

## **Nigerian music and the dynamics of romance: An ideological analysis of Davido's "IF" musical track**

<sup>\*1</sup>Emelda Chinasa Nnanyelugo, Ikenna Emmanuel Onwuegbunna<sup>1</sup> Samson Obialor Onu<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Music, University of Nigeria Nsukka Enugu State, Nigeria

\*Correspondence to Nnanyelugo E.C.: Email: Chinasa.nnanyelugo@unn.edu.ng

### **Abstract**

**Background:** Music is an important instrument for communication with a universal appeal. Through the instrument of music, the barriers associated with spoken words are broken while at the same time, entertaining and educating the target audience. Music communicates trends, issues, and societal changes. Also, it serves as an instrument of social change. Therefore, the ideological meaning inherent in music is an important area of research because it provides insights into the prevailing popular thinking.

**Objective:** This paper sought to ascertain the philosophical meaning of the lyrics of the Nigerian pop music artist's (David Adeleke, popularly known as Davido) song, "IF". In doing so, the researchers sought to examine how Davido portrays the dynamics of love, money, and romance in contemporary Nigeria.

**Methodology:** The researchers deployed the ideological perspective to examine how Davido portrays the dynamics of love, romance, and money. Therefore, the research team viewed the music of Davido many times during which they took notes for further analysis.

**Results:** The researchers found that Davido made use of his music to portray love as dependent on the amount of money a man is able to spend on a woman. Furthermore, the artist presents physical appearance as the greatest asset of a woman which is meant for the highest bidder. Consequently, the artist objectifies the body of women while highlighting finance as the only basis for a woman to respond positively to a man's romantic advances.

**Conclusion:** In contemporary Nigeria, greater attention is paid to money and physical attractiveness as essential determinants of love. The growing acceptance of such musical videos points to the fact that the Nigerian society is fast abandoning its values of hard work, family history, and good conduct that were once essential in determining romantic relations to the love for money and physical appearance.

**Unique contribution:** This study has shown how music is utilized to present the current dynamics of love with emphasis on the interplay between money and romance. The researchers also developed six stages that can be used to analyse musical contents.

**Key recommendation:** Further studies should be conducted to examine the association between exposure to Davido's music and the behaviour intention towards love and romance among Nigeria music fans.

**Keywords:** ideology; love; money; music; romance; money; Nigeria

### **Introduction**

Harnessing the artist's world view and opinion to happenings surrounding his environment is not just a thing of assumption, but an issue of critical approach which has to do with the use of a well specified and acceptable approach to such studies. Music artists generally have a significant influence on the general public and as such, their view, when expressed through the contents of their production, is worth evaluating. Boer (2009) commented on the importance of music thus: "Music is important in most people's lives independent of their cultural origin. Music can foster bonds between people and it communicates values and

identity.’’ Hallam (2010) in a study reported that music has a significant effect on behaviour, intellectual development, and social change. Poulin (2018) holds a similar view regarding the power of music on the society. The implication here therefore, is that the content of music is either a reflection of current events in the society or a mirror of what the society will be in the future.

One of the ways of evaluating the content of music is through the ideological approach. Researchers (Ajayi, 2015, 2017; Aboh, 2008, 2009) argue that in the analysis of the ideological content of music, it is essential to also take into account the identity which a music artist attempts to project. According to such researchers, identity and ideology are like Siamese twins; it is difficult to separate them. For example, Ajayi (2015: 1) avers that ‘identity and ideology are two inseparable phenomena that characterize the existence of mankind.’ Ajayi (2017) also notes that people generally showcase identities and ideologies in the process of their linguistic behaviour. The implication of the views of Ajayi is that it is difficult for people to express themselves without pinpointing their identity and ideology about issues. Aboh (2008 and 2009) affirms that it will be difficult for any linguistic expression to take place without revealing a particular ideology. This implies that in every musical track, there must be an expression of ideology that reveals the identity of the artist and his background.

Ideology defines a set of belief system which a person has towards an issue. In the views of Bloor and Bloor (2007), ideologies describe established values, attitude, belief systems, and assumptions which are shared among members of a particular social group in contrast to members of another group. This means that ideology can as well be the dividing line between musical artists and religious leaders. For example, while religious leaders may view love from the perspective of the love of Christ, those in the musical world may view it from the perspective of romance. The difference is the ideology which both groups have concerning love. Keller (2007, 91), in commenting on the ideological contents of music notes:

Music as a form of social activity, just like other kinds of activity, more or less visibly seeks to include some people and exclude, or even antagonize others. The interplay of these two levels of symbolic import probably accounts for the incredible variety of ideological meanings that different music has acquired in the course of time.

The submission of Keller above point to the fact that the ideology expressed in music may not be generally acceptable by everyone nor will it be completely rejected by all. For example, some people may not agree that romance is dependent on any material condition, but purely based on emotional attachment while others may see it differently. Morris (2013) must have been thinking in the same direction when he noted that music make up communities in a special manner because it depends mainly on bodily innervations. He adds that such bodily innervations create communities of listeners and producers. The implication here is that through music, people who share similar views about life and issues will be united into a community. Within the context of the current study, it can be argued that Davido’s music has the propensity to create a community of people who believe in his ideology of romance and love. One of the ways to understand how Davido views romance is through an analysis of his music.

The ideological approach is one of the most suitable approaches to examine how Davido made use of the word “*IF*” to portray romance. By its very nature, the ideological approach gives room to ascertaining the real picture which an artist tries to paint in his or her musical works. The ideological approach helps to examine and analyze a popular music without bias of any sort. Onwuegbunna (2015) notes that: “the analyst using this approach to study pop music must be objective and ensure that his biases and his mental constructs do not interject into the analytical assignment” (p, 108). This analytical approach is one that is forced from jungle justice’s interpretation; it gives the artist the opportunity to state things the way he/she sees it and then, throws it in the open to expose its actual representation in the real life. For the purpose of this investigation, the ideological analysis of the song “*IF*” by Davido will be of great importance to the realization of the actual position of his view about the subject matter. Therefore, this study attempted to examine the views and opinions of the artist and his ideas which he tries to communicate in his musical track “*IF*” including his world views about humans and environment, and about nature and nurture and how he sees it in his own unique way.

### **Popular Music**

Popular music analysis could be approached in four dimensions namely: musical, historical, socio-cultural, and ideological (Viljoen, 2004). Amongst the four, the interest of this paper lies in the fourth approach which is the ideological perspective of popular music analysis. African pop music belongs to the contemporary folk music which is done with the interest of the composer’s contemporary, as it would best suit their interest and consumption. Popular music is one musical practice which passes messages of the socio-political events of the people and environment, and as it relates to the social lives of the people living in a community. According to Nzewi (2007), “music-making is not simply an exercise in the organization of sound; it is a symbolic expression of societal and cultural organization which reflects the values and the past and present ways of life of the human beings who creates it” (p, 200). Music creation has to do with the cultural practices a group of people with common goal and ideas have collectively, which is what governs their ways of life and behaviours (Nnanyelugo, 2019). This study extracted the lyrical song “*IF*” by Davido and examined it critically to ascertain:

1. His ideology to the making and composing of the music “*IF*”.
2. His general opinion to man and woman relationship.
3. His critical articulation of his views to the composition of “*IF*”.

### **The ideological analysis procedure**

The researchers made use of six broad stages to analyze the ideological content of Davido’s musical song “*IF*”. These procedures are as follows:

**Stage one (music selection):** A decision was made regarding which music to analyze. Under this stage, attention was paid to the track to analyze and the artist whose track was to be analysed. Therefore, the track was “*IF*” and the artist was Davido. This then paved the way for the second stage.

**Stage two (purpose of analysis):** At this stage, the researchers outlined what they wanted to achieve from the analysis, and what was desired to be achieved was to determine how the artist made use of his music to explain the dynamics of love. In other words, how the artist expressed his ideology of love.

**Stage three (type of analysis):** At this stage of the analysis, a decision was made concerning the type of analysis that was most suitable. The researcher reasoned that ideological analysis was better for the study so as to understand the ideology behind the musical track.

**Stage four (exposure to music):** At this stage, the researchers watched the video of the music. In the process of watching, notes were taken. The researchers watched the video of the music track up to five times to become familiar with it.

**Stage five (preliminary report):** The researchers prepared a preliminary report about the ideological content of the track in preparation for the final report.

**Stage six (Final report):** After the preliminary report, the research team watched the video track again to see if there was any aspect that was omitted. The final report was prepared after watching it at post preliminary report stage.

### **Results/discussion**

The finding from the study uncovers the true meaning of the ideology and concepts behind the composition and making of the music “**IF**” through the use of ideological analytical angle. It has also projected the artist’s general opinion to man and woman relationship through his music “**IF**” and finally, it helped and highlighted critically, the artist’s articulated views in his composition of “**IF**”.

### **Lyrical analysis of Davido’s “IF”**

*[Intro]*

*My money my body na your own*

*(It’s OBO, baddest!)*

*[Verse 1]*

*If I tell you say I love you, o*

*My money my body na your own, o baby*

*Thirty billion for the account, io*

*Versace and Gucci for your body, o baby*

*[Pre-Chorus]*

*No do, no do*

*No do, garagara for me*

*No do, no do*

*No do senrere o*

*No do, no do*

*No do shakara owe*

*No do, no do*

*No do garagara for me o, owe*

*[Chorus]*

*Girl you're beautiful too*

*My number one itutu*

*Sip burukutu*

*For your love I tutu*

*I go chook you chuku chuku o*

*Biko Obianuju*

*Sheh you do me juju*

*'Cause I'm feeling the juju*

*[Verse 2]*

*Shake it oo, take it*

*I wanna catch it io, take it*

*You can have it io, take it*

*You know I got this io, take it*

*[Bridge]*

*I love you, I love you,*

*I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you,*

*There's nothing above you*

*There's nothing above you, above you above you*

*Bridget eh, I love your mini skirt io*

*Oh girl you carry sense io*

*If I tell you say I love you, o*  
*My money, my body na your own o baby*  
*Thirty billion for the account o, yeh*  
*Versace and Gucci for your body, o baby*

*[Pre-Chorus]*

*No do, No do*  
*No do, Garagara for me*  
*No do, No do*  
*No do Senrere o*  
*No do, No do*  
*No do Shakara owe*  
*No do, no do*  
*No do Garagara for me o, owe*

*[Chorus]*

*Girl you're beautiful too*  
*My number one itutu*  
*Sip burukutu*  
*For your love I tutu*  
*I go chook you chuku chuku o*  
*Biko Obianuju*  
*Sheh you do me juju*  
*'Cause I'm feeling the juju*

*[Verse 3]*

*And you know say nobody holy*  
*But I no go tell you story*

*I gotta be your man, I gotta be your man*

*Lemme talk to you, say a few things*

*Girl I'm feeling you*

*What is up to you?*

*Shey you know I gat you*

*[Bridge]*

*I love you, I love you,*

*I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you,*

*There's nothing above you*

*There's nothing above you, above you above you*

*Bridget eh, I love your mini skirt io*

*Oh girl you carry sense io*

*If I tell you say I love you, o*

*My money, my body na your own o baby*

*Thirty billion for the account o, yeh*

*Versace and Gucci for your body, o baby*

*[Outro]*

*No do, No do*

*No do, Garagara for me*

*No do, No do*

*No do Senrere o*

*No do, No do*

*No do Shakara owe*

*No do, no do*

*No do Garagara for me o, owe*

Looking at the ideological stand of this artist's world view about "love" as in his song "**IF**", one would actually know how he feels and thinks of love, his own definition of love and belief to what women think of love, money, and affluence. In the musical track "**IF**" with different lyrical compositions such as: "*My money my body na your own*", "*If I tell you say I love you, o*", etc., the artist in this context believes that love should be seen as a totality of one's endeavours which includes physical presence and monetary gratification and he wonders why a lady should not submit totally to his gestures and affection, and even to her admirers. In the video, he could be seen pouring out series of promises to the lady that he is making advances at such as promising her thirty billion naira, which to him, is for her upkeep. Ordinarily, no man does that to such level, but recently, everyone's eye is on money and the artist's reference to it entails the danger in securing your own heart desire, for without money in the present state of the society, one tends to suffer.

In the music, the artist expressed concern as to how some women treat men who truly love them, and assume that money should be able to take care of the lady's financial upkeeps and body maintenance. He wonders why the lady should not embrace the offer without showing off as is the case of the lady in the video displayed. Also, in the musical track "**IF**", the artist tries to depict a young man with affluence trying to fall in love, and with the level of money and resources he has, he thinks money can get anything he wants and needs, but finds it difficult with the lady he truly loves even with all he is willing to do and spend on her.

According to Danahar (2005), "song lyrics are important in capturing the feelings and reactions of the singers to the world around them and can contribute to a solid change (p, 14)". In the words of Machin (2010), "lyrics are not only about artists telling stories, but also communicating discourses about their identity (p, 77)". Also, Agu (2017) and Nanyelugo (2018) are of the opinion that African music, especially in Nigeria, are used as a means through which ethnic community and individual identities are formulated, conceived, and expressed or acted. It is through the display of musical ideations and traditional practices that one's culture and beliefs are publicized as well as his opinion made known.

The irony of this song "**IF**" by Davido centres on love in its magnitude. The artist assumes the role of a guy who has fallen in love with a lady and in trying to please the girl, offers her both his body and resource as though his love for her has enchanted him like magic, and that's why you can hear him speak of magic as he sings "*biko Obianuju, shey you do me juju*", "*'cause I'm feeling the juju*", and also, "*sip burukutu*," "*for your love I tutu*", etc., which is a kind of native drink that intoxicates. Here, the artist made reference to show how he felt for the girl which makes him stagger. His feelings of ecstasy over the girl grew so strong that his love for the girl blindfolded him that he could barely talk of himself. He expresses his intention over the girl as he promised her his body, money, and everything he has when he said: "*shake it oo, take it*", "*I wanna catch it io, take it*," "*you can have it io, take it*", "*you know I got this io, take it*", etc. Thus, the artist tries to pour out his heart feelings about the girl whom he truly loves, and in the video, you could see him demonstrating to the girl and the girl in return showing him off. He is also seen promising never to betray the girl nor hurt her feelings as he is saying to her "*I gotta be your man, I gotta be your man*".

The main ideology in this music "**IF**" is the way that he perceives the real meaning of love and the opposite of what is happening recently. The artist sees what should be called real love and not the other way round which in some cases is the order of the day and that is why



there is huge number of breakups in marriages/relationship. He tries to explain that love should know no boundaries and should be a totality of one's physical, economic, and spiritual commitment because such kind of love is not only free from selfish interest, but it is of total sacrifice. Ideologically, it is a binding effort of both the man and the woman. That is why the first and second lines of the first verse which is "*If I tell you say I love you, o*", "*my money my body na your own, o baby*" explains it all in a lighter mood and also in a simple language.

One conflicting thing about the characters in the video is that the lady, who is the centre of attraction, is showing off and at the same time, refusing his proposal and romancing him in contradiction, which is a trademark of every first contact of most relationship. Nevertheless, the lady in question who was in miniskirt was equally displaying some sensitive parts of her body to attract the male folks. Practically, this is what happens in our contemporary society; females no longer hold on to the secrecy of their body and even to moral practices. The artist, by putting up this kind of video performance, indirectly gives room for mockery on what people perceive as love, and women's attitude to love.

"*IF*" by Davido points at certain stages of life and accompanying behavioural attitude like when it comes to falling in love and getting into a relationship. This is seen in the various stages of life as it pertains to relationship. In the preliminary stage, gestures are shown with expectations of a positive response. Under this stage, there are lots of display from both the male and female in strive for notice and visibility. The other is the interactive stage which is the most critical stage because many are said to encourage and give hope to others seeking attention. Many of the promises are made under siege and desperation, which may or may not be fulfilled. This is also seen in the track "*IF*" as the artist was saying "*And you know say nobody holy*", "*but I no go tell you story*", "*I gotta be your man, I gotta be your man*", etc. The other stage is the acceptance stage which is now the climax of it all. In the musical album/track, these stages were visibly addressed and it also goes on to show how after every challenge which confronts a man in the process of winning a girl's heart, the man later resorts to a positive reaction which in most cases, does not always result to positive reactions in real life situations as regards such gestures and promises.

The artist's point of view about the whole situation is painted in his choice of words as to depict the world view of the word "love", which is a contradiction of the aim of love in recent times whereby everybody depends on what he or she will get in return, how rich a man is and how attractive he is facially, as well as the physical attractiveness of a woman regardless of moral judgement. Currently, there are no more proper character checks as was the case in time past, which was the ideal thing for a good woman or man. This is why Ikemerike (2015) asserts that: "consequent upon these current trends, the 21<sup>st</sup> century or modern age appears to operate at a totally different frequency, and at a morality and value ratio that remains far removed from that of their progenitors; several sharp practices that have ab initio remained sacrilegious now hold sway (p, 88)". Going by the above ideological analysis with reference to "*IF*" by Davido, it is clear that his opinions and world view of what love is all about has to do with money, and nothing like love happens when there is no money.

### **Conclusion/recommendations**

This study analyzed one of the African popular music using ideological analytical approaches. This makes it easier to determine the artist's views on the social-cultural

existence of the African nature. This study also exposed the ideological views of the song “*IF*” by Davido, for the purpose of articulating the musical embellishment of Africans as seen in the musically creative act of this artist. The study has shown that African music is not meant only for entertainment; it also sends out messages across to its listeners. With the prior knowledge of this, the musical track “*IF*” by Davido is one which addresses critical societal issues of love, romance, and money by judging from the world’s view as he paints the picture of women and money in the video. This study makes the following recommendations: In the first place, further studies should be conducted to examine public perception of the ideology of love and money as expressed in Davido’s music. It is also recommended that empirical studies should be conducted to examine the influence of Davido’s music on attitude and behaviour intention towards love and money.

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