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MUSIC AS A CATALYST FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE AND NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA

Abstract

Music is a universal human phenomenon that exists across cultures and societies, serving diverse social, educational, political, and developmental functions. Despite its recognized contributions to social cohesion and value formation, its potential role in promoting good governance and national development has received limited scholarly attention in Nigeria. This paper examines the role of music in nation-building and its relevance to the promotion of good governance, national security, and socio-economic development. The study adopts a qualitative and historical research approach, drawing on literature, documentary sources, and relevant theoretical perspectives on music, governance, and nation-building. Findings reveal that music serves as a powerful medium for civic education, moral instruction, cultural preservation, social mobilization, and the promotion of values essential for responsible leadership and citizenship. The study further establishes that societies that integrate music into educational and social development programmes are better positioned to cultivate disciplined, patriotic, and socially responsible citizens. The paper concludes that music education constitutes an important instrument for human capital development and sustainable national progress. It therefore recommends the integration of music education into all levels of the educational system, increased governmental support for music-based civic enlightenment programmes, and the utilization of music as a strategic tool for promoting ethical leadership, social cohesion, and national development.

Keywords: Music, Catalyst, Good Governance, National Security, Cultural Development.

Introduction

Music is one of the most universal manifestations of human culture and remains a distinctive feature of every society. Across geographical, ethnic, religious, and historical boundaries, music serves as a medium through which individuals and communities' express emotions, transmit knowledge, preserve cultural values, and reinforce social relationships. As a branch of the arts, music maintains an inseparable relationship with humanity and the environment within which it is created and performed. Nevertheless, because musical practices differ considerably from one society to another, a single universal interpretation of music remains difficult. Ayeyemi (2006) observes that although music is a common phenomenon among peoples of the world, its meanings, functions, and modes of practice vary according to the cultural realities of individual societies.

This diversity is particularly evident in Africa where music exists in numerous forms and serves multiple functions. African music cannot be treated as a homogeneous entity because each cultural group possesses unique musical traditions shaped by its worldview, social structure, religious beliefs, and historical experiences. Nketia (1974) notes that African music derives its significance largely from the social situations in which it is performed, while Merriam (1964) argues that music can only be properly understood within the cultural context that gives it meaning. Consequently, attempts to generalize about music in sub-Saharan Africa often fail to capture the rich diversity and complexity that characterize African musical traditions. What music signifies to one community may differ substantially from what it represents to another because musical meaning is largely conditioned by shared cultural experiences and social associations.

Music occupies a central position throughout the human life cycle. From birth to death, it accompanies major social, cultural, religious, and political activities. It is present in naming ceremonies, initiation rites, marriages, festivals, worship services, funerals, and state functions. Some individuals participate in music as composers, performers, teachers, or scholars, while others engage with it as listeners and patrons. According to Willoughby (1996), many people develop varying levels of musical competence through singing, dancing, listening, and instrumental performance. Contemporary research further demonstrates that active engagement with music contributes significantly to intellectual, social, emotional, and personal development. Hallam

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(2010) argues that musical participation enhances creativity, concentration, self-confidence, social interaction, emotional sensitivity, and cognitive development among learners. Similarly, Welch, Biasutti, MacRitchie, McPherson, and Himonides (2020) contend that music positively influences human well-being, educational attainment, social inclusion, and emotional health across different stages of life (Hallam, 2010).

Beyond entertainment, music functions as a powerful communicative and expressive medium. Through music, individuals and groups communicate feelings, ideas, beliefs, aspirations, and collective memories. Music has the capacity to stimulate physical movement, evoke emotional responses, strengthen group identity, and reinforce social cohesion. It may express joy, sorrow, hope, love, unity, resistance, spirituality, and communal solidarity. Merriam (1964) identifies emotional expression, communication, social integration, cultural continuity, and the validation of social institutions as some of the major functions of music in society. These functions explain why music remains an indispensable component of human existence and an effective instrument for cultural transmission and social organization.

The influence of music extends beyond cultural and social spheres into political life. Throughout history, music has served as a vehicle for political communication, mobilization, social criticism, and the promotion of ideological values. Political leaders, governments, and communities have often utilized music to communicate policies, reinforce authority, mobilize support, and foster national identity. This relationship between music and governance underscores the broader role of music as a tool for human and societal development.

Governance itself derives from political processes and ideological frameworks that guide the administration of society. The concept has its roots in ancient Greek political thought, where it referred to the management and organization of public affairs. Politics generally concerns the acquisition, distribution, and exercise of power within society. Akpaamo (2004) maintains that political participation reflects individual and collective aspirations for influence, recognition, and social relevance. Individuals may belong to political structures either by birth through inherited affiliations or by personal choice based on interests and convictions.

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According to Hoebel (1972), politics may be understood as the process of determining “who gets what, when, and how.” Although brief, this definition highlights the distributive and regulatory dimensions of political activity. Hoebel further explains that politics is not an isolated aspect of life but rather an integral component of broader cultural and social processes. Every society establishes norms, roles, responsibilities, rights, and obligations that regulate social behaviour, and political systems provide the mechanisms through which these arrangements are organized and enforced.

Swartz, Turner, and Tuden (as cited in Hoebel, 1972) identify several characteristics of political processes. First, politics is fundamentally public because it concerns matters affecting communities and societies rather than private individuals alone. Second, it is goal-oriented, involving decision-making processes through which societies select objectives and determine appropriate means of achieving them. Third, politics involves the allocation and enforcement of power through recognized authorities and institutions. These characteristics reveal politics as a mechanism through which societies coordinate activities, pursue collective goals, and maintain social order.

Closely related to politics is the concept of governance. Governance refers to the processes through which decisions are made, implemented, monitored, and evaluated. According to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), governance is fundamentally concerned with both decision-making and the processes by which decisions are implemented. Good governance therefore emphasizes participation, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, effectiveness, equity, and adherence to the rule of law. It focuses not merely on achieving desirable outcomes but on ensuring that decision-making processes serve the interests of society fairly and efficiently.

In contemporary societies, governance plays a crucial role in determining developmental priorities, including education, culture, and the arts. The level of attention accorded to music within national educational and cultural policies often reflects the priorities of political leaders and governing institutions. Consequently, the development or neglect of music education is not merely an educational issue but also a governance issue. It is within this context that this article examines the position of music in Nigeria's developmental agenda and evaluates the extent to which governance

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structures have recognized and utilized music as a strategic instrument for human development, cultural sustainability, and national transformation.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Structural Functionalism Theory as propounded by Talcott Parsons (1951) and further developed from the earlier sociological ideas of Émile Durkheim. The theory emerged from attempts to explain how societies maintain stability, continuity, and social order through the interaction of various institutions. Structural functionalists view society as a system composed of interconnected structures, including government, education, religion, family, economy, and culture, each performing specific functions necessary for the survival and development of the social system.

The fundamental premise of Structural Functionalism is that every social institution contributes to the maintenance, stability, and progress of society. Parsons (1951) argued that society functions as an integrated system whose constituent parts work together to promote equilibrium and collective well-being. Consequently, when one institution fails to perform its assigned functions effectively, dysfunction occurs, resulting in social imbalance and developmental challenges. Durkheim (1964) similarly maintained that social institutions are indispensable mechanisms for promoting social solidarity, cultural continuity, and collective consciousness.

Music from a functionalist perspective, constitutes an important cultural institution that performs numerous functions in society. Beyond entertainment, music contributes to social integration, value transmission, identity formation, cultural preservation, emotional expression, political mobilization, and educational development. Merriam (1964) identifies several functions of music, including emotional expression, communication, reinforcement of social norms, validation of social institutions, cultural continuity, and social integration. In traditional African societies, music has historically functioned as an instrument for education, governance, social control, religious worship, conflict resolution, and communal cohesion (Nketia, 1974).

The theory further posits that governance serves as the coordinating mechanism through which societal institutions are organized and supported to achieve collective goals. Governments formulate policies, allocate resources, establish priorities, and create enabling environments for

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institutions to function effectively. Consequently, the development or neglect of any social institution often reflects prevailing governance structures and policy orientations. When governments recognize the strategic importance of culture and education, they are more likely to formulate policies that strengthen artistic and educational development. Conversely, inadequate policy attention, poor funding, and weak implementation mechanisms may hinder the ability of such institutions to contribute meaningfully to national development.

The relevance of Structural Functionalism to this study lies in its explanation of the interconnected relationship between governance, music, education, culture, and national development. The theory provides a useful framework for understanding music not merely as an artistic activity but as a functional social institution capable of contributing to human development, cultural sustainability, social cohesion, and economic growth. It also explains how governance decisions influence the extent to which music can perform these societal functions. Applying the theory to the Nigerian situation reveals that the persistent marginalization of music education within educational policies, inadequate funding of arts programmes, insufficient infrastructural support, and inconsistent implementation of cultural policies represent forms of institutional dysfunction. Such deficiencies limit the capacity of music to contribute effectively to nation-building, cultural preservation, youth empowerment, and creative industry development. From a functionalist standpoint, the neglect of music education undermines an important component of the societal system and consequently weakens broader developmental objectives.

Therefore, Structural Functionalism provides an appropriate lens for examining the role of governance in determining the status of music within Nigeria's developmental agenda. The theory supports the argument that music, like other social institutions, should receive adequate governmental attention and support because of its significant contributions to human development, social stability, cultural continuity, and national transformation.

Methodology

This study is grounded in a qualitative research methodology, specifically employing documentary and historical research designs. Qualitative methodology is appropriate where the aim is to

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interpret meanings embedded in texts, policies, and institutional practices rather than quantify variables (Flick, 2022).

The study adopts document analysis as its primary method of data collection. Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing and interpreting printed and digital materials to extract meaning, develop understanding, and generate empirical knowledge (Bowen, 2009; Bingham, 2023). In this study, relevant documents include Nigerian educational policy frameworks, music curriculum documents, government reports, UNESCO policy briefs, and peer-reviewed scholarly publications on music education and governance.

A historical-interpretive approach is also integrated to trace the evolution of music education policy and governance structures in Nigeria. Historical qualitative inquiry enables researchers to examine how past institutional decisions shape present educational and cultural outcomes (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2023). This is particularly relevant for understanding the changing status of music within Nigeria's educational and developmental agenda.

Data analysis is conducted using thematic content analysis, a widely accepted qualitative analytic procedure for identifying, coding, and interpreting patterns of meaning across textual data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Through iterative reading, coding, and categorisation, themes such as policy neglect, curriculum marginalisation, governance priorities, and cultural development are generated and interpreted within the analytical lens of Structural Functionalism. To ensure trustworthiness, the study employs triangulation of documentary sources, credibility checks, and auditability of materials. This aligns with contemporary standards of qualitative rigor that emphasize transparency, consistency, and confirmability in document-based research (Flick, 2022; Bingham, 2023). However, this methodological framework provides a structured basis for examining how governance processes influence the positioning of music education within Nigeria's educational and cultural development system.

Historical Insights: Greek Musical Philosophy

Greek civilization is widely recognized as one of the foundations of Western civilization. Although present-day Greece is a relatively small country, its contributions to philosophy, politics,

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education, arts, and culture have continued to influence societies across the world. Between 750 and 500 B.C.E., Greek colonists spread along the shores of the eastern Mediterranean Sea, facilitating the dissemination of Greek culture and intellectual traditions (Wright & Simms, 2010).

The city-state of Athens became the intellectual center of Greek civilization, producing philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. These philosophers laid the foundation for Western philosophical thought and emphasized the importance of education in developing responsible citizens. Music and physical training were considered indispensable aspects of education. Socrates taught that music and gymnastics were the two essentials of a good education, while Plato maintained that both disciplines should be kept in proper balance. The Greeks believed that music possessed the power to shape emotions, influence conduct, and cultivate moral virtues.

Plato and Aristotle regarded music as the “most powerful of the arts” because of its profound influence on human character and behaviour (Wright & Simms, 2010). Plato argued that musical training was essential for developing virtue and social harmony, while Aristotle maintained that music could influence the passions and dispositions of the soul. Recent scholarship continues to affirm that Greek philosophers viewed music education as a vital instrument for moral formation and civic development (Kotsonis, 2021; Miano, 2025). According to Abeles, Hoffer, and Klotman (1981), the principal aim of Greek education was the development of individuals possessing character, grace, and physical stamina. To achieve this objective, education was organized around rhetoric for the mind, gymnastics for the body, and music and the arts for the soul. Consequently, music was not regarded merely as entertainment but as an essential component of holistic human development.

Aristotle, in his *Politics*, further emphasized that music imitates and expresses various emotional states such as gentleness, courage, and anger. Because musical habits were cultivated from childhood, music became a powerful means of transmitting societal values and shaping moral character. Similar educational functions of music have been observed in traditional African societies. Emeka (2012) noted that childhood is the most appropriate stage for musical and moral training. In traditional Nigerian society, music served as a medium through which young people acquired desirable behaviours, attitudes, speech patterns, and cultural values necessary for responsible adulthood.

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In contemporary society, however, the moral and educational functions traditionally associated with music have increasingly been challenged by the proliferation of popular music genres. Youth-oriented styles such as Afro-rock, hip-hop, rap, and pop often emphasize commercial appeal, dance rhythms, and celebrity culture. Anibeze, Arenyeka, Ebirim, and Adeyeri (2014) argued that such developments have weakened the ethical orientation traditionally associated with music. Similarly, Ekwueme (2008) observed that popular music exerts considerable influence on the lifestyles, fashion choices, and value systems of young people. Nevertheless, music remains a strong instrument for societal transformation. Just as positive musical expressions can preserve cultural heritage and promote moral values, negative influences may contribute to cultural erosion and the decline of societal norms. Anibeze, Arenyeka, Ebirim, and Adeyeri (2014) therefore emphasized that music remains one of the most strategic means of influencing human thought and behaviour.

While Western musical influences have introduced certain challenges, they have also contributed significantly to the growth of Nigeria's music industry. Contemporary musical genres have created employment opportunities, encouraged intercultural interaction, and facilitated the fusion of indigenous and foreign musical traditions. The challenge for contemporary society is therefore to harness both traditional and modern musical practices in ways that promote cultural integrity, moral responsibility, and national development.

Music and the Making of Good Governance

Modern political leadership studies increasingly adopt interdisciplinary approaches that link governance, ethics, and civic formation. The School of Politics and International Studies, University of Leeds, identifies key objectives in leadership research, including theoretical critique, model development, interdisciplinary integration, empirical evaluation of leadership contexts, and the application of case studies to real governance situations. These approaches aim to strengthen understanding of leadership dynamics within liberal democratic systems.

Although developed within Western contexts, these principles are relevant to governance challenges in Nigeria. Classical Greek education provides an instructive model, where music and physical training were combined to shape morally grounded and disciplined citizens. Music

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functioned as a tool for ethical formation, while physical education cultivated self-control and resilience.

Similarly, pre-colonial Nigerian societies used music as a medium for moral instruction, social cohesion, and cultural continuity. However, this value-oriented function of music has weakened in contemporary educational practice, contributing to gaps in ethical formation among young people. This concern becomes more significant in light of Nigeria's current security challenges, including violent crimes, insurgency, and widespread insecurity (Oyedokun in Ayeyemi, 2013). Such conditions reflect broader weaknesses in civic values and social responsibility. In this context, the neglect of moral and cultural education, including music, becomes a critical issue.

Drawing from the Greek model, music education can be repositioned as a core component of the Nigerian curriculum from early childhood to tertiary levels. Its role would extend beyond aesthetics to include character formation, ethical awareness, and civic responsibility. As argued by Ayeyemi (2013), such an approach can contribute to reorienting future leaders and strengthening governance culture. Structured music education offers a viable framework for cultivating disciplined, ethical, and socially responsible citizens, thereby supporting long-term improvements in governance and national stability.

Music, Governance, and National Security

The study revealed that music occupied a central position in the educational philosophy of ancient Greece and was regarded as an indispensable instrument for the holistic development of individuals. Greek philosophers, particularly Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, viewed music not merely as a form of entertainment but as a strong means of cultivating moral values, emotional stability, intellectual growth, and responsible citizenship. The study further found that the Greek educational system was deliberately structured to achieve balanced development of the mind, body, and soul through rhetoric, gymnastics, and music. Music was therefore considered an essential component of character formation and socialization, with the capacity to influence human behaviour and inculcate desirable societal values from childhood.

Another important finding is that the educational function of music in ancient Greece shares notable similarities with traditional African and Nigerian music education practices. In both contexts, music served as a medium for transmitting cultural values, moral instruction, social

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norms, and communal identity to younger generations. Furthermore, contemporary popular music has significantly altered the traditional moral and educational functions of music. The increasing dominance of commercially driven genres, characterized by themes of materialism, sexuality, and celebrity culture, has contributed to concerns about declining moral values among youths and the gradual erosion of indigenous cultural principles.

Despite these concerns, the study revealed that modern musical styles have generated positive outcomes, including economic empowerment, employment opportunities, international recognition, cultural exchange, and the creative fusion of indigenous and foreign musical traditions. Contemporary music has therefore become a significant contributor to cultural globalization and the creative economy.

Conclusion

This paper examined the role of music in promoting good governance, national security, and nation-building. The study established that music is not merely a medium of entertainment but a powerful instrument for moral education, cultural transmission, social integration, and civic consciousness. Evidence from historical and contemporary societies demonstrates that music can contribute significantly to character formation, value reorientation, and the development of responsible citizenship, which are essential foundations of good governance. The paper further revealed that many of the socio-political and security challenges confronting Nigeria are linked to deficiencies in ethical orientation, civic responsibility, and leadership values.

Given its capacity to influence attitudes, behaviour, and social norms, music education offers a viable means of fostering patriotism, discipline, accountability, and national unity. The study therefore concludes that the strategic integration of music into educational and national development programmes can contribute meaningfully to the cultivation of responsible leaders and citizens, thereby enhancing governance and sustainable national development.

Recommendations

1. Music education should be made a core component of the curriculum at all levels of education in Nigeria in order to promote moral values, civic responsibility, and national consciousness among learners.

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2. Government should support the use of music in civic enlightenment campaigns aimed at promoting peace, patriotism, national unity, and responsible citizenship.
3. Educational policymakers should integrate indigenous musical traditions into school programmes to strengthen cultural identity and value transmission among young people.
4. Public institutions, religious organizations, and community groups should utilize music as a tool for social reorientation and the promotion of ethical behaviour.
5. Greater investment should be made in music education through adequate funding, teacher training, and the provision of instructional facilities to maximize its developmental benefits.
6. Researchers should undertake empirical studies on the relationship between music education, leadership development, civic engagement, and good governance in Nigeria and other African societies.

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