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Sexual Abuse and its Implication in Nigerian Universities: A Reflection of David Bolaji's TaniMola, A Satirical Folk Opera

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Keywords:

Satire, Folk Opera, Sexual Abuse, Nigerian University System. Satire is a potent literary art used to critique and redress illicit acts in societies. It is one of the artistic weapons from time immemorial used by literary writers and art musicians for correcting societal ills. Also, this phenomenon, within the context of academia, has been used to unmask the perpetrators of evils and unlawful acts prevalent at different levels of the Nigerian university system and political system of governance. This study examines sexual abuse and its implication for Nigerian universities while reflecting on the illicit behaviours illustrated in David Bolaji's Tanimola (2011), a satirical folk opera. The paper exposes male lecturers' sexual molestation of female students and the stigmatisation of sexual assault victims. In addition, it unravels other illicit acts within the University community in Nigeria and how each identified unlawful act is treated with irony, humour, and contempt within the framework of TaniMola. Adopting the principle of Ethics and Moral Theory presented by Strahovnik (2018) for textual analyses of the libretto, plots, and scenes in Tanimola, the article submits that as the university system passes through different transitions, there is a need for caution on the part of male lecturers concerning sexual assaults being perpetuated on female students. The study pointed out that every institution has roles to play in the crusade against the illicit acts of female sexual abuse in Nigerian universities if gender fairness is guaranteed and the education standard is to be improved.

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INTRODUCTION

The act of addressing societal ills through the appropriate and effective medium is not new. One such powerful medium is satire, which is used to expose anomalies and societal ills that cut across other institutions. Satire has been extensively explored in various artistic and performative literary works in the academic arena. Most importantly, the creative art in Nigeria has identified satire as one of the effective tools in addressing various areas of human life. Sovinka (1984) addresses the unsavoury leadership behaviour that dominates the political scene in Nigeria, using ironic characters in satirical expressiveness to critique the lousy leadership behaviour in Nigeria and Africa at large. Similarly, Akingbe (2014) and Akpah (2018) affirm that the engagement of satire is a medium used to interrogate the states of affairs in societies and in poetic form, which different African writers have exploited. This implies that the practical use of satire has been widely applied via numerous research works which are not limited to a musical art form, communications, drama, play settings, and other shades of human activities. Likewise, other art forms have stood the test of time as tools for addressing and correcting inherent societal ills in indigenous African societies. These forms include folklore, hilarious storylines, and a proverbial statement addressing unlawful acts. However, the use of opera in a satirical pattern differs from every other art form. Bolaji (2022) opines that the corrective measure carried out through African popular artistic music and scholarly works improves the expressive liberty in expressing, critiquing, and correcting societal ills in some indigenous operatic works. The creative use of opera is a complete art form that depicts the state of life in society. Thus, the performative act of opera as a genre is specifically composed in order to be performed. Consequently, the primary endpoint of any operatic composition is to be staged in a production platform for a specific/targeted audience. This suggests that operatic design and performance are significant phenomena that communicate different artistic messages embedded in various creative works.

Using opera as an art form from a satirical perspective reflects the fundamental focus of the creative design and presentation that Bolaji used in his folk operatic work, TaniMola. His dynamic creativity and ingenuity were used to echo the illicit acts of male lecturers who victimise female students in the Nigerian university system. Furthermore, his folk operatic work unmasked the misdemeanours of most male lecturers in Nigerian universities, which led to the promotion of antisocial behaviour. In addition to the sexual degradation of female students, the nefarious operation and involvement of students in stigmatising sexual assault victims were captured in the folk operatic work. This implies that the repressive and dictatorial leadership has been part of hindering the growth and good spirit of scholarship in Nigerian universities. Therefore, it is pertinent to mention that the focus of this paper is not on the linguistic techniques, the lexico-grammatical characters, or the stylistic qualities displayed by the composer via the libretto. The study is premised on how the satirical scenes, libretto, and music of TaniMola, are enough to stimulate and create awareness for the anticipated change in the Nigerian University system and its society. The paper exemplifies how Bolaji, through his libretto and scenes, consciously adopts satire in pointing out the corresponding social vices.

THEORY OF ETHICAL EDUCATION AND MORAL THEORY

The theory of ethical education and moral theory, as presented by Strahovnik (2018), is a theory on which this study hinges. The application of the theory best describes and portrays Bolaji, in his Tanimola, as an adherent of satire. First, we shall give an insight into ethical education, then shed some light on the concept of moral theory before presenting the connotative view of the underlying theory as a single entity. Strahovnik (2018) opines that the total inclusiveness of educational dimensions and the systemic educational approach might be necessary or circuitous to the world of ethical dimensions of our existence. He says that this can be through properly structured, designed, and directed approaches under appropriate supervisory educational pedagogies and mediums. Therefore, the significance of this theory in this study lies in our ability to view the scholarly community as an institution designed to promote academic ethics and value in students' learning processes. In addition, other attributive acts and identity features that must constitute and reflect the daily uniqueness of the educational milieu must be promoted for effective continuity in holistic learning, which means that a proper holistic sense of education must be acclaimed. Thus, a sense of responsibility beholds all lecturers to reflect and practise uncompromised justice, genuine equality, unquestionable integrity, and equal human rights in executing their duties. This is connected to the fact that lecturing as a career is part of human capacity determines building, which sustainable development in the educational system. In this regard, an excellent method of nurturing mutual respectful behaviour between individuals and the community sees interpersonal relationships as paramount. The endpoint of ethical theory, as seen in the underlying subject of this study, is a powerful gospel against the displeasure of characters captured in TaniMola. Also, the essence and application of this theory serve to warn the male lecturers to stop the aforesaid illicit acts as illustrated in the study.

The moral theory logically unravels the ironic messages expressed in satirical patterns in the TaniMola folk opera. Ayeni (2012) asserts that the subject matter, from the philosophical angle, projects human behaviour and obligations according to the acceptable rules of attitudinal expression in any institution. It is important to note that the expressive act of a person in any institution as regards the ethics of such institution stands as the fundamental principle of expected moral conduct. Therefore, this view makes the concept of morality a nexus phenomenon in education. This agrees with the above line of thought that no institution or person lives nor should behave outside the acceptable moral and ethical principles of the tradition of its or his instituted profession. Similarly, the interplay of any formal educational level, either direct or indirect, hinges on the moral sphere. Hence, this study also concludes that the context of morality cannot be taken in isolation and outside education. The fact that morality is embedded in educational institutions shows that morality and education are one.

The application of the theory of ethical education and moral theory as a single entity, therefore, stands for the exhibition of honest character within the milieu of academics. This is because the gospel behind the approach stresses the significance of and need for each institution and its personnel to express themselves within the operative mode of the institution. Thus, the adoption of the theory is highly significant because it projects and announces satire used in TaniMola.

BOLAJI'S "TANIMOLA, A FOLK OPERA" AND ITS SATIRICAL SEXUAL ABUSE

The assertion that Africans can proffer solutions to Africa's problems is not a mere assertion but a reality. This means that Africans are in the best position to suggest and provide solid answers to the

identified challenges and issues peculiar to Africans. Consequently, the vast responsibility of suggestive and discursive strategies lies in the intellectual capacity of African scholars to proffer specific solutions to each problem challenging the growth of academics in Africa. Given this, the offering of crucial solution(s) to any identified problem within the circle of academics in Africa must be sought by the spirit of scholarship (spirit solution-propounding). To this end, using the Nigerian university as a reference point, the total bewilderment confronting free liberty, uniqueness of education, and different issues at various levels in Nigeria's university system needs to be tackled with the definitiveness of literary works. Literary works are not produced, nor do they exist in isolation. But they are creative ideas that originate from different indigenous practices of a society. In the same vein, Nigerian scholars' exhibitions and the invention of literary works remain the mouthpieces that address various institutions. Each scholarly work aims at reshaping any identified existing problem in the social-cultural setting. This implies that the strength of literal work is seen as a measure used for readdressing, rebuilding, and remoulding any collapsing structural institution to establish the process of steady continuity.

The Creative Perspective of TaniMola, a Folk Opera

The events enacted in TaniMola interrogate the state of affairs in Nigerian universities. The fundamental aim of portraying unsavoury characters that are detrimental to the students' learning atmosphere in Nigerian universities is unveiled through Bolaji's artistic intellectualism in the operatic composition. The work uses different scenes and acts in dramatic compartmentalisation patterns as it captures social vices and gives specific structural formation to the embodiment of the operatic creation. Hence, it is notable to view the purposive part of using folk opera in the under-study work because of its grassroots representation in the art form. This means that the folk operatic work of TaniMola presents the

negative, unrefined attitude that ought to be found outside the university environment located outside real nature, though the said attitude has become part of the system. It is essential to mention that the performative state of the creative work is not in an isolative form of separating the nuances of opera from its context. Still, its superlative significance in combining the music and theatrical act makes it an appropriate perspective. Bolaji (2022) opines that the interconnectivity of music and drama as art forms has a more powerful plea to the moral sense of every human being without negating the relativity of their essentiality in communities. This suggests that the use of music and drama as essential shades of opera proves to be more appellative to the cognitive realm of the human mind that can initiate and produce desired changes.

Agawu (2001) states that opera as an art form is music. Furthermore, he classifies it as a theatrical art form. This means that Agawu sees music and drama as a single entity with substantial solid nexus, though he affirms that the stands of music define the thriving realm of any operatic production. Thus, the expressive nature and high artistic, performative stance of drama do not present and classify the outstanding performance of an opera as successful. But the singular act of justifying each act of the folk opera with music strongly emphasises the piece as the artistic stance of the production rather than the descriptive action of each scene in the opera. Consequently, this confirms the use of different musical compositions by Bolaji in portraying and accentuating the thrust message of each act in his folk opera. Similarly, Abbate (1991) observes that the tunes of the musical compositions might keep ringing as an unforgettable pleasure in the cognitive states of most devotees' minds after an operatic production. Thus, our stance in this study is that each musical piece used in TaniMola asserts the core message of each scene and gives the audience a quick remembrance of the acts and scenes. The implication is that recalling the melodious voice in the operatic production authenticates the influential

role of music as a vital factor in the entire folk opera. Likewise, Abbate recounts that opera as an art form does not hinge on the acting alone, nor is it the performance of drama, but concludes that the realm of opera is the voice.

Soyinka (1999) maintains that often now and then, if the performance of opera centres on the use of voice, opera is well-marched if viewed from the African modes of context and expression. The human voice plays an important role in the imitative range of any African operatic work. Agawu (2001) notes that the dexterity and expressiveness of other musical instruments in any operatic performance cannot be compared with the vast principal range of the vocals. He notes the human voice has the expressive ability, ranging from syllabic accentuate expression, in-between speech narrative, and singing, multiple notes expression to a definite single note as the main thrust of operatic performance. Furthermore, Agawu asserts that the aforementioned are nuances in the artistic performances within the Central Eastern style and Northern African music. Therefore, the folk opera, TaniMola, is conclusive proof of the composer's principle that is presented in brilliance, ironic, and humorous artistic creativity in it that strives towards indigenous operatic production.

Structural Analysis of TaniMola, a Folk Operatic Work

The satirical folk operatic work, TaniMola, is a unique artistic composition that derives the contents of its libretto from the day-to-day academic activities, social activities, and oppressive scenarios that dominate Nigerian university communities. Bolaji satirises, using dynamics and unique patterns to unravel the male lecturers' sexually abusive acts as attaching conditions to academic grades for the female students. He uses the lecturers' position as the second main character and creatively presents their unethical behaviour towards female students. The characters of male lecturers in this category are artistically cast to reflect the pain, inhumanity, and

humiliation that many innocent female students pass through in their academic struggles to become university graduates. Thus, the creative inventiveness of Bolaji can be seen in the different live scenarios as the content of each act in TaniMola plays out. The work is divided into three separate acts with subdivisions of scenes. At this juncture, it is pertinent to state that in the context of TaniMola as a creative work, the composer adopts some peculiar nuances that characterise the performative stratum of the Yoruba folk opera and the Western operatic work. This suggests that the composer fuses the Western and indigenous idioms' identities. One prominent feature adopted from the context of the Yoruba folk opera is the use of opening glee (Ijuba) and closing glee. The use of glee is the fundamental phenomenon protuberant in the modern art scene popularly known as Yoruba folk opera. Bolaji (2011) states that:

The Yoruba folk opera consists of prominent features embedded in its performance art. However, scholars have acknowledged these features in Yoruba folk opera, from opening glee, main body, closing glee, mode of rendition, theme, vocal performance, orchestral, and customs. The *Ijuba* oral "sort of opening glee" (paying homage) usually starts the performance alongside the recitation of the trouped *Oriki*. It clarifies the dramatist roles in society, which discloses the connection between the actor and the value of its communications.

Similarly, Ogunbiyi (1981) and Omojola (2014) state that the indigenous operatic production of the Yoruba, popularly known as "Yoruba folk opera, constitutes the performative stance of presenting a stage performance. They both affirm that the artistic components of the genre constitute the use of indigenous Yoruba songs alongside traditional instruments at different characterisation presentations and plot sectionalisation as composed. In line with the above claims, Bolaji uses different musical creativity for the opening glee by orchestrating for *Iya-ilu Bata* (mother drum) presenting the rhythmic structure of the instrument

in a proverbial communicative content that "it is not all travails in life that yield money." Introducing this membrane musical instrument creates sonic tension on the performance stage because it ushers in other performative presentations in the operatic work. The *Iya-ilu Bata* rhythmic structure propels the dancers to the stage by giving their rhythmic movement pulse; hereafter, *Ijuba* comes up.

In the creative presentation of TaniMola, the composer likens TaniMola's older sister's secret and immoral lifestyle to that of an Ostrich that attempts to hide from enemies by covering its head but leaving its body uncovered. This is precisely what Bolaji satirises as the genesis of TaniMola's tragic character, who is the protagonist of the folk opera. In satirising the negative action of the older sister, he presents her advice as the only and best solution remaining for their livelihood. The older sister attempts to establish a consortium act between TaniMola and herself through her action in the opera. This is depicted in her libretto, music, and not only in her action when she wanted to introduce TaniMola to prostitution. The author uses the deliberate musical composition titled "Ganmale-Twenty" (Poison) to buttress the alternative solution that TaniMola gets from her older sister as she refuses to join the ignoble business. Nevertheless, the composer links the appearance of what seems to be a Good Samaritan character but later turns to the destructive ladder to TaniMola's womanhood. Her encounter, presented in Act One with the womaniser male lecturer (Osho-omo) who saved her from her suicidal attempt, as suggested by her older sister, leads her to defile her dignity as a girl.

The illusive character of Mr. *Osho-omo* presents the corruptible state of Nigerian society today, which negates the form of trust, communal living, and humanity that characterises harmonious living in Africa. Additionally, the systemic pattern of presenting the deceptive help of Osho-omo is used to expose the driving force behind the illicit practices that have taken over the mind of an average male lecturer. An average male lecturer

sees indulgence in a sexual act with female students as the best reciprocating gift for any of their kind assistance to a female student, though this act is usually not suggested at the initial stage of rendering help. It is usually subsumed and embedded as the last resort and tragedy that leads to sexual objectification. Thus, the aberration of Mr. *Oshoomo's* abuse against TaniMola unveils the dehumanisation multiple ladies face in the struggle to survive in society.

Similarly, Swim et al. (2001) came up with statistics that 94% of undergraduate female students in the United States have experienced undesirable sexual objectification at one point or the other. This means that the deliberate act portrayed in TaniMola's is an illicit one that is not peculiar to the Nigerian university system alone. Fredrickson & Roberts (1997) report that 50% of college ladies face the challenge of sexual victimisation in their day-to-day academic experiences in the United States of America. The foregoing statistics are in tune with Bolaji's declaration that the unethical behaviours of male lecturers in the Nigerian university system can be seen as the norm in most educational sectors today.

Mr. Osho-omo's character in tainting TaniMola's feminine dignity leads to another tragedy that befalls her unexpectedly. His last action in defiling TaniMola results from his negative notion of seeing the girl differently from an innocent girl. This comes to play as his attention is drawn to the fact that TaniMola's puberty stage has become pronounced. He bases his atrocities on suspicion that other male lecturers must have been outshining him in having carnal sexual acts with TaniMola. Through the displacement of his character, as revealed in the contextual content of his music and action, he devises a plan to check and not abuse TaniMola sexually. Of course, the checking cannot be accomplished without a sexual act with TaniMola. Bolaji's creative gamut presents the criminal action of *Osho-omo* as a behavioural norm seen in most men, including lecturers, in society

today. The displacement of remorse after his inhumane act stands as the affirmative proof that his behaviour is a normative stance.

Most lecturers' dictatorship and oppressive behaviour, especially male lecturers, are identified as one of the horrible fast-growing trends in Nigerian universities today. The level of ethics expected of university lecturers and the lecturers' task of being role models to the students have been tainted by illicit sexual abuse and bribery within the academic setting. This is depicted in a systematic manner by Bolaji, using the character of Mr. Ogbe n-kanmi Senumuye (Head of Department); when he succeeds and has a violent, immoral act on TaniMola. Usually, an unethical relationship and sexual acts between any male lecturer and female student alter the systematic judgment of academic standards. The results are that these acts affect the worldview of the male lecturers' and distort the students' true academic abilities. Furthermore, viewing the expressive character of HOD. from his libretto in singing the song "tragedy", the composer unveils that those female students that refuse the sexual advances of male lecturers end up having carryovers and extra years (extension).

The composer identifies the character of Mr. Ogbe *n-kanmi Senumuye* as complicity in the rottenness that is common in the academic scene in Nigerian universities. That is to say, the moulding, human capacity development, and sustainable development of knowledge for posterity purposes are destroyed. As a result, one of the core values of the university system in Nigeria that hinges on and promotes "character and learning" has been destroyed. The ineptitude of the HOD represents the tyrannical behaviour of male lecturers toward female students who insist on exploiting innocent female students. His unethical behaviour in assaulting TaniMola in his office, which eventually becomes a secret talk between some staff and students that get the clue of the incident, exposes TaniMola to the world of prostitution. Also, Mr. Ogbe n-Kanmi Senumuye's height of ridicule brings upon the lecturing profession and academic community destructive violent male lecturers. The interpretation of the HOD's libretto and music through his displayed character represents that his unscrupulous act is a norm in the university system.

This singular act of the HOD eventually propels other shameless male lecturers to forcefully demand sex from TaniMola. All the illicit demands and her unwillingness to cooperate landed her in a full-time prostituting business. Her experience reveals the true situation of many female students in universities and society today. However, the composer interjects TaniMola's last incident with the HOD. and subsequent demands by other lecturers as the judgemental and condemnable mockery of the character roles by two of her classmates. The introduction of the character of Blessing and Joy represents the destructive stigmatisation that other girls out to their fellow girls rather than give a supportive stance to fight against injustice. Nevertheless, the creative presentation of TaniMola's change of lifestyle and definite repentance from her sinful lifestyle of prostituting, as presented by the composer via his creative ingenuity, reveals that there is enormous hope for other girls in this category. The protagonist's repentance from her old illicit way ushers her into the comfortable lifestyle of a wealthy societal lady.

Satirical Devices in Bolaji's TaniMola Folk Operatic Work

Bolaji's ironical presentation is quite obvious in his folk opera. Specifically, the notion of using irony in his opera is a potent tool for artistic empowerment. The irony is creatively deployed in work to highlight the folly of most male lecturers in the Nigerian university system and society. Using irony as a tool, the author presents instances when the meaning of a phenomenon is expressively shown by implying disapproval of specific actions in folk opera. Indeed, the use of sarcastic characters in TaniMola is to intensify the application of satire.

Therefore, the deliberate title, TaniMola (who can affirm tomorrow?), is affirmatively ironic.

Also, other names used in the folk opera, e.g., Oshoomo (womaniser) and Ogbe n-kanmi Senu muye (the silent killer), are promptly satirical. Specifically, Osho-omo means a male personality that indulges in sexual activities with girls irrespective of their age, status, size, religion, complexion, or nationality. The primary aim of identifying a male with the name Osho-omo in Yoruba culture is to raise the alarm and caution the girls, ladies, women, and parents in society to avoid such a personality. Likewise, the name Ogbe n kanmi Senumuye represents a secret killer. The content of the word killer is not in its literal sense. Instead, it is another ironic pattern to describe a personality that is covertly a womaniser, meaning that the true nature of this person is usually not revealed and known to the general public. But except for those that understand the direction of such acts in the Yoruba society. Usually, the primary aim of any personality tagged as Osho-omo and Ogbe n kanmi Senumuye in the Yoruba society implies a character that devours ladies who fall into their immoral web. This explains the narrative behind the tragedy TaniMola experiences when she is deceived and caught up in the web of corrupt activities of the two personalities in the folk operatic work. Also, it explains the reason behind the ugly experiences that different innocent female girls encounter in the university milieu and society at large. This implies that the personality of Osho-omo and Ogbe n-kanmi Senumuye contributes to morality in the Nigerian university system.

CONCLUSION

The folk opera, TaniMola, is unique and highly relevant considering the dynamic, contemporary challenges-tyranny, sexual abuse, and stigmatisation that dominate the university domain. Bolaji makes no reservations about painting an accurate picture of characters that aid different models for the folk opera. The older sister's

character depicts the lousy state of the economy and its implication in society, especially on female girls compromising their value. Though the composer presents her character as ruthlessness in the opera, the fundamental factor that leads to her action can be traced to the dire state of the economy. Hence, a struggle for survival becomes the survival of the fittest. The activities in the Nigerian university milieu are the focal points of Bolaji's folk opera. Bolaji uncovers and questions illicit attitudes and unethical behaviour exhibited by some male lecturers within the university system. The stylistic pattern and presentation of his criticism of immoral activities that dominate the educational sector are approached with a high sense of musical creativity and artistic strata. He uses satire to reawaken the attention of lecturers, university authorities, society, and the government to the urgent need to fight against sexual abuses of female students in Nigerian university education and the community at large. The affirmative of the university policy, in character and learning, must first be protected by the lecturers. Also, stakeholders must deliberately preserve the interest and dignity of women from whatever phenomenon that threatens it. Though in recent times, different measures have been put in place by the university authorities, government, and diverse human right organisation against the identified subject matter, there is still more room for improvement. TaniMola is a contemporary satire whose subject matter is the issue that plagues the Nigerian university system in particular and the world at large: sexual abuse.

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