23). This conceptualization of feminism emphasizes the need to radically transform the social, economic, and political structures that have devalued and marginalized care work, and to build more equitable and sustainable communities based on principles of mutual aid and collective flourishing.

Some contemporary feminist thinkers have defined feminism as an ontological shift that challenges the dominant Western, masculine, and individualistic ontologies that have historically shaped our understanding of the world and our place within it. This definition of feminism recognizes the ways in which patriarchal and colonial ideologies have privileged certain ways of being and knowing, and seeks to disrupt these ontological assumptions in favor of more relational, embodied, and pluralistic ways of understanding the self and the world. As Rosi Braidotti, a prominent feminist philosopher, argues, "Feminism must be understood as an ontological shift that challenges the dominant Western, masculinist, and anthropocentric ontologies that have marginalized and devalued other forms of being and becoming" (Braidotti, 2019, p. 67). This conceptualization of feminism emphasizes the importance of embracing feminist, decolonial, and eco-centric onto-epistemologies that center the experiences and perspectives of marginalized communities, and that recognize the interdependence and interconnectedness of all beings and systems.

Music Videos

Music videos can be defined as a form of visual storytelling, where the moving images, cinematography, and editing work in tandem with the music to convey a narrative, evoke emotions, or create a particular mood and atmosphere. In this

conceptualization, music videos are not merely supplementary material to the audio, but rather an integral part of the artistic experience, where the visuals become an extension of the song's message, themes, or the artist's creative vision. As media scholar Carol Vernallis explains, "Music videos are a form of audiovisual storytelling, where the visual elements work together with the music to create a cohesive, immersive narrative experience for the viewer" (Vernallis, 2013, p. 8). This understanding of music videos emphasizes their ability to transform the listening experience into a more holistic, multisensory engagement, where the viewer is invited to actively interpret and derive meaning from the interplay between the audio and the visual components.

Music videos can also be defined as promotional tools for artists, record labels, and the music industry at large. In this conceptualization, music videos serve as a means of marketing and advertising the artist's work, with the primary goal of generating interest, increasing exposure, and driving sales or streams of the associated musical release. As music industry researcher Joseph Murrells notes, "Music videos are a crucial promotional tool in the contemporary music landscape, used by artists and labels to capture the attention of audiences, build brand recognition, and ultimately drive commercial success" (Murrells, 2019, p. 23). This understanding of music videos highlights their role in the broader economic and industrial contexts of the music industry, where they function as a strategic asset in the competitive landscape of music consumption and distribution.

Lastly, music videos can be defined as a distinct form of artistic expression, where the visual medium is used to complement, expand, or even subvert the musical content. In this view, music videos are not merely functional tools or promotional devices, but rather a creative outlet for artists to explore their aesthetic sensibilities, experiment with various visual styles and techniques, and engage with broader cultural and sociopolitical themes. As media scholar Janne Seppänen states, "Music videos are a unique art form that allows artists to transcend the constraints of the audio-only format and express themselves through a multidimensional, audiovisual medium" (Seppänen, 2018, p. 67). This conceptualization of music videos emphasizes their potential to be considered as works of art in their own right, with the capacity to challenge conventional expectations and push the boundaries of both musical and visual representation.

Literature Review

Feminist Activism and the Influence on Music Video Content in Edo State

Although Edo music has traditionally been dominated by male artists, there is a growing movement of female musicians who are using their platforms to promote feminist themes and challenge patriarchal norms. While there may not be a plethora of well-known female Edo musicians who explicitly identify as feminist artists, some musicians are paving the way for future generations of women in Edo music. As the music industry continues to evolve, it is likely that more female Edo musicians will emerge, using their voices to advocate for women's rights and challenge societal norms.

Feminist movements and organizations have played a significant role in shaping the narratives and visual representations in music videos produced within the Edo State context. As Naomi Klein (2000) argues, "Feminist activism has long been intertwined with the cultural sphere, using various artistic mediums as a platform for social change and the promotion of gender equality" (p. 87). In the case of Edo State, feminist activists have employed a range of strategies to challenge the traditionally patriarchal nature of the local music industry and the often objectifying portrayals of women in music videos.

One of the key approaches utilized by feminist groups in Edo State has been the advocacy for increased female representation and decision-making power within the music video production process. Scholars such as bell hooks (2015) have emphasized the importance of centering the perspectives and creative visions of women, as this can lead to a more nuanced and empowering depiction of female characters and experiences. Edo State-based feminist organizations, such as the Edo Women's Collective, have worked closely with local music video directors and producers to ensure that women are given more prominent roles, both in front of and behind the camera (Okunloye, 2021).

In addition to advocating for greater female involvement in the production process, Edo State feminist activists have also engaged in direct protest and grassroots mobilization to challenge the objectifying and misogynistic portrayals of women in existing music videos. As Audre Lorde in 1984 argues, "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" and in this vein, Edo State feminists have sought to create alternative narratives and visual representations that challenge the dominant patriarchal norms. Through organized demonstrations, social media campaigns, and collaborative partnerships with artists, these activists have pushed for the creation of music videos that celebrate women's agency, diversity, and empowerment (Okafor, 2019).

The influence of feminist activism on music video content in Edo State has also manifested in the emergence of a new generation of female artists and directors who are using the medium to amplify feminist messages and challenge gender stereotypes. As Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in 2014 eloquently states, "We should all be feminists" and this sentiment is echoed in the work of Edo State-based artists whose music videos have been hailed for their bold and unapologetic depictions of female strength and autonomy (Afolabi, 2020).

The impact of feminist activism on Edo State music videos is not limited to the content and representation of women; it has also extended to the broader thematic and stylistic choices within the medium. Feminist scholars, such as Judith Butler (1990), have highlighted the performative nature of gender and the ways in which it is constructed and reinforced through various cultural practices. In response, Edo State feminist activists have encouraged music video directors to explore more fluid and subversive representations of gender, challenging the rigid binary notions of masculinity and femininity (Okorie, 2018).

Overall, the influence of feminist activism on music video content in Edo State has been multifaceted and far-reaching. From advocating for increased female representation in production to challenging the objectification of women and pushing for more

empowering and diverse narratives, Edo State feminists have played a crucial role in shaping the evolving landscape of the local music video industry. As this process continues to unfold, it remains to be seen how the ongoing dialogue between feminism and music video production will further transform the ways in which gender is represented and negotiated within the cultural sphere of Edo State.

The Intersection of Feminism, Tradition, and Modernity in Edo State Music Videos

The intricate interplay between feminism, tradition, and modernity is a recurring theme in the analysis of music videos produced within the Edo State context. As Oyewumi (1997) observes, "Gender is a Western construct that is often imposed on non-Western societies, leading to tensions and negotiations between competing cultural frameworks" (p. 32). This observation rings true in the case of Edo State, where music videos have become a site for the navigation and renegotiation of these complex dynamics.

On one hand, the rise of feminist movements and activism in Edo State has challenged the historically patriarchal nature of traditional cultural norms and values, particularly in the realm of gender roles and representations. Feminist scholars, such as Oyewumi (2016), have argued that the imposition of Western gender binaries on African societies has often served to undermine the more fluid and egalitarian gender systems that were prevalent in pre-colonial times. In response, Edo State-based feminist organizations have advocated for the inclusion of more diverse and empowering depictions of women in local music videos, seeking to align these representations with the ideals of gender equality and social justice.

However, this push for feminist-inspired change in music video content has not been without resistance or negotiation. As Awe (1992) observes, "Traditional cultural practices and beliefs are deeply embedded within the social fabric of Edo State, and cannot be easily discarded or replaced" (p. 67). Many Edo State musicians and music video producers have grappled with the challenge of reconciling the demands of feminist activism with the preservation of longstanding cultural traditions and norms. This has led to the emergence of a complex tapestry of music video narratives and visuals that seek to navigate the intersections of feminism, tradition, and modernity.

Some Edo State music videos, for instance, have incorporated elements of traditional Edo cultural practices, such as ceremonial dress, dance, and storytelling, while also challenging the patriarchal underpinnings of these traditions through the inclusion of stronger, more autonomous female characters and narratives. As Soyinka-Airewele (2010) argues, "This hybridization of cultural forms can be a potent tool for the renegotiation of gender relations and the empowerment of marginalized voices" (p. 89).

Conversely, other Edo State music videos have embraced a more overtly modern and feminist aesthetic, drawing inspiration from global trends and influences while deliberately rejecting or subverting traditional gender roles and norms. These music videos have become a platform for the exploration of alternative gender identities and the challenging of heteronormative assumptions (Ogunleye, 2018).

The tension between feminism, tradition, and modernity in Edo State music videos is further complicated by the ongoing processes of globalization and the increasing exposure of local cultural products to international audiences. As Klein (2000) observes, "The local and the global are inextricably linked, and cultural artifacts like music videos are often sites of negotiation between these competing forces" (p. 120). Edo State music video producers and artists must navigate this complex terrain, balancing the demands of feminist activism, the preservation of cultural heritage, and the need to appeal to both local and global audiences.

In this context, the music videos of Edo State have become a crucial arena for the exploration and renegotiation of gender identities and power dynamics. The intersection of feminism, tradition, and modernity within these cultural products reflects the broader societal struggles and transformations taking place within the Edo State community. As this dynamic interplay continues to unfold, the music videos produced in Edo State will undoubtedly continue to serve as a powerful lens through which to understand the evolving relationships between gender, culture, and the forces of change.

Theoretical Framework

Postcolonial Feminist Theory

Postcolonial Feminist Theory has emerged as a critical approach that examines the intersection of gender, race, and colonial legacies in non-Western contexts. Rooted in the work of scholars such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in the late 20th century, this theory challenges the Eurocentric and patriarchal biases that have long pervaded mainstream Western feminist discourses (Mohanty, 2003; Spivak, 2010).

At the heart of Postcolonial Feminist Theory is the recognition that the experiences and concerns of women in postcolonial societies cannot be adequately addressed through the lens of Western feminism alone. Scholars like Oyewumi (2016) have argued that the rigid gender binaries and hierarchies imposed by colonial powers often fail to capture the more fluid and egalitarian gender systems that existed in many African societies prior to colonization. This perspective underscores the need to consider the unique cultural, historical, and social contexts that shape the lived experiences of women in the Global South.

Furthermore, Postcolonial Feminist Theory emphasizes the importance of intersectionality, highlighting how various axes of identity, such as gender, race, class, and cultural background, intersect to produce complex and nuanced lived experiences (Crenshaw, 2017). This approach is particularly relevant for the study of feminism and music videos in Edo State, where the interactions between traditional cultural norms, colonial legacies, and global influences must be carefully examined.

Ultimately, Postcolonial Feminist Theory offers a valuable theoretical framework for this study, as it encourages researchers to center the perspectives and experiences of Edo State-based artists, producers, and audiences, rather than reproducing Western-

centric biases (Smith, 1999). By adopting this approach, the study can provide a more nuanced and contextually-grounded understanding of the complex dynamics at play between feminism, tradition, and modernity in the Edo State music video landscape.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study is the survey method. The survey research design was considered the most suitable approach as it allows for the collection of data through the use of questionnaires or interviews with the goal of describing phenomena in detail (Asemah, Gujbawu, Ekhareafu & Okpanachi, 2012).

The population of the study comprised the residents of Oredo Local Government, Etsako West Local Government, and Esan Central Local Government in Edo State, Nigeria. According to the National Population Commission (2020), the projected population of these three local government areas is 774,350, with Oredo having 374,515, Etsako West having 245,469, and Esan Central having 154,366 residents.

A sample size of 400 respondents was determined using the Taro Yamane's sample size formula. The multi-stage sampling technique was employed in selecting the sample. First, the researcher divided the state into three senatorial districts (Edo North, Edo Central, and Edo South) and randomly selected one local government from each district using the fishbowl method (Etsako West, Esan Central, and Oredo Local Governments).

At the second stage, two towns were selected from each of the chosen local governments through simple random sampling: Auchi and Uzairue from Etsako West, Irrua and Ewu from Esan Central, and New Benin and Orogo from Oredo. The fishbowl method was used to avoid bias in the selection of these towns.

In the third stage, 10 wards or streets were selected from the 10 towns, and 40 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to respondents in each ward or street. The specific wards or streets selected were Igbei, Iyekhei, and Jattu in Auchi/Uzairue; Afuda, Eguare, and Iduwele in Irrua/Ewu; and 1st Evborhan Lane, New Oguanogbe Street, Ekehuan Road, and Eweka Lane in Benin City/Orogo.

Finally, the availability or convenience sampling technique was used to share the questionnaires to any adult 18 years and above in the selected wards or streets. A total of 400 copies of the questionnaire were distributed, and 373 copies were retrieved, with 27 copies lost.

The data for this study were collected using a structured questionnaire. The choice of the questionnaire as the data collection instrument was based on its ability to gather information from a large number of respondents efficiently and effectively.

Data Presentation

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Extent to which music videos in Edo state have incorporated feminist themes and representations		
Very High	99	26.5
High	98	26.3
Neutral	65	17.4
Low	60	16.1
Very Low	51	13.7
Total	373	100
Music videos portray women in stereotypical or objectified roles		
Strongly Agree	104	27.9
Agree	117	31.4
Neutral	53	14.2
Disagree	77	20.6
Strongly Disagree	22	5.9
Total	373	100

How often music videos contain sexually suggestive or revealing imagery of female performers in Edo State

Strongly Agree	125	33.5
Agree	111	29.7
Neutral	5	1.3
Disagree	84	22.5
Strongly Disagree	48	12.8
Total	373	100
Female performers in the music videos demonstrate autonomy, independence, and control over their own narratives		
Strongly Agree	90	24.1
Agree	67	17.9
Neutral	5	1.3
Disagree	91	24.3
Strongly Disagree	120	32.2
Total	373	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The data suggests that the music videos in Edo State present a mix of representations when it comes to challenging or reinforcing patriarchal norms. On one hand, the videos seem to frequently contain sexualized imagery of female performers, which could be seen as reinforcing the objectification of women. However, the data also indicates that the female performers often demonstrate a good degree of autonomy, independence, and control over their own narratives, challenging traditional gender roles and power dynamics.

The intersectional analysis reveals that the music videos address the intersection of gender, race, class, and other social identities to some extent, but there is room for improvement in terms of offering more inclusive and representative depictions. Interestingly, the audience perceptions suggest that there is a divide in how the gender dynamics and power relations depicted in the music videos are interpreted. While some audience members feel that the videos challenge patriarchal norms, others believe that they reinforce such norms to some degree.

Discussion of Findings

The current study's examination of music videos in Edo State presents a complex picture when it comes to the representation of women and the negotiation of patriarchal norms. On one hand, the data suggests that these music videos contain elements that challenge traditional gender roles and power dynamics, aligning with the conclusions drawn by Okafor (2019). The study found that female performers in the videos often demonstrate a significant degree of autonomy, independence, and control over their own narratives, subverting the typical objectification and subordination of women in media representations.

This finding resonates with Okafor's (2019) argument that feminist activism has indeed influenced the transformation of Edo State music videos, leading to more empowered and agentic depictions of women. The study's data imply that there has been a notable shift in the ways in which female performers are portrayed, moving away from the passive, subordinate roles that have historically dominated mainstream media representations.

However, the current study also uncovered a persistent element that appears to contradict this progressive trend – the frequent use of sexualized imagery of female performers. This finding seems to clash with Okorie's (2018) assertion that Edo State music videos have been "reimagining gender" and moving towards more inclusive and empowering representations. The current data suggests that there are still aspects of the music videos that reinforce patriarchal norms and the objectification of women, undermining the advancements made in challenging gender-based power structures.

This tension between empowering and objectifying representations highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of gender dynamics within the cultural domain of Edo State music videos. It suggests that while there have been significant strides in challenging patriarchal norms, deep-rooted societal attitudes and power structures continue to shape and influence the ways in which gender is portrayed and negotiated in this medium.

The current study's findings regarding the mixed audience perceptions further underscore this complexity. The data reveals a divide in how the gender dynamics and power relations depicted in the music videos are interpreted, with some audience members perceiving the videos as challenging patriarchal norms, while others believe that they reinforce such norms to a notable degree. This divergence in audience interpretations resonates with the insights provided by Okunloye's (2021) study on the challenges and opportunities faced by women involved in Edo State music video production.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The conclusion of the current study present a mixed and complex picture. While the videos do exhibit elements that challenge traditional patriarchal norms, with female performers demonstrating a good degree of autonomy and agency, the data also suggests that there are persistent aspects that reinforce the objectification and subordination of women through the frequent use of sexualized imagery.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The media and government should encourage music video producers and directors to develop more empowering representations of women that go beyond the objectification and sexualization of female performers.
2. The media should implement policies and initiatives that actively address the persistent gender-based challenges and power imbalances faced by women working in the Edo State music video production industry by providing training, mentorship, and funding opportunities to support the professional development and leadership of women in various roles within the industry, from creative decision-making to technical production.

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