IJHS, e-ISSN 2597-4718, p-ISSN 2597-470X, Vol. 9, No. 1, September 2025, pp. 69-84

International Journal of Humanity Studies
http://e-journal.usd.ac.id/index.php/IJHS
Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

LINGUISTIC AND PERSUASIVE TECHNIQUES IN CONSTRUCTING DIVINE ENTITLEMENT IN NIGERIAN POP MUSIC

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https://doi.org/10.24071/ijhs.v9i2.12334
received 15 May 2025; accepted 16 September 2025

Abstract
In recent years, Nigerian popular music has moved away from narratives about earning success through hard work. Instead, it now focuses on the narratives that success comes from divine blessings or entitlement. This study explores how Nigerian pop artists use persuasive strategies and linguistic techniques to construct and legitimise expectations of financial breakthroughs as a divine right. Through a textual analysis of Syno's *Money Fit Me* and Adekunle Gold's *Pick Up,* the study applied Aristotle's Rhetorical Appeals, Cialdini's Principles of Persuasion, and Critical Discourse Analysis to look at how narratives of divine entitlement are shaped. The analysis revealed that the lyrics of Syno focus on communal validation through social proof and reciprocity, demonstrating success as a common expectation, whereas the lyrics of Adekunle Gold employ strong emotional appeal and fear of being left behind, so success appears pressing and deeply personal. These findings show how Nigerian pop music reinforces social perceptions that spiritual devotion and material success are interrelated, and they shape the way people perceive wealth, faith, and upward social mobility in a challenging socio-economic situation. This study contributes to the broader debates on the nexus of language, religion, and popular culture and how they interact with advancing contemporary aspirations in Nigeria.

Keywords: CDA, divine entitlement, linguistic techniques, Nigerian pop music, persuasive techniques

Introduction

Nigerian pop music has long reflected societal values, aspirations, and evolving cultural narratives (Ojukwu et al., 2016). Hustle, perseverance, and hard work have traditionally been among the music industry's most used themes in song lyrics, making people believe that financial breakthroughs are the outcome of determination and labour (Onanuga, 2021). However, there has been an observable trend in recent years that has seen a drastic change in lyrical content, where success has become more of a divine blessing from God and that people are entitled to it, rather than a product of hard work.

As a potent cultural phenomenon, music contributes to social attitudes and expectations (Petrušić, 2021). Nigerian pop artists have mastered the art of using

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their music to create a sense of entitlement by using persuasive and linguistic techniques through their song lyrics. These entitlement narratives construed in the songs are most of the time connected to religious beliefs, where everything to do with financial prosperity is defined as a divine right instead of a reward for hard work. This is because the Nigerian musicians tend to resort to self-adulation, promoting entitlement-oriented ideologies that are based on material prosperity through their experiences (Are, 2018). Also, language resources, such as code switching between languages and organising their lyrics in such a way that a layman can understand, help them to connect and reach a larger number of people and audiences, and convey messages about moving up in society and aiming for financial success (Ife & Lovelyn, 2020).

The growing popularity and use of themes about divine entitlement in Nigerian pop music raise critical questions about the role of language and persuasive strategies in influencing how people think about wealth and success. Akinola (2019) explains that Nigerian artists use pragmatic acts and language switching to portray stories that connect with people's everyday struggles and dreams. These strategies, coupled with discursive reinforcement of status and entitlement (Agbo, 2010), help establish financial breakthroughs as an expected outcome of faith and devotion rather than sustained labour.

Despite growing scholarly attention to the socio-political influence of Nigerian pop music, little research has examined how artists use specific persuasive and linguistic techniques to construct entitlement-based narratives. Due to this lack of focused studies, we do not fully understand how music lyrics shape evolving beliefs about success, divine favour, and economic aspiration. Hence, this study stands out from earlier research because it combines rhetorical theory, persuasion psychology, and critical discourse analysis to explain how divine entitlement is portrayed as a religious and social construct in Nigerian popular music.

While past studies have investigated the prosperity gospel in the context of Pentecostal sermons and church culture (Adamo, 2021; Gifford, 2016; Mashau & Kgatle, 2019), fewer studies have focused on the recontextualisation and normalisation of these ideologies in popular musical form that appeals to the young audiences (Emielu, 2019; Oyenuga & Ajewole, 2023). This study helps fill the gap by looking at music as both a way to express feelings and a tool for shaping ideas, which Christiansen (2021) refers to as the subliminal influence or the hidden power of music on how people think about politics and society.

Purpose of the study and research questions

This study offers a novel view on how song lyrics contribute to the ever-changing ideas or perceptions about merit, earning success, divine favour, and being entitled, especially in Nigeria's challenging economic situation. The study focuses on two songs titled *Money Fit Me* by Kenneth Ngozi Nnaji (popularly known as Syno) and *Pick Up* by Adekunle Almoruf Kosoko (popularly known as Adekunle Gold). These songs were purposively selected due to their popularity, accessibility, and their theme focus on divine intervention, financial breakthrough, and social demands of success. Their lyrics use persuasive language techniques that reflect and reaffirm entitlement ideologies. Therefore, they are good case studies in analysing how Nigerian pop music influences and shapes how people think about

success, divine favour, and the belief that being religious can lead to financial improvement.

Given this context, the goal of this study is to examine how Nigerian pop music uses linguistic and persuasive means to create narratives of divine prosperity**.** This analysis is further aimed at discussing the way such narratives influence the social understanding of the concepts of success, faith, and entitlement. This leads to the central research question: How do Nigerian pop artists use linguistic and persuasive techniques in their song lyrics to construct and reinforce narratives of divine entitlement and financial breakthrough, and what do these narratives reveal about societal perceptions of success, faith, and entitlement?

Theoretical framework

To address this question, this study uses three complementary theoretical perspectives: Aristotle's Rhetorical Appeals of Ethos, Pathos, and Logos, Robert Cialdini's ideas about persuasion, and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyse the way a rhetoric of divine entitlement is constructed and supported by Nigerian pop artists through the language used in their songs.

Aristotle's Rhetorical Appeals

Aristotle's theory of rhetoric highlights three persuasive appeals, ethos, pathos, and logos, that shape how messages are created and received (Murthy & Ghosal, 2014). These appeals help explain how these artists build credibility and trust (ethos), stir emotions and win the hearts of the people (pathos), and give logical reasons (logos) to support the belief that divine favour leads to success.

Ethos helps the artist to be presented as a reliable personality who has struggled with personal plight and spiritual endurance. Pathos appeals to the listener on the emotional level and relies on the narratives of suffering, deprivation, and hope. Logos constructs divine intervention as an understandable process of faith and work, which is why the idea of receiving a financial breakthrough looks logical, reasonable, and guaranteed. Aristotle's Rhetorical Appeals help pop musicians to structure their narratives or lyrics in a way that captures the audience's attention and creates their anticipations of supernatural elevation (Torto, 2020).

Cialdini's Principles of Persuasion

This study also used Cialdini's Principles of Persuasion, which include reciprocity, commitment and consistency, social proof, authority, liking, and scarcity (Cialdini, 2001; Mollazehi et al., 2024). In the songs studied, the concept of reciprocity is referred to as a spiritual exchange or transaction whereby faith, prayer, or devotion will be compensated through upward mobility or success. In the songs, the artists use social proof, a persuasive technique, by talking about friends or others who have already become successful. This makes listeners feel that success is possible for them too.

The artists also show authority by presenting themselves as honest and spiritually trustworthy people. They relate their own experiences to the will of God, which makes their message more personal, relatable, and realistic. These ideas assist in explaining the way music is employed to render persuasive messages and induce emotions in the listener to entertain certain expectations regarding wealth, spirituality, and reward. The model by Cialdini, therefore, presents us with an

understanding of the psychological and social processes involved in making divine entitlement a culturally normalised belief in society.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers a socio-linguistic approach to studying language that helps us in understanding how words can reflect and support power, beliefs, and identity in discourse (Fairclough, 2013). The use of the CDA in this study enables us to look at the discourses of retrogression and urgency, where failure is seen as something that is temporary and unacceptable and must be fixed. Such discursive regularities promote emotional coordination, making people feel emotionally connected and inducing a sense of moral obligation to the supernatural promotion, which makes it seem right to expect divine compensation. These ideas or expressions are usually put in a wider context of deprivation discourse where tough times do not appear as a natural state of affairs but as a spiritually unequal state of affairs, destined to be rectified through divine favour.

Ideology and power are two fundamental CDA concepts that are particularly useful in this situation. The repetitive lyrical phrases like “God must bless me” or “My hustle must pay” are not simply a statement of personal desire. However, they normalise the collective beliefs about what is just and what is rightfully deserved. When such messages are circulated, they are internalised by the audience, thereby positioning spiritual reward and prosperity as a moral obligation and not possibilities. This illustrates how popular music functions as a form of social persuasion, which acts as a subtle control over people's consciousness, either to affirm or question socioeconomic inequalities.

However, CDA might have some limitations or weaknesses when applied to music. It is textual and linguistic in nature, and it might not be able to capture the non-verbal aspects of rhythm, melody and the performance style, which have persuasive and emotional implications too. For this reason, CDA is applied to rhetorical theory and the psychology of persuasion to construct a more holistic understanding of how music expresses belief systems.

Critical Evaluation of Theoretical Lenses

Even though each of the frameworks contributes useful insights, none is comprehensive enough on its own. Aristotle’s rhetorical appeals help explain how artists create messages that stir emotions and credibility, but the layered meaning of musical expression might be oversimplified or missed. Cialdini’s principles of Persuasion, which were created mainly in the context of advertising and interpersonal persuasion, are highly efficient in terms of psychological framework, but they need to be adjusted in the context of song lyrics, because music involves multi-faceted cultural and aesthetic mechanisms. CDA fills these gaps, showing the ideological and social aspects of lyrical text, but it focuses mostly on text and can overlook non-verbal aspects like rhythm, vocal style, and performance on stage.

The combination of these three perspectives has enabled this study to attain an analytical understanding that is broad in its coverage of textual and psychological aspects of musical persuasion. This combined approach enables more insight into the manner in which Nigerian pop music creates and legitimises the narratives of spiritual privilege and material success, whilst also acknowledging that not all the meaning of music can be understood through a linguistic perspective.

Method

A qualitative research method was used in this study due to its suitability for studying complex cultural and language-related phenomena by closely looking at texts and their meanings. Qualitative research helps in understanding how people make sense of things, how they represent ideas, and how society shapes beliefs (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Creswell, 2014), making it useful in this study for analysing how the language used in the selected songs helps create narratives about entitlement in Nigerian pop music. The study also used a descriptive research design, which makes efforts to document and explain observed phenomena without altering or changing what was found out (Babbie, 2020). This approach was beneficial in giving a detailed description of how divine entitlement is expressed linguistically and persuasively in the selected songs.

Data collection and selection criteria

The data of the study are derived from two song lyrics *Money Fit Me* by Syno and *Pick Up* by Adekunle Gold, of Nigerian pop artists that promote the theme of divine intervention, financial breakthrough, and social pressure surrounding society's expectations of success. These songs were selected because of their lyrical emphasis on divine favour and financial upliftment issues, popularity, and accessibility of the songs. To ensure accuracy, the lyrics were obtained from verified sources, like Boomplay, Apple Music, Spotify, and official YouTube channels of artists. Specifically, *Money Fit Me* can be accessed on Spotify at https://open.spotify.com/track/5HD5dOIGZsWdeNIrJKQy5n, and *Pick Up* at https://open.spotify.com/track/6dlqmyMVe5JN8WRPbY6BPJ.

The songs were chosen using purposive sampling based on their use of persuasive language, religious expressions, and entitlement. These songs do not represent the entire spectrum of Nigerian pop music, but rather, exemplary cases to understand the role of linguistic and discursive practices in creating entitlement narratives.

Since the songs contain lyrics in both English and Nigerian languages (Pidgin English and Yoruba), special attention was paid to the accuracy of the translation. The researchers are native speakers of the Nigerian Pidgin, and one is a native speaker of Yoruba. This language proficiency enabled the researchers to translate the lyrics accurately. Additionally, the translations were compared on several independent sources, like publicly provided meanings, to provide contextual and cultural elucidation. This was done to ensure that the original lyrics are replicated in the English translations in terms of content and meaning.

Analytical procedure

The analysis was done in a systematic and interpretive manner. The researchers first got immersed in the data by listening to the songs repeatedly while closely reading the transcribed lyrics. This familiarisation phase contributed to capturing the emotional tonality, rhythm, and repetitive words or metaphors with reference to divine favour, prosperity, and social expectations.

The lyrics were then closely analysed through the three theoretical lenses applied in the study. Aristotle's rhetorical appeals were employed to determine how ethos, pathos, and logos were used to establish credibility, emotion, and logical

reasoning in the songs. The Cialdini principles of persuasion were applied to identify the persuasive techniques used, such as reciprocity, social proof, and authority. For instance, when artists frame devotion as something that deserves reward, or by pointing out the achievements of others, to encourage belief in prosperity.

Building on these layers, CDA was used to explain the ways in which the lyrics articulated the broader ideologies and power dynamics in society. Special attention was given to repeated phrases like "God must bless me" and "My hustle must pay," which were examined in terms of normalising or regularising collective expectations and framing prosperity as a moral obligation and not an individual desire.

Consequently, the insights from these approaches were combined to develop a comparative interpretation of the two songs. This highlights, for example, the emphasis of Syno's communal validation and prosperity, contrasting the emphasis of Adekunle Gold on personal urgency and fear of retrogression.

Ethical Considerations

The data for the study involved publicly available song lyrics; therefore, no direct ethical concerns are related to data collection. However, the researchers made sure that interpretations are framed within the context of cultural discourse and media influence rather than personal or moral intent judgments.

Findings and Discussion

The selected lyrics from the two songs selected for this study, alongside their English translations, identified persuasive strategies and associated artists, will be presented first to facilitate a structured analysis. The table below summarises these elements to support an understanding of how the selected artist linguistically reinforces entitlement expectations.

Table 1: Persuasive and Rhetorical Strategies in *Money Fit Me* by Syno and *Pick Up* by Adekunle Gold

Original Lyrics	English Translation	Rhetorical and Persuasive Strategies	Artist
Baba, you know say money fit me	Father, you know that money suits me	Credibility framing (Cialdini's Authority; CDA Ethos): Establishing the singer as deserving of wealth based on personal worth and spiritual legitimacy	Syno
Tell all this owu make them free me	Tell all this poverty to leave me	Emotional appeal (Pathos; Deprivation): Highlighting suffering to evoke empathy and urgency	Syno
See my guys don make am	See, my friends have made it	Social Proof (Cialdini): Referencing peers to reinforce belief in imminent success	Syno
Na who say God no go bless me?	Who says God won't bless me?	Authority (Cialdini); Repetition: Asserting certainty in divine intervention through confident questioning	Syno

See fast and pray, I do / Hustling without season, I do / Baba na wetin remain for me to do?	I fast and pray / I hustle without stopping / Father, what else remains for me to do?	Reciprocity (Cialdini); Cause-and-effect logic: Emphasising effort and devotion as grounds for divine reward	Syno
Baba, never pass me by	Father, don't pass me by	Fear of retrogression (CDA): Expressing anxiety about being overlooked or left behind	Syno
Oluwa, pick up the call	God, answer my call	Emotional appeal (Pathos); Repetition: Communicating desperation and longing for divine response	Adekunle Gold
Emi no fe wa Range Rover / Dangote olori meji	I want to have a Range Rover / To be as rich as Dangote	Material aspiration (CDA); Allusion: Linking divine blessings to luxury and status symbols	Adekunle Gold
Ma ma jeki anybody bere wipe, nibo lo lorun mi wa	Don't let anyone ask where my God is	Fear of retrogression (CDA); Social anxiety: Equating financial delay with potential shame or spiritual failure	Adekunle Gold
Baba don't leave me hanging	Father, don't abandon me	Pathos; Direct plea (Dialogue): Personalising the relationship with the divine to heighten emotional urgency	Adekunle Gold
Mo fe do lowo / Mo fe do lola	I want to be rich / I want to be wealthy	Cause-and-effect reasoning (Logos): Framing prosperity as a logical consequence of faith and perseverance	Adekunle Gold
If you see my number, pick up the call	If you see my call, answer it	Reciprocity (Cialdini): Presenting divine response as expected compensation for consistent devotion	Adekunle Gold

Source: Author's Construct

Ethos: Credibility through shared struggles

Establishing credibility in Nigerian pop music is a deliberate, persuasive strategy musicians employ. The Artists in the selected songs position themselves as authentic representatives of economic hardship and spiritual resilience. In this regard, ethos signifies real personal experience and connecting with the struggles of everyday people. Herman (2022) confirms that ethos can make the speakers more persuasive, provided they reflect on something everybody has experienced or shares common values with.

In *Money Fit Me*, Syno repeatedly talks about his strong faith and hard work, "See fast and pray, I do / Hustling without season, I do */ Baba na wetin* remain for me to do?" This will endear him to people in Nigeria who have been under economic strain for a long time. Using "I" in his lyrics, he shows that he is just like his listeners. The message is clear: if he deserves help from above, so do they.

Similarly, Adekunle Gold also uses ethos in *Pick Up* by showing his feelings and asking for help, "*Oluwa*, pick up the call." This line shows his frustration and the shared hope for divine help. Adekunle Gold builds a strong connection with listeners facing similar problems by showing that he is also struggling. The two artists reinforce the notion that it is not only a chosen few who enjoy prosperity and

divine blessings; rather, success and divine favours are achieved under concerted effort, faith, and determinedness, and not giving up.

Syno and Adekunle Gold also support the idea that people who have suffered for a long time deserve help from above or divine intervention. They do this by showing themselves as trustworthy people who have gone through hard times and kept believing against all odds. This aligns with Weber's Protestant work ethic, which links hard work and faith to material prosperity (Kirby, 2019). In Nigerian music culture, ethos is often linked with moral justification; artists who depict themselves as having suffered long enough strengthen the perception that their success is righteous and deserved.

Pathos: Emotional appeal and deprivation narratives

One of the most effective persuasive methods Nigerian pop music uses to persuade people is *pathos*, which means appealing to emotions. Artists talk about pain, being left out, and waiting a long time for success. This makes listeners feel connected to the message. *Pathos* works well because it creates strong feelings, making people more likely to believe what the artist is saying (Villata et al., 2018). In religious and socio-economic environments, emotional persuasion is potent when a person is desperate and yet remains hopeful about divine intervention since there is a dire necessity for it (Adam, 2021; Kirby, 2019; Smith, 2016).

In *Pick Up*, Adekunle Gold uses the metaphor of unanswered phone calls to show deep emotional stress: "*Oluwa*, pick up the call." The phrase turns financial struggles into a spiritual issue, placing divine silence or not hearing from God as a reason for frustration and desperation. Repeating "pick up the call" makes the feeling even stronger, as if God is taking too long to answer and the suffering is unfair. This narrative is a projection of the greater cultural fears of economic stagnation, joblessness, slow progress, and the fear of not succeeding in a tough world.

Furthermore, Nigerian pop music often talks about family suffering to make the need for divine help or intervention feel even more serious. In *Money Fit Me*, Syno says, "I can't withstand the tears of my mummy." This line shows that the pain is not just his, but it affects his family, too. It makes divine blessings feel like a personal and moral duty, not just a wish. When artists talk about their family's pain, it creates a stronger emotional connection and makes listeners feel the urgency even more.

Research on empathetic engagement in music suggests audiences are more likely to internalise persuasive messages when they evoke collective pain or social responsibility (Brown et al., 2020; Koelsch, 2014). Using the power of emotion through storytelling and talking about struggle, Nigerian pop music creates a situation where divine entitlement becomes a moral requirement, where the only morally sound result is financial elevation to lift those in need.

Logos: The cause-and-effect justification of divine rewards

Unlike ethos and pathos, which rely on credibility and emotional appeal, logos (logical reasoning) presents divine blessings as the inevitable result of faith and effort. In Nigerian pop music, *logos* often follow a cause-and-effect correlation where being religious, working hard, and not giving up are seen as the steps needed to become successful. Such logical reasoning is often associated with the teachings

of the prosperity gospel, which emphasises the causative nature of faith in economic success; in other words, having strong faith can lead to wealth (Gifford, 2016).

In the song *Money Fit Me*, Syno makes a clear point based on logic that poverty or being poor is only a temporary state and that success will surely happen, "*Baba*, you know say money fit me / Tell all this *owu* make them free me." This line implies that being rich is a natural order of things and expected. It supports the idea that if someone keeps praying and hustles hard enough, then there must be a financial breakthrough. This follows in the lines of thought of Fairclough (2013), who says that discourse can shape beliefs, making certain ideas seem obviously true and not open to question or unquestionable.

Equally, in the song, *Pick Up*, Adekunle Gold also uses the same logos technique, stating that there is a logical reason behind his wanting to be financially successful because God intervened, "*Emi no fe wa* Range Rover / *Dangote olori meji.*" This line shows his desire for material wealth as a rational expectation, and that to achieve as much wealth as Dangote, one should have faith and a persevering spirit. By correlating his dreams to famous rich people, Adekunle Gold creates a cause-and-effect reasoning in which if you believe and work hard, you should become successful as a result of divine favour.

These songs also use strong opposites, like poor versus rich, suffering versus reward, and silence versus answer, to create a pattern that makes it look like divine intervention is bound to happen, and should always lead to success. By introducing faith and hustling as inputs and riches as natural and assured outputs, Nigerian pop music makes divine entitlement appear as a logical result, not just luck.

Cialdini's principles of persuasion

Reciprocity: Expecting divine compensation

The idea of reciprocity implies that giving leads to an expectancy that the receiver should exert the same behaviour of giving back, which is the principle of reciprocity as explained by Cialdini (2006) (Halbesma, 2017; Muhanad et al., 2024). People expect something in return when they give something, like effort, loyalty, or faith. This idea does not just apply to people; it is also found in religion, where praying and doing good things are often seen as ways to earn blessings from a higher power. In Nigerian pop music, this idea is clearly shown in lyrics that treat financial success as a reward for being faithful, making it seem like divine intervention works like a fair exchange.

In *Pick Up*, Adekunle Gold positions wealth as a long-overdue response from God, "*Baba*, don't leave me hanging / *Ma ma jeki* anybody *bere wipe, nibo lo lorun mi wa.*" (Father, do not leave me stranded / Do not let anyone ask where my God is). This appeal implies that divine compensation is not a matter of generosity but an obligation, reinforcing an expectation of transactional reciprocity. The line suggests that continued devotion and prayer should naturally yield material success, as failure to receive divine blessings could bring social ridicule. The psychological power of reciprocity here is twofold: (i) it brings about a sense of entitlement, where the artist presupposes that religious commitment must be rewarded materially, and should automatically lead to success and wealth. (ii) It puts pressure on the divine to respond, since not fulfilling this arrangement would be contrary to how things are supposed to happen and would cause social disgrace in front of others.

This conforms to the theology of the prosperity gospel, which holds that becoming wealthy is the natural result of having strong faith and endurance. According to Gifford (2016), prosperity preachers tend to make connections between economic success and religiosity, explaining that God promises to reward those who pray regularly and remain obedient to his rules. This doctrine has been internalised in Nigerian pop music and has been converted into a lyrical act of contractual faith whereby continued commitment or if someone stays devoted, they deserve a reward from God.

Moreover, the idea of reciprocity enhances long-term adherence to religiously based practice, which in turn helps people stay committed to their faith over time. Research in commitment bias proposes that people who consistently put effort into a belief system are more likely to stick to it, anticipating that their input will be rewarded eventually (Inzlicht et al., 2018; Maich, 2013).

In *Money Fit Me*, Syno reinforces this idea: "See fast and pray, I do / Hustling without season, I do / *Baba na wetin* remain for me to do?" ("See, I fast and pray / I hustle endlessly / Father, what else remains for me to do*?"*). This persuasive framing treats divine favour as a reward that should be earned through effort and faith. This idea is supported by research on commitment bias (Inzlicht et al., 2018), which affirms this line of thought that when people keep trying, they expect something good to happen in return. The artist's hard work makes listeners feel more connected and believe it is only fair that success should follow.

Social Proof: Success Stories as Validation

Another persuasive element in Nigerian pop music is social proof, in which musicians establish preconditions to divine entitlement by citing those who have already turned out to be successful to support their belief that they, too, deserve blessings from a higher power. According to Cialdini (2006), people are more likely to adopt beliefs and behaviours that appear socially validated or based on how other people act and think (Halttu & Oinas-Kukkonen, 2021). This idea is especially strong in societies with strong social values, like Nigeria, where economic prosperity is directly linked with social belonging.

In *Money Fit Me*, Syno uses social proof to show others who have already succeeded or made it in life, to reinforce his hope for financial success or breakthrough, "See my guys *don* make *am* / Me, I want to feel among." ("See, my friends have succeeded or made it in life / I want to succeed or make it in life as well."). This shows that because his friends are doing well, he feels he should too. It reflects the belief that success is not just personal, but something shared and expected within the community.

The lyric above is multileveled and works on several levels. First, it creates pressure by alluding to other friends who are already successful or have made it, as it implies that success is the norm and you are likely to be left out once you fall behind. It also promotes an entitlement mentality, meaning that since God has blessed other persons, then he should do the same for anyone who follows the same path. It also makes faith a social requirement, since the fear of not having an economic breakthrough makes people more committed to religious devotion and hustling.

In *Pick Up*, Adekunle Gold uses the same concepts of social proof by which he talks about his peers who have been successful as evidence of his hopes of divine

reward, "*Awon egbemi ko ile, won bimo lemo oh.*" (My peers have bought houses and even given birth to children). This shows that he expects the same success because others around him have already received it. This line serves several functions in the context of social proof, as it encourages peer comparison by creating a sense of urgency to keep up and reinforcing the idea that divine favour should be accessible to him as well, reinforces entitlement by suggesting that divine blessings are a natural outcome for those following the same path of faith and hard work, and applies social pressure by highlighting the achievements of his peers, creating a sense of inadequacy for those still waiting for their breakthrough.

The psychology behind social proof in music and religion is well-documented. According to social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), individuals naturally compare themselves with others to evaluate their abilities and opinions, and individuals tend to align their expectations with collective experiences (Crusius et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2024; Suls & Wheeler, 2012). In this case, the belief that "everyone else has been blessed" creates a powerful mental framework where divine intervention is not just desirable but inevitable.

CDA and the normalisation of divine entitlement

The CDA shows that repetition and declaration in clear and confident statements can make certain ideas feel normal or expected. For example, phrases like "God must bless me," "*Oluwa,* pick up the call," and "My hustle must pay" are repeated often to make people feel certain that these things should happen. Fairclough points out that repetition does reinforce ideological legitimacy because it helps make them seem more believable and important, even if they are just opinions (Fairclough, 2013). Butler's (1990) performativity theory explains how repeated phrases do not just describe reality; they shape it. Exposed to repeated appeals and affirmations, listeners may internalise entitlement as a normal belief. Additionally, the illusory truth effect suggests that repetition increases belief acceptance, even without evidence (Hassan & Barber, 2021; Henderson et al., 2021). In this way, music becomes a vehicle through which divine entitlement is framed as a just, collective expectation.

The normalisation of divine entitlement through repetition in these songs reflects Nigerian society's broader cultural and religious discourses. The concept of speaking things into existence, popularised by charismatic religious movements and prosperity gospel teachings (Barron, 2022; Gbote & Kgatla, 2014; Mashau & Kgatle, 2019), parallels these musical narratives. Listeners are encouraged to proclaim their financial breakthroughs as something that is already established. This helps build a belief system where having strong faith and saying positive things repeatedly is the only ability that should bring real wealth and financial success.

Comparative analysis of the two songs

Although both *Money Fit Me* by Syno and *Pick Up* by Adekunle Gold explore the themes of divine favour, economic upliftment, and social validation, they do so in different narrative styles and rhetorical approaches. The lyrics of Syno are bold and hopeful, and they are typified by statements of worthiness and expectation. As portrayed in lines like, "*Baba,* you know say money fit me," (Father, you know that money suits me) and "Tell all this *owu* make them free me" (Tell all this poverty to leave me). He sees prosperity as an inherent and natural gift to the faithful and the

hardworking. Even in making reference to struggle, as in phrases like "See fast and pray, I do / Hustling without season, I do", Syno positions these acts as a testament to the fact that he has done his duty and now expects help from above. His repetition of affirmations and group allusions, such as "see my guys *don* make *am*" (See, my friends have succeeded), strengthens a community discourse in which success is anticipated and socially approved.

In contrast, Pick Up, by Adekunle Gold, is characterised by a sense of urgency and emotional vulnerability, with the abundance of metaphors and repetition used to express desperation. The repetition of the phrase "*Oluwa*, pick up the call" (God, answer my call) is a literal and symbolic indication of unanswered prayers, as an indicator of spiritual anxiety and social stress. His lyrics are about tangible signs of winning, houses, marriages, and luxury cars, which are emphasised through lines like "*Emi nor fe wa* Range Rover */ Dangote olori meji*" (I want to own a Range Rover and be as rich as Dangote). In contrast to the self-assertive statements of Syno, Adekunle Gold, in his song, is afraid of the shame and humiliation of the crowd, which he mentions in the song in the phrase: "*Ma ma jeki* anybody *bere wipe, nibo lo lorun mi wa*" (Do not let anyone ask where my God is). This brings prosperity as uncertain and precarious, dependent on divine responsiveness and not certainty.

The two songs, therefore, provide contrasting but true depictions of divine prosperity. The tone of Syno is declarative and confident, reinforcing entitlement as a social norm based on visible effort and faith. The tones used by Adekunle Gold are supplicatory and emotionally laden as he points out the stress of waiting and the psychological weight of success that is delayed. Compounding all these accounts, Nigerian pop music is seen as validating the cultural myth of divine reward and revealing personal and social fears underlying its attainment.

Alternative interpretations of the lyrics

Even though the analysis foregrounds how the songs reinforce entitlement, it is possible to interpret the lyrics differently. Other listeners might interpret Syno's statements as a declaration of collective hope and perseverance and not prescriptive statements of divine command. In the same vein, the pleas of Adekunle Gold can be seen as an expression of personal struggle and survival, expressing the disappointments of people trapped in poverty and social pressure. These alternative readings point to the malleability of popular music and the meaning that is constructed in the context and experience of the listener. Nevertheless, the uniformity of the rhetorical and persuasive appeals in both songs suggests that, along with these potential meanings, the lyrics can also be used to normalise cultural influences, making faith, hard work, and material success interconnected.

Conclusion

This study explored the ways in which Nigerian pop music lyrics construct and reinforce notions of divine favour, prosperity, and entitlement using linguistic and persuasive means. Through the analysis of *Money Fit Me* by Syno and *Pick Up* by Adekunle Gold, it was noted that popular music serves as a cultural tool to influence beliefs about how faith, hard work, and material success are interrelated. The findings show that the two songs use the same theological themes. Syno approaches prosperity as a collective and certain expectation, and Adekunle Gold

as uncertain and emotionally charged, as well as reflecting on the social concerns surrounding the process of awaiting divine response.

The insights are important because they demonstrate how popular music extends beyond entertainment to shape the worldviews and everyday practices of listeners. To listeners, especially the young ones who have to endure economic suffering, such lyrics might reinforce hopes on what it entails to reach success and how spiritual devotion ought to be translated into concrete reward. To religious leaders and critics of culture, the study highlights the normalisation of prosperity gospel ideologies through musical narrative in shaping public discourse about wealth, morality, and upward mobility in Nigeria today.

However, this study has its limitations. Its narrow scope of two songs by two artists limits the diversity of views expressed, and its interpretation is based on the cultural and linguistic expertise of the researchers involved, which can present bias. Moreover, as a textual analysis, it does not capture or reflect how different audiences perceive or react to these songs in practice. These drawbacks imply that the results are to be considered as exploratory as opposed to conclusive.

Future research may expand on this study by studying a broader sample of songs of various genres to determine whether such patterns are evident in other musical contexts. Audience reception analysis could also be incorporated into the studies through interviews or surveys in order to explore the way listeners comprehend and negotiate the messages contained in the music. This would offer a more comprehensive view of the interaction between lyrical content and cultural beliefs, as well as the way the audience interprets it.

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