Oralizing Global Pandemics: The Case of Selected Covid-19 Responsive Topical Songs from Africa

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Abstract: *The functional nature of Africa's orality has always been manifest in its potency of serving specific needs of the society in which it originates. It is on this premise that this paper seeks to appraise oral artists' commitment in addressing emerging issues in the society through topical songs. In the main, this paper aims at (re) valuing the effectiveness of oralizing global pandemics such as Covid-19 in selected topical songs from Africa. The paper attempts to assess the place of Covid-19 responsive topical songs in combating the pandemic, analyze their artistic constitution and lastly, evaluate the role of technology in aiding their composition and dissemination. This research is majorly guided by functionalism and psychoanalytical criticism as well as qualitative research design. The analysis of selected songs from across Africa reveals that topical Covid-19 songs played a significant role in combating and complementing measures aimed at fighting the pandemic. The analysis also reveals that effective repertoires were employed in the composition of the songs. Finally, the analysis exposes the key role (s) played by technology in shaping and aiding the composition and dissemination of the songs.*

Keywords: *Oral artist, topical songs, oralizing, global pandemic, Covid-19, functionalism, repertoires*

1. INTRODUCTION

Corona virus disease 2019 (Covid-19) is a contagious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome corona virus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The first case was identified in Wuhan China in December 2019 and quickly spread to other countries including Nepal, France, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, Italy and many more others in the days and weeks that followed. Within no time, the disease had a worldwide presence making it the most virulent global pandemic. On 30th January, WHO declared Covid-19 a public Health Emergency of international concern (Wikepedia) before finally declaring it a pandemic on March 11, 2020. (aljazeera.com)

The first African country to report the first case of the virus was Egypt on 14th of February 2020, followed by Nigeria by the end the same month. Kenya reported the first case of Covid-19 in Nairobi on 12th March 2020. By May 13th, all African states had reported a case, with the last being Lesotho. (Wikipedia)

Ministries of health in governments across the continent of Africa proceeded to issue a raft of precautionary measures to combat the spread. Some of the measures included among others regular washing of hands, maintaining social distance, staying at home upon noticing symptoms such as fever, coughing and difficulty in breathing and suspension of public gatherings. Other measures were imposition of curfews, lockdowns, air travel bans, suspension of learning and working from home. For instance, on March 15, 2020, the Kenyan government closed all learning institutions upon identification of two more cases of the virus. Former president Uhuru Kenyatta on March 25th announced a nationwide curfew on unauthorized movement from 7 pm to 5 am amidst other measures. By this time more than half of Africa's countries had taken similar steps in an effort to contain the spread of the virus.

Covid-19 continued to cause social and economic havoc across the world as new infections and fatalities continued being reported on a daily basis. For instance, by November 13th, 2020, there were over 253 Million infections and 5.09 Million deaths globally.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Since time immemorial, oral literature has been regarded as the backbone of any society's literature. Europe, despite its civilization which dates centuries back has its literature founded on the oral epic performances by Homer and Ulysses. The Greek mythology informing the classical tragedies is firmly based on the society's orality. Africa's literary history similarly has its roots on oral literature in the form of songs and dances, proverbs and different forms of tales all of which have variously reflected its worldview.

Oral literature of any given community has a social significance embedded on contexts and occasions that are dictated by the social cultural, economic or even political happenings in the community (Finnegan 1970, Waita (2020), Doob (1961). This implies that the creative acumen of any community's oral artists is not based on a vacuum but is informed by what is happening around them. Concisely, Waita (ibid) views oral artists as vehicles "of transmitting new information and education" (p.98). Further, P'Bitek (1983) puts the role of artists into perspective by regarding them as individuals who form the consciousness of their time by relating what has happened, what is happening and even what will happen. Bitek's viewpoint places artists on an integral pedestal in so far as their involvement in the society's affairs is concerned. To him, they are like historians who chronicle what has and is happening and as prophets due to their ability to predict what is bound to happen in future.

This study proceeds to investigate the place of topical songs in sensitizing and helping in combating pandemics such as Covid-19. Topical songs are songs that address current issues in any society and as such, they fit in the ambit of popular culture and popular literature in particular despite being bed-rocked in oral literature. Under popular culture, they fall under popular art forms which Barber (1987) associates with communicative, pleasurable and memorable characteristics. Also, the songs meet popular culture's conceptualization as forms of expression that are "frequently negotiated or widely accepted, commonly liked or approved and characteristic of a particular group of people at a given time" (Ibe, 2019, p. 184). This is due to their spontaneous responsiveness to immediate societal concerns and challenges.

Typically, these songs address global or regional issues that are of great threat or importance to the society, hence their popularity. In Africa, artists have oralized through songs issues such as HIV/Aids, drought and famine, acts of terrorism, accidents to mention but a few. For instance, awareness about HIV/Aids has effectively been communicated through the spoken word, with Waita (2020) viewing oral literature as an effective agent for helping fight the scourge. For instance, songstress Prince Jully, a Kenyan Musician, played a key role in sensitizing Kenyans about HIV/Aids after the disease was declared a national disaster in 1999. This artist, together with many others, has formidably created awareness and prevention of the scourge through their music.

Olawale (2000) opines that through oral performances, abstract and difficult phenomena of life can be understood. As such therefore, there is need to conduct a literary valuation of oral materials in order to appreciate their centrality in reflecting and addressing any society's immediate needs. Resultantly, this paper analyzes Covid-19 songs namely: 'Janga la Corona' by Salome Wairimu (Kenya) 'Corona' by Jimmy Gait (Kenya) 'Corona' by Rayvanny featuring Magufuli (Tanzania), 'Corona Virus Alert' by Bobi Wine and Nubian Li (Uganda) and "Stand Together"- African Anthem of Solidarity against COVID-19, a song featuring several artists from across Africa namely: 2Baba (Nigeria), Ahmed Soultan (Morocco), Ben Pol (Tanzania), Teni (Nigeria), Yemi Alade (Nigeria), Amanda Black (South Africa), Stanley Enow (Cameroon), Gigi La Mayne (South Africa), Prodigio (Angola) and Betty G (Ethiopia).

The study utilizes functionalism and psychoanalysis theories in appraising the efficacy of topical songs in addressing pandemics such as Covid-19. Functionalist theory helps in uncovering and appreciating the functional import of these songs. The theory is based on the argument that all aspects of the society such as institutions, roles and values serve a purpose that is crucial for the survival of

the society. The proponents of the theory are Bronislaw Malinowiski from Poland and A. B. Radcliffe-Brown from England. Malinowski (1939) argued that what was required to understand societies was a scientific theory based on the theory of human needs because every aspect of culture has a role to play in terms of fulfilling the needs of humanity which are biological, psychological and social in nature. To him, understanding the function of something makes us understand everything. The Covid 19-songs under study in this paper are a product of Africa's oral culture and are functional to echo Ngugi (1981) observation that every art is functional. This study seeks to argue that Covid-19 songs served biological, psychological and social needs of humanity exposed to the risk of contracting the virus. On the other hand, Radcliffe Brown (1935) posits that any society is a system of relationships that function together in the maintenance of the social whole. He views a function as the contribution that a partial activity makes to the total activity of which it is part. This surmise is crucial in this paper since the study seeks to evaluate the individual contribution of each Covid-19 song in helping create awareness and in mitigating the spread of the virus. Further Bascom (1954) identifies four functions of folklore and these are amusement, validation of culture, education, and the etiological function. Resultantly, this paper isolates edutainment and sensitization roles as critical thematic areas that Covid-19 artists contended with.

Psychoanalysis theory is derived from Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939), a medical doctor who lived and worked in Vienna Austria. He developed psychoanalysis as a method of dealing with mental illness, but then helped in expanding it to cover a very wide number of other areas including literary criticism. The theory is premised on the argument that human activity is not wholly conscious and that we do some things unaware of what we are doing and that these things could be influenced by our fear, desires and emotions (Freud, 1900). Even if psychoanalytic criticism deals with a work of literature as an expression of the inner psyche or character and personality of the author, the criticism can also be applied on the characters used in the text as well as the effect of the work on readers. Resultantly, I seek to evaluate the psychological effects and purpose of Covid-19 songs. To achieve this, I will be underscoring the psychological import behind the emergence of the songs in a population that was affected, infected at the risk of being affected or infected by the virus.

3. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research design involves a detailed description of data and data analysis (Smith, Todd & Waldman, 2009). Qualitative research design also involves content analysis which is a systematic qualitative description of materials under study (Mugenda & Mugenda 1999). Description and content analysis of data is appropriate to this study since the research aims at assessing the efficacy of Covid-19 music in helping combat the virus. Primary data is obtained from songs drawn from across Africa. The songs are then analyzed based on the study's objectives. The study also consults secondary sources from the library and internet to augment the discussion. Data from primary and secondary sources is analyzed with respect to the following objectives.

1. To assess the place of Covid-19 songs in combating Corona virus in Africa
2. To analyze the artistic constitution of Covid-19 songs
3. To evaluate the role of technology in the composition and dissemination of Covid-19 songs.

Finally, data is presented in subheadings that correspond with the objectives of the research. The presented data reveals that Covid-19 songs played an integral role in combating the virus. The analysis exposes unparalleled acumen in the composition of Covid-19 songs with technology playing a central role in their creation and dissemination.

4. COMBATING COVID-19 WITH MUSIC IN AFRICA

As discussed earlier, oral artists have not been left behind in addressing critical issues affecting any society. One way this has been achieved is by oralizing such issues in order to create awareness, or help in combating them by relaying crucial information about the matter to the public. Topical songs, therefore, are edutainment tools that serve entertainment as well as informative and educative roles to the public.

Upon the outbreak of Covid-19, a number of measures and protocols were enforced to mitigate the spread of the virus. These include among others wearing a face mask, proper hand sanitization, social distancing, washing hands with soap and water, avoiding crowded place and working from home. This section assesses the extent to which African artists oralized these measures and protocols as well as transmitted other necessary information regarding the disease in a bid to fight the pandemic. Notably, the songs analyzed in this paper were released in early 2020 just after the initial cases of the virus were reported in a number of African countries. The urgent release of the songs delineates the serious attention given to the disease by the artists.

'Janga la Corona' was released by Salome Wairimu, a primary school pupil in April 2020. The young artist begins her melody by tracing the historical origins of the virus to Wuhan China and its consequential spread to the rest of the world.

Ugonjwa huu kwa jina la Corona
Ulilipuka mwaka jana
Wuhan nchini China

(Translation)

This disease by the name Corona

Broke out last year

In Wuhan, China

The adroit chronicling of the genesis and spread of the disease places the artist on the pedestal of an historian, a term Okot P'Bitek designates for oral artists who verbalize important historical events in their communities. Such historical information can easily and readily reach the audience even as it gets entertained by the sweet but sad melody of the song. It is remarkable to note that the song derives its rhythm from a 1970s patriotic song 'Wimbo huu ni wimbo wa Historia' (This is a song of history), an emotionally moving rendition of colonial political history of the republic of Kenya as well as the difficulties that the late president Jomo Kenyatta, the founding father of the republic of Kenya underwent as he lead the country to independence from Britain, its colonizer.

The initial reception of Covid-19 as not threatening and as ordinary cold by most people in Africa is echoed in the song but then, ultimately, the disease arrives in Kenya and is declared a global pandemic.

Hivi majuzi wakenya tulihuzunika
Kwa kusikia ati Corona hatimaye imewadia
Rais wetu Uhuru wa Kenyatta
Naye akatupasha kuwa janga limefika

(Translation)

Just recently, Kenyans we were saddened

To hear that Corona is in the country

Our President Uhuru Kenyatta

Informed us the pandemic is in the nation.

This stanza rekindles the momentous announcement of the first case of the virus in Kenya, an event that ultimately threw the country and Kenyans at large on high alert. The song thinly alludes to Kenya's president emphasize that the health measures that had already been announced by World Health Organization to help combat the virus needed to be be adhered to.

Crucial health measures that were to observed in the fight against the virus are espoused by Jimmy Gait, also a Kenyan artist in his song 'Corona'

Kwa mara nyingi osha mikono yako kwa sabuni
Na usiguze macho, mdomo na hata na mapua
Ni bora ufunikie mdomo kama wakohoa

Maumivu yakizidi ona daktari
Na walioadhirika ni watu kama sisi
Tusiwaachilie

(Translation)

Clean your hands many times with soap

Do not touch eyes, mouth and nose

Cover your mouth as you sneeze

When pain worsens visit a doctor

The affected are people like us

Let's not slacken our watchfulness

Jimmy's song is preceded by a phone call he receives from a female friend of his whose husband succumbs to the virus. The song demystifies the myths that were being peddled when the first cases of the virus started being reported in Africa. Such myths included disbelief; speculation and denial about the presence of the virus in Africa, with many arguing that Africans' immunity and hot tropical climate could fight the disease. The song underscores the fact that the virus is a reality and was actually taking lives of people. The singer emphasizes that anybody is at risk because the affected are people like us, hence insisting on the need for everyone to be watchful.

Corona related symptoms, which are the cause of the man's death are related in the song. The distressed woman tells Jimmy:

Your husband?
Ni nini imefanyika?
"Bwana yangu amekufa,
Alikuwa anakohoa sana, joto jingi
Na kushindwa kupumua
Daktari alisema ni Corona"

(Translation)

Your husband?

What has happened?

"My husband has died

He was coughing a lot and had high temperature

And unable to breath

The doctor said it was Corona

Here, some of the major symptoms of the virus such as excessive coughing, high temperature and inability to breath are highlighted. Outside music, the government and the ministry of health has always been sensitizing people about these symptoms and even advising them to see the doctor if they have such symptoms. Oralizing such symptoms and juxtaposing them with the death of a person who exhibited them was aimed at making the audience take the message seriously. Even as the Ministry of Health, governments and other agencies across Africa went out sensitizing people about the virus, the artist, who also has a sizeable audience, ably supplements such stakeholders' efforts in the fight against the disease.

Just like Jimmy Gait, and Salome Wairimu from Kenya, Rayvanny, a successful and popular Bongo Flava and Afro-Pop hit songs artist from Tanzania features the late former immediate president of Tanzania John Pombe Magufuli in the song 'Corona'- in sorrowfully oralizing the damaging effects of the pandemic in Tanzania and the need to always follow health protocols in mitigating the effects of the scourge..

Habari kote duniani zimesambaa
Ugonjwa unaua na hauna tiba

Na wengine wetu masikini hatujiwezi
Mwenyezi Mungu kawe tiba

Watoto wetu mashule, aah
Mama zetu tu sokoni
Kwenye vyombo vya usafiri makazini
Tujilinde

Osha mikono, aaah
Epuka mikusanyiko sio ya lazima, aaah
Na uonapo dalili
Mapema wahi hospitali

(Translation)

News is over the world

That this disease has no cure

And some of us are already poor

Let God be our cure

Our children in schools

Our mothers in markets

In public transport and workplaces

Let's take care of ourselves

Wash your hands

Avoid unnecessary crowded places

And when you have symptoms

Visit the hospital early enough

The fact that the disease has no cure is reiterated with the artist calling upon all to take care of themselves to be safe. Schools, markets, workplaces and public means of transport and crowded places are some of the places that this artists earmarks as the most likely areas to contract the virus from. Again, washing of hands is stressed in the song with the advice to visit the hospital if one experiences symptoms related to the virus. The featuring of the president in the song brings a sense of official authority which cannot be ignored by the audience. It underscores the government's serious take of the disease and its commitment to fight the virus. The president reinforces the measures that have already been put into place by the ministry of Health asking Tanzanians to comply with them.

Napenda nirudie ndugu zangu Watanzania

Kwamba ni vizuri sana tukaendelea
Kuchukua tahadhari, kwa nguvu zote
Ugonjwa huu unaua, na unaua kwa haraka sana
Niwaombe ndugu zangu Watanzania

Tusipuuze ungonjwa huu (Corona, corona, corona)
Tusipuuze hata kidogo (Corona, corona, corona)
Ni lazima tuanze kuchukua hatua (Corona, corona, corona)
Za kujikinga kwa tatizo hili (Corona, corona, corona)

(Translation)

I want to repeat my fellow Tanzanians

That it is good to continue

Taking precaution with all our strength

This disease kills and kills very fast

I implore you my fellow Tanzanians

Let us not assume this disease

Let us not assume even the least

We must start taking steps

To protect ourselves from this trouble

The president does not only inform his people that the disease kills but that it kills very fast. His message implies urgent and serious regard of the disease by observing all the precautionary measures to be safe. He demystifies the very many myths that were earlier on being peddled about the virus and especially those that tried to purport that Africans were immutable by the virus.

Bobi Wine, a Ugandan politician cum artist and Nubian Li also wade into the concerted efforts by Africans musicians in sensitizing their audience about the virus in their song "Coronavirus Alert'. It is remarkable to note that Bobi Wine just like Rayvanny is a very popular musician with a huge following in East Africa and across the world. The duo begins their song by reminding everyone that although they are potential victim of the virus, they are also potential solution to the same. The lines imply that the solution to the virus lies in his audience. This is apparent in the raft of measures that they proceed to highlight as key in fighting the virus.

Everyone is a potential solution
Sensitise the masses to sanitise
Keep a social distance and quarantine

Discipline and personal hygiene
And make sure you regularly wash your hands
Keep a distance from everyone
Report anything like a symptom
Serious fever is a symptom
Dry cough is a symptom
Okwecyamula is a symptom
Itchy eyes and flu is a symptom

Most of the protocols enunciated in this song were already pronounced by Ministries of Health in Africa and across the globe. Hence, such a song underscores measures that are already in public domain. The duo highlight sanitizing, keeping social distance and quarantine in case of an infection as well as washing hands, visiting the hospital in case one has symptoms such as high fever, dry cough; itchy eyes and flu symptoms as central in combating the virus.

Perhaps, the song that consolidates African artists' efforts to rally against the virus is 'Stand Together'-African Anthem of Solidarity against COVID-19, a song that featured ten artists from countries such as Nigeria, Morocco, Tanzania, South Africa, Cameroon, Angola and Ethiopia. These countries represent the face of Africa since West Africa, South Africa, North Africa and East African regions are represented. The voice of these artists is therefore a representation of all artists from the continent that this paper has not analyzed. In addition, their sensitization and artistic intervention message encapsulate all the artist interventions in the continent.

The anthem is inarguably a song of hope, resilience and determination to keep fighting until the fight is won. Lines such as 2Baba's "All because of the virus but it/ Can't kill the power inside us/To stand together and defeat Corona , Amhed Soultan's We will get out of it God willing live again God/willing coz nobody is safe until everybody is safe or even Ben Pol's Let's believe that this shall be over, we will win/ Lets fight together, it's us against Covid-19, all stress on the need for faith and hope, and unrelenting determination to beat the virus with the assurance of ultimate victory Literary texts can help audiences discover suppressed fantasies and wishes to help them "resolve their many psychological conflicts" (Waita, 2019,p. 28). Similarly, the song is psychologically placating, assuring the audience of a near future when the virus shall have been defeated. The song's chorus also stresses the need to have faith and hope of eventually defeating the virus.

One day my people, one day we will be

Celebrating cause this plaugue is over

Nothing will be separating us cause

Nobody is safe until everybody is safe.

Such lines are not only psychologically reassuring to a people whose lives have been completely affected, wrecked and transformed by the virus but they also instill in the audience a purpose of living and fighting on. The chorus stresses on the need for involving everyone in the fight against the disease since none can claim to be safe until all are safe. There is concerted call for combined efforts hence the need for roping in everyone in the fight.

The song therefore becomes a song of victory for Africa. When victory is anticipated, the present suffering does not count. The artists do not look at the present but project at a near future when the battle will have been won. This was such a great prophetic song coming from Africa, for it prophesied a time in near future when Corona would have been defeated. Importantly, the prophecy carries hope and not doom as Stanley Enow, one of the artists sings:

But we will win win win. Our story

Will change, victory will be ours.

Even if corona went on ravaging Africa long after the song's release, the song uplifts the souls of those affected and potentially at the risk of being affected by the virus. The one thing that the artists emphasize is the need to bring everyone on board in the fight against the scourge and with such unity, there would ultimately be victory.

The ontological belief in God by Africans is palpable in most of these musical artistic interventions against the virus. Diseases have traditionally been associated with supernatural forces (Kenyatta 1978 (1938); Leakey 1977) a belief still held to be true by many in Africa as witnessed in the call for people to turn to God for protection and salvation from the virus in the afore discussed music. Trusting in God's divine intervention in times of calamity and pestilences affirms the trust the artists and their audiences have in the immanence and transcendentalism of God in influencing all aspects of human life. For instance, Sarah Wairimu ends her song by beseeching God to intervene and save humanity from the pandemic while Jimmy Gait acknowledges the power of God in intervening in such difficult times:

Lakini Mungu yupo, itakuwa sawa
Itakuwa sawa(Sawa sawa)
Tukitizama Mungu, itakuwa sawa(Sawa sawa)

(Translation)

There is God, all will be alright

Will be alright (alright alright)

If we look at God, it will be alright (alright alright)

Rayvanny, featuring Magufuli also calls upon everyone to pray to God for protection against the scourge. Similarly, the faith and hope that the featured artists in the anthem 'Stand Together' rally their audience to possess is founded in God as Ahmed Soultan sings: "We will get out of it God willing, live again God willing." Axiomatically, God is projected as the source of resilience and determination that was needed by the vulnerable people of Africa in winning the battle against the virus.

5. ARTISTIC REPERTOIRES IN COVID-19 SONGS

Any literary production requires the employment of requisite repertoires or a set of techniques and skills for successful rendition and encapsulation of the message, in addition to aiding the achievement of the needed aestheticism. Aestheticism, in the material, elicits enjoyment through entertainment, the cardinal function of literature, even before serving as conduits of other functions such as education. In this section, I assess style in Covid-19 music and its effectiveness in aiding the communication of Corona virus menace. Style has been considered by many scholars variously. This discussion agrees

with Leech and Short (1981) conceptualization of the term as the manner of doing something. This surmise aids in appreciating unique techniques and devices employed by African artists in artistically oralizing Covid-19 pandemic

5.1. Diction

Diction refers to the linguistic choices an artist employs to effectively convey an idea, an effect, point of view or tell a story. I argue that specific and intentional choice of words enables artists to communicate the message beautifully and successfully. The paper argues that through diction, effective sound patterns, tonal and mood coloring, structural patternings and other techniques lead to effective compositions and their transmission.

5.2. Rhyme and Alliteration

The choice of words in Salome Wairimu's Swahili song 'Janga la Corona' enhances a number of sound devices such as rhyme, alliteration and consonance, patterns that enhance the song's aestheticism. In the first stanza, the last words in each line rhyme. These are Corona, jana (yesterday) and china. Such patterning reveals the artist's acumen in the composition. Quite strikingly, corona rhymes with China the country where the virus began.

In stanza two, the alliterative sound /w/ in the words Wanasayansi, (scientists) wakiwa (with), watafiti (researchers) and Waliamua (decided) unveils the concerted and combined efforts by scientists and other researcher in trying to find cure for the virus. Thus, the alliterative words musically points at the serious measures being undertaken about the disease.

5.3. Tone and Mood

Wairimu in 'Janga la Corona' creates a solemn mood throughout the poem to emphasize the gravity of the virus. Diseases are never celebrated and therefore, the singer strikes a sad tone in her entire rendition. She achieves this through the employment of solemn words. These include corona haina tiba, (Corona has no cure) ukatangazwa kama janga la ulimwengu (was declared a global disaster) yaliadhirika (were adversely affected), Vifo navyo vilianza kushudiwa, (deaths started being witnessed), Tukashikwa na kiwewe (we were all worried) and many others. The song ends with a sad exclamation (uwooiii, uwooii, mola twakuomba tuepushe na janga hili (uwooii, uwoii, lord we pray you save us from this calamity). The choice of such saddening words automatically elicits a solemn mood during the song's performance. This solemnity is intended to instill the needed fear and worry in the audience so that it can take the pandemic seriously and adhere to the stipulated precautions.

Rayvanny and Magufuli similarly employ a sad tone that engulfs his audience in their song 'Corona,' The artists' choice of words such as ugonjwa unaua na hauna tiba (the disease kills and has no cure) and Ugonjwa huu unaua, na unaua kwa haraka sana (this disease kills and kills very fast) enable them strike a sad tone that resonates with the intended message of inculcating a sense of fear and worry about the threat of the pandemic. The apostrophic repetition of the word 'Corona' makes the audience deeply reflect on the virus. Similarly, the expected health measures to be observed are enunciated with the same grave tone, implying the seriousness of the measures. The spoken words of the late president John Pombe Magufuli in the song endow it with an authorial facade, hence elevating the seemingly entertaining composition to a binding edict.

Jimmy Gait combines a hopeful and somber tone in his song 'Corona' which infuses anxiety and optimism at the same time. His choice of words enables him achieve these mixed emotions in his song. The phone call he receives from a female friend at the beginning of the song signals anxiety and creates the right mood for divulging the sad news about the death of his friend's husband, the cause of which is Corona. Hence forth, the audience is gripped by the shock of the heartbreaking news, shock which the singer continues to accentuate through words such as Corona watisha ulimwengu (Corona you scare the world). However, Gait balances the shock of the virus by infusing hope in his audience in each stanza.

Oooh Corona, watisha ulimwengu
Lakini Mungu yupo, itakuwa sawa
Itakuwa sawa(Sawa sawa)
Tukitizama Mungu, itakuwa sawa(Sawa sawa)

(Translation)

Oooh, Corona you scare the world

But there is God, it shall be alright

It shall be alright (Alright, alright)

If we focus on God, it shall be alright

The first line in the stanza above elicits fear and worry on the audience but the other three lines convey a sense of optimism on the audience. The artist assures his audience that with God all will be well. The aesthetic collocation of the grave reality of the disease with victory over the same in the same stanza effectively lifts the souls of his depressed audience. Although the video is riddled with images of corona-related scenes, the lyrics in the song bring rays of hope that point at ultimate victory over the disease.

5.4. Linguistic and Structural Choices

Ugandan artists, Bobi wine and Nubian Li appeal to the diverse linguistic backgrounds of their audience by employing English, luganda and Swahili. Their song begins forcefully with a very deliberate choice of words which creates parallelism

The bad news is that
Everyone is a potential victim
But the good news that
Everyone is a potential solution
Sensitise the masses to sanitise

This stanza is cataphorically structured with the bad news just about to be disclosed foregrounding the grave reality of the virus that the artist proceeds to oralize in the subsequent stanzas. Apart from evoking suspense the use of cataphora establishes the grave mood and tone which are augmented by appropriate choice of words. Diction achieves parallelism in the entire composition. For instance, the line 'Everyone is a potential victim' is a parallel of 'Everyone is a potential solution' a technique that provides optimism in an otherwise grave reality. Similarly, in stanza two, 'The corona virus is sweeping over mankind' and 'Everybody must be alert' are structurally related. This structure corresponds with proverbs' structure of proposition and completion. In the duo's song, the problem is highlighted in the first line and solution offered in the subsequent line. Parallelism is also achieved through juxtaposing related words such as 'Sensitize' and 'sanitize.' Such a technique serves in foregrounding one measure of fighting the virus.

The artists opt to rap health measures and Covid-19 related symptoms. Such rapped message would find great reception in his youthful fans also greatly exposed to the virus. In addition, he uses local language as well as a little bit of Swahili to reach part of his audience which might not understand English. These strategies achieve success in not only conveying critical scientific information relating to the virus but also in enhancing aestheticism in the song.

In 'Stand Together'-African Anthem of Solidarity against COVID-19, the artists' call for unity in the fight against the disease is accentuated in a repetitive paralleic structure. Ahmed Soultan sings: 'Coz nobody is safe until everybody is safe,' Teni from Nigeria says: 'If we stand together, if we stand in solidarity, We not going to fall down, fall down, Yemi from Nigeria: 'Nobody is safe until everybody's safe,' and Betty G from Ethiopia sings: 'But if we fight together, Stand together, we can heal." Such structural patternings pitting a fight involving everyone and the ultimate consequential victory for all emphasize the need for forging a united front in the fight against the virus in Africa.

The artists in the anthem borrow from Africa's rich orality and African linguistic background to wrap the message in a manner their audiences are used to in their day to day conversations. Teni from Nigeria, in prophesying the transciency of the pandemic compares it with rain that does not last forever. She observes: 'Rain no go fall forever.' This statement is proverbial and points at the transcient nature of the pandemic hence infusing her audience with placating hope. The English used is the Nigerian version which enables her effectively connects with her immediate Nigerian audience. Yemi Alande from Nigeria also indigenizes her English to meet the linguistic tastes of her audience.

She sings: 'Me I like you and I know that you like me too,' The tonal quality of the voice employed by these artists also resonate with that of their audiences in their respective countries with a view to having successful receptions.

Perhaps the personification of corona by Stanley Enow from Cameroon by referring to the virus as Mr. Coro may sound funny but given the virus' entry into many households in Africa, the virus needs to be personified for it to be defeated. Perhaps, the artist insinuates that by bringing the virus to the level and realm of humanity, it would be easier and less fearful to fight it.

5.5. Flash-forward

Flash-forward is the major technique used by almost all the artists In 'Stand Together'-African Anthem of Solidarity against COVID-19. The technique conveniently relays optimism of defeating the disease in the near future. This triumphant message is carried in the chorus and in the interspersions by all the featured artists.

One day my people, one day we will be

Celebrating cause this plaugue is over

Nothing will be separating us cause

Nobody is safe until everybody is safe.

In the line above, the prevailing grave situation caused by the pandemic is ameliorated with the promise of celebration once the plague is defeated. Similarly, Jimmy Gait infuses optimism in his audience by singing of a future when everything will be alright. Though he does not provide definite timelines of victory, hope is rekindled in the audience through suggesting an imagined future when the disease would be no more.

6. DIGITAL SPACES IN THE COMPOSITION AND TRANSMISSION OF COVID-19 SONGS

Any oral artist utilizes the surfaces available to him or her in producing their verbal material. These surfaces are selected based on their effectiveness in creating and disseminating the intended content. According to Enenche (2019), technological milestones have created new surfaces which has made the modern society discard traditional cultural forms for identity formation and entertainment. For instance, the late 20th and 21st centuries have witnessed many techno-digital milestones that have resulted into inventions of digital gadgets such as computers, television, radios, mobile phones and smart phones. These surfaces have extensively been exploited by contemporary artists in the creation and dissemination of their content. All the songs analyzed in this paper are in audio and video forms. The video productions accentuate the message in the song. Inarguably, video editing applications and high quality audio-video production skills are employed in enhancing the quality of audio-visual productions and performances. Gadgets such as computers come in handy in such production while television and radio serve as mass media conduits for transmission of the songs, with the latter media form having greater audience due to its affordability.

Additionally, internet infrastructure has enhanced and stretched the efficiency of gadgets such as computers and mobile phones. As such these gadgets can host an array of social media sites such as Whatsapp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and many others. The content analyzed in this paper is available in some of these online platforms; with the artists also having accounts in those social media sites, hence enabling them reach and connect with their fan base. The appropriation of these online platforms helps in reducing production costs as well as other bureaucratic hurdles the upcoming artists may not easily navigate. Similarly, given that these productions took place when movements were restricted, the online platforms ensured that productions reached the immobilized audience in the comfort of their homes through sites as YouTube, radio and television.

The success of an artistic production is now easily gauged through online spaces such as YouTube. Accordingly, the more the views and likes a production receives, the more the success of the production. For instance, Rayvanny and Magufuli's 'Corona' attracted over 2.8 million views, Bobi Wine and Nubian Li's 'Corona Virus Alert' had over 1.6 million views, Salome Wairimu's 'Janga la Corona' 1.9 million views, 'Stand Together'-African Anthem of Solidarity against COVID-19, 395,000 views and Jimmy Gait's Corona trails with 78,000 views. These statistics can be used to

gauge the success or otherwise of the artists in joining the fight against the virus. Going by the above figures, Rayvanny and Magufuli's 'Corona' was the most successful Covid-19 song in complementing other stakeholders in the fight against the scourge.

7. CONCLUSION

Quantifying the efficacy of Covid-19 disease responsive topical songs in Africa may not be empirically possible. However, it cannot be gainsaid that artists from the continent played a key role in sensitizing their audiences about the virus and in enforcing and complementing scientific and governments' efforts in combating the scourge. Most of these musical interventions were released early in 2020 when the first cases of the virus started being reported in Africa. This underscores oral artists' commitment in representing the worldview of their societies as well as their commitment in dealing with challenging emerging issues affecting the society.

Even as these artists oralized such a grave matter, beauty is not lost in the performances. The artists studied have employed a number of skills and techniques that entertain the audience even as the critical messages are being communicated. This underscores art for art's sake and the utilitarian function of literary productions. Finally, the role of digital spaces cannot be dismissed in the production and transmission of these compositions. Technological advancements have ensured quality productions and transmission while internet connectivity has expanded online spaces that are central in disseminating the oeuvres.

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