

A Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of Crime-related Themes in Naira Marley's Songs

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Abstract

This study investigates the multimodal portrayal of crime in Naira Marley's songs. Using Ledin and Machin's (2018) Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) framework, the study examines the interaction of verbal and visual communicative resources in five purposively selected songs, namely: *Soapy*, *Yahoo Boy*, *Japa*, *Vawulence*, and *As E Dey Go*. These songs were selected because of their theme of crime. The study reveals that Naira Marley employs repetition, rhetorical questions, symbolism, and colloquial expressions to reinforce crime narratives as both an act and a lifestyle. Visual elements, including close-ups of weapons and aggressive actions, amplify these narratives, glamorising criminal behaviour while challenging societal norms. The study highlights the normalisation of cyber fraud, violence and rebellion in Naira Marley's songs, presenting them as alternative paths to success and power. This multimodal portrayal of crime raises critical concerns about its potential influence on impressionable youth, particularly within Nigeria's socio-cultural context, where crime and delinquency are pressing issues. The paper concludes that while Naira Marley's music provides a voice for marginalised groups, it also perpetuates narratives that may desensitise audiences to the consequences of criminal behaviour.

Keywords: Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis, Crime Studies, Identity, Ideology.

Introduction

Multimodal studies generally facilitate interrogating the interplay of different communicative resources used to encode meaning in different domains of language use. In cultural productions such as music, multiple modes encode meaning and are resources for articulating different socio-cultural and socio-political issues. Many studies have interrogated how multimodal resources are deployed in these cultural productions to articulate meaning (Turner 2006, Oyeleye and Gbadegesin, 2020). Music as one of these productions has been identified as reflecting and influencing social norms and values (Anderson et al. 2007; Akingbe and Onanuga, 2020).

Before the 21st century, Nigeria's rich cultural heritage was expressed in the different popular music produced in the country, leading to the country's prominence on the global scene. The songs of Fela, Okosun, and Sunny Ade showcased the nation's rich cultural heritage and values through their lyrics and dance moves. Some Nigerian musicians adapt their music to the nation's needs and expose societal ills (Adegoju, 2009). This is evident in the way language is used as well as how indigenous and traditional musical genres are appropriated in the songs while still adhering to modern music styles. These music serves as social commentary on several socio-political issues such as politics, inequality and poverty, among others. Recently, flamboyance, fraud, and crime are articulated in Nigerian artistes' lyrics and music videos. The flamboyant display of wealth in the music videos and the idealised glamorous life portrayed often contrast with the nation's economic realities. Therefore, such songs, advocating

affluence interspersed with crimes and illicit money, are in contrast with prevailing social and cultural standards (Tade & Aliyu, 2011).

More so, the increase in crime rate in Nigeria is evidence of the effect of these songs, among other factors, on the life of the Nigerian youth. Statistics show that Nigeria ranked 17th globally in crime with a 66.7% crime index as the Economic and Financial Crime commission (EFCC)'s record of financial crime convictions has increased for almost a decade. In 2016, 195 convictions were made, 312 in 2018, 1280 in 2019, 976 in 2020 (a reduction due to the COVID-19 lockdown), 2220 in 2021 and 3785 in 2022 (Premium Times Nigeria, October 27, 2022). Although unemployment, poverty, and corruption have been indicated as factors responsible for youth's indulgence in crime (Oluwaleye, 2021), there is scholarly evidence that Nigerian music, especially hip-hop, contributes to the proliferation of crime, the get-rich-quick syndrome and the profligate lifestyle among Nigerian youths (Ebebe et al., 2021). Naira Marley (henceforth, NM) is particularly influential among the youth for his promotion of crime, quick success and indulgence in a profligate lifestyle (Ebebe et al., 2021). His impact is so profound that a subset of young people who identify as Marlians style their lives after him. These youths allow themselves to be influenced by the ideologies that inform NM's songs. Such youths are often criticised for their rough lifestyle and carelessness in different facets of life.

Although some studies have explored youth culture as influenced by hip-hop and how multiple modes are used to create meaning in songs (Onanuga & Onanuga 2020; Olayemi, 2020; Oyeleye & Gbadegesin, 2020), such studies have not engaged with the lyrical and multimodal construction of crime in Naira Marley's songs. This study fills this observed gap in the literature by analysing selected songs of NM, focusing on the multimodal portrayal of crime. It is important to engage NM's songs multimodally to unravel how he employs language and other modes to make crime appealing to the youth and how he uses different modes to shape the youth culture in Nigeria.

Review of Earlier Studies

The role of language in shaping societal ideologies cannot be overemphasised. Language serves as the connection between social processes and people's understanding of their world. In his statement on how language is used to spread ideologies, Fairclough (2005) posits that language is a tool of power and control and a communication medium. Language is also an effective means of ideology transmission and power enforcement. In addition to giving people categories and models for thought, language affects how people perceive the outer world. Odebunmi (2016) says that language is a uniquely human attribute that has enabled the human species to express itself. The statement implies that language is a means of expressing and gaining access to human philosophies. Therefore, it expresses ideologies. Ideology is a complex and very flexible concept. It is a set of values that directs and shapes a person's or a group's action and behaviour. It is the foundation for any political, economic, religious, or social framework. According to Chilwa (2013, p. 239), it is "a set of beliefs, socio-political and cultural convention upon which people's actions or discursive practices are based." Ideology is the way that people express their ideas, emotions, and life experiences.

Language and ideology are dialectically related since language is a vehicle through which ideologies are conveyed and articulated in discourse. Language users' worldview is shaped by their interactions with their community's institutions and socioeconomic structures (Fowler & Kress, 1979). Fairclough (1992) (cited in Ike-Nwafor 2015, p. 5) asserts that "every language use is ideologically motivated, and all linguistic usages encode different ideologies resulting from their different situations and purposes; and that by these means, every language works as a form of social practice." In his analysis of the relationship between language and ideology, van Dijk (2011) notes that ideological analysis of language and discourse are critical endeavour in the humanities and social sciences because speakers' or authors' ideologies can be discovered through attentive reading, comprehension, or methodical language study.

Ideologies are also communicated multimodally. Multimodal text analysis may show how different semiotic resources, or modes, support the creation of ideological discourses by "taking the power of description so useful for drawing out buried ideologies in linguistic-based CDA to be applied to other communicative modes," (Machin, 2013, p. 348). As Ademilokun (2020) asserts, multimodal resources are purveyors of ideologies and identities. Also, ideological values are expressed through visual components alongside linguistic resources (Ginting & Pulungan, 2024). Joyce and Gaudin (2007) also state that visual aids may be employed to represent the actual world (interpersonal meaning), organise the purpose of multimodal texts (textual meaning) and establish relationships with readers. Just like other domains of language use, entertainment media including music are sites for the expression of ideologies. Machin and van Leeuwen (2016) argue that political ideologies are infused into culture more widely including media entertainments. The implication is that ideologies and identities are located in such productions as popular music and they are articulated through multiple modes in their music videos.

Existing studies on popular music in Nigeria has examined such issues as protest and revolution (Akingbe & Onanuga, 2020), sexuality (Onanuga & Onanuga, 2020; Olayemi, 2020) and linkages between transportation, rurality/urbanity, and popular music (Sylvanus, 2020), among others. Although these issues are ideological and can be explored multimodally, only Olayemi (2020) attempts a multimodal exploration focusing on gender and sexuality. She argues that the use of derogatory language and images to describe female characters in pop music primarily frames them as sex commodities, which calls into question the dignity of African women. Eze (2020) examines how patriarchal institutions are shown and regularly employed in popular culture. The study explains how hip-hop culture originated in America and has been taken, promoted, and disseminated throughout Nigeria. Eze claims that sexism and the objectification of women as sexual symbols are global trends in hip-hop. Sexist representations of women in music, films, and other media uphold these clichés. Through content analysis, the study explores the politics surrounding the overtly sexualized portrayals of women in Wizkid's music and argues that contemporary depictions of women are at odds with those seen in pre-hip hop music genres. The study argues that derogatory language objectifies women and fosters a culture that is supposedly masculine.

The present study extends the multimodal analysis of popular music in Nigeria to the articulation of crime in the music videos of NM. It focuses on how multiple

modes are deployed in these videos to portray crime as acceptable and necessary for success.

Research Method

The data for this study are collected from five music videos of Naira Marley's songs namely: *Soapy*, *Yahoo Boy* (ft. Zlatan), *Japa*, *Vawulence*, and *As E Dey Go*. These music videos are purposively selected from three albums with 25 tracks based on their relevance to the theme of crime. The study is qualitative and Machin and Ledin's (2018) model of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis has been adopted for the data analysis. This approach to MCDA emphasizes the interaction of text, participant, actions, objects, angles and proximity in the articulation of sociocultural and sociopolitical issues as well as the production of meaning. According to Jimaima (2016), "communication and representation always draw on a multiplicity of semiotic modes of which language may be one" (pp. 67–68), further undermine this notion. Kress (2010) also states that a multimodal approach views verbalised or scripted language as one of many modalities used to express meaning. This implies that communicating meaning involves more than just language modalities.

For Machin and Ledin (2018), the text is at the micro level of communication. The text is part of a social grouping, a culture and a tradition of shared belief. These social groupings which includes artifacts and technologies such as cameras, computers and writing systems forms the macro-level of communication and the resources here are channeled to meaning making in line with a particular cultural tradition. In between the micro and macro-level, we find the meso-level of communication which embodies the canon of use and the contextual use of semiotic resources. The focus of Machin and Ledin is the meso level. That is, a text is a semiotic device embodying a whole lot of other semiotic material because it draws on elements such as the canon of use and context to make a whole meaning. This theory is considered appropriate since multiple modes are used in music videos to articulate meaning and sustain audience attention.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Naira Marley is a famous Nigerian musician whose music is known for its explicit lyrics and controversial themes. His songs often feature themes of crime, which have drawn criticism and sometimes praise from the public. This analysis focuses on the multimodal portrayal of crime in his music videos. Despite popular music being distinguished by the presence of its rhythm and harmony (Ebebe et al., 2021), some of the songs in this genre have elements suggesting crime. These elements are often expressed both overtly and covertly. Lyrical construction, images, objects, and gestures could be used to suggest crimes like cyber fraud, assassination, violence, gang involvement, and drug use. The consumers of this music, mostly youths, are subtly led to crime as a substitute for hard work. This alternative way of life deviates from society's norms and moral standards (Tade, 2019; Ebebe et al., 2021). The linguistic and pictorial portrayal of crimes in Naira Marley's songs are presented below.

1. Repetition

Repetition describes the reiteration of specific words or phrases for the sake of emphasis and to enhance memorability. According to Royce (2007) (cited in Muhassin

et al. 2022, p. 14), “repetition in multimodal discourse takes into account the emergence of verbal elements that represent the same meaning as visual objects.” Repetition is used to encode and emphasise the relentless effort made by the singer to escape and evade punishment for the crime he has committed. The recurring phrase “Popo behind my back” captures his attempt to escape.” This repetition explains the constant presence and pressure from the police (“popo”) in the narrator’s life. Some examples are:

Excerpt 1, “Japa”

Popo behind my back and I aint gonna stop
(The police are after me and I’m not stopping)
Owo tollgate yen
(the tollgate fee)
Mi oni le san
(I won’t be able to pay)
I’m on bail
(I am on the run)
I’m sorry mi o ni le lo (mi oni le lo)
(I’m sorry, I won’t be able to go)
I’m on the run o, catch me if you can
Japa, japa, japa lo London - japa lo London
(Japa, japa, japa to London - japa to London)
Japa, japa ja to Canada - japa to Canada
(Japa, japa enter Canada - japa to Canada)
Japa, japa ja wo Chicago - japa to Chicago
(Japa, japa enter Chicago - japa to Chicago)
Japa, japa, ja lo si Africa - japa to Africa
(Japa, japa, go to Africa - japa to Africa)
Popo behind my back
(The police are after me!)
Popo behind my back and I aint gonna stop
(The police are after me and I’m not stopping)
Popo at ma house asking me questions
But I aint gon talk....



Image 1: The artist trying to escape from the reach of police men

Excerpt 2, “Vawulence”

We are the violent youngsters your mother warned you about.
What the fuck are you actually discussing? (Gangster moves soundlessly.)
You already know that I'm fleeing (screw the trident, OTR)
Your mother forewarned you about us kids—nigga, we're violent...

....

Turn a Q to a ounce
Turn a ounce to a nine
And the box came with a strap
Strap came in the box
The gun's real not props
I aint gon talk



Image 2: The artist unboxing a gun

Excerpt 3: “Am I a Yahoo boy”

Shey mo jo omo yahoo
(Do I look like a yahoo boy?)
Shey won ko yahoo si mi lori ni
(Do I have yahoo inscribed on my forehead?)
Am I a yahoo boy

In excerpt 1, the singer repeats some lexical items such as ‘I am’ ‘japa’ which means run away or migrate, ‘on bail’ and ‘popo behind my back’. The repetition in excerpt 1 alongside image 1 encodes and emphasises the relentless effort made by the singer to evade punishment for the crime he has committed. His attempt to escape is captured in the recurring phrase “Popo behind my back” in excerpt 1 and the image of running ahead of a police car in image 1.” This repetition explains the constant presence and pressure from the police (“popo”) in the narrator’s life. The fact that the police always pursue the singer signals his incessant involvement in crime. The constant attempt to escape punishment also indicates his lack of remorse and willingness to continue committing the crime he is involved in.

The recurring phrase “Popo behind my back” exemplifies the singer’s constant entanglement with the police, emphasising an unbroken cycle of criminality and evasion. The data analysis suggests that repetition, in this case, does not merely reflect a narrative but also constructs the persona’s worldview, one marked by defiance, lack of remorse and an unrepentant attitude toward criminality. It signals a normalisation of crime and its accompanying lifestyle.

Repetition is also seen in excerpt 2 and is used to emphasise themes of violence and evasion. Phrases like “We are the violent youngsters your mother warned you about” and “What the fuck you really talking ’bout?” recur throughout the song, underscoring the defiant and rebellious attitude of the persona. The repeated use of “Turn a...” and “to a...” highlights the transition from a modest way of life into one

involving crime and violence. This chain repetition, “...a Q to a ounce, ...a ounce to a nine” and “the box came with a strap, the strap came in the box” reveals a sensitive object—a gun and this line is visually captured in image 2 where a gun is unboxed by the artiste. The physical presence of a gun is meant to reinforce the theme of crime in the lyrics.

Repetitions like “We da kids your mama warned you about” and “Am I a yahoo boy?” reinforce themes of defiance and provoke societal judgments. The singer employs repetition to challenge stereotypes, reflect stigmatisation, and justify his stance within a socio-economic context that necessitates a defiant behaviour. This challenges the listeners to question societal structures that label individuals without addressing underlying systemic issues like poverty, lack of opportunities, or inequality. It also highlights the duality of music as both a reflection of reality and a tool for subversion.

The phrase “Am I a yahoo boy?” is also repeated in excerpt 3, emphasising the issue of crime and success. This repetition challenges and provokes the listener to question societal judgments and the stigmatisation of certain behaviours. Although, the repetition creates a rhythmic structure that enhances the musicality of the songs, it serves to embed the song’s central message into the listener’s mind. The interplay between repetition and rhythm draws attention to how music is a powerful mnemonic device, embedding societal critiques or messages in listeners’ consciousness. This ensures that the song’s themes remain relevant beyond its immediate context.

2. Rhetorical Question

According to Biezma and Rawlins (2017), rhetorical questions have the texture of assertions. It strengthens the assertion in a text. Here are some instances of rhetorical questions in the data:

Excerpt 4: “Japa”

I saw nothing, and I have no knowledge of anything.
Ki lemimo (what was I even aware of?)

Excerpt 5: “Vawulence”

How many man have I put underground?
To Baba God, how many men have we sent?, ah?

Excerpt 6: “Am I a yahoo boy”

Am I a yahoo boy?
E ra mi egba mi o
(Please save me)
Shey mo jo omo yahoo?
(Do I look like a yahoo boy)
Am I a yahoo boy
Emi hotmail mo fine gan
Am not a yahoo boy
But contact me
Naira Marley at yahoo dot com

....

Oya yahoo yahoo
K'oloun ma je ka Damu
(May we not be troubled)
Maga to Sanwo mi se
(The victim paying my money)

...

Yahoo yahoo
K'oloun ma je ka Damu
(May we not be troubled)
Maga to fun mi lowo steady se
(It is the victim that is paying me steadily)

...

Olopa kole mu wa, Tani sars fe mulo ni bi?
(The police cant catch, who are the policemen going to catch here)?

In excerpt 4, rhetorical question is used to emphasise the narrator's refusal to cooperate with authorities or comply societal norms. The artist refuses arrest and cooperation with the police as he claims he would rather die than go to the station and answer to police interrogation. His lyrics are further buttressed by video scenes of him trying to run away from the reach of the police as seen in image 1. By trying to evade arrest, interrogation and punishment, he promotes the disruptions of law and order. The singer also subtly encourages such evasion when youths are faced with similar situation.

In excerpt 5, rhetorical questions are used to establish the assertion that the artist and his gangs are murderers, hence their involvement with the police. Špago (2016) argues that rhetorical questions differ from answer-seeking questions primarily because they aim to persuade the audience to accept the seemingly obvious answer implied by the speaker rather than eliciting a verbal response. In excerpt 6, the repeated rhetorical question "Am I a Yahoo boy?" engages the listener, prompting them to consider the implications of labeling someone a criminal based on appearances or assumptions. Although the artist dissociates himself from cybercrime (Yahoo), he stated later in the lyrics that he prays that the 'maga' paying him will maintain a good relationship with him. His use of 'maga' which connotes a victim of cyberfraud suggests that he is indeed involved in the crime. "Tani SARS fe mu lo ni bi?" (Who is SARS going to arrest here) in excerpt 7 challenges the Special Anti-Robbery Squad which saddled with the responsibility of arresting and prosecuting people involved in crime including internet fraud. The rhetorical question reinforces the aggressive and defiant nature of the artist and his gang.

Rhetorical questions in this analysis are a strategic tool to assert dominance, challenge authority, and engage the audience. These devices deepen the narrative's complexity and invite listeners into an interactive discourse, blurring the lines between performance, identity, and reality. The analysis effectively demonstrates how rhetorical questions shape the artist's persona and provoke critical engagement with societal issues.

3. Colloquialism

Colloquial words are lexical innovations used by a group of individuals to facilitate social interaction. Such expressions are often used to create group identity. Naira Marley's song is rich in slang and colloquial expressions. In excerpt one, expressions such as: "Japa" (a Yoruba term meaning to run away), "popo" (police), and "Owo tollgate yen" (that tollgate fee meaning bribe) are expressions within the Yoruba cultural and linguistic context as well as the Nigerian street culture. These expressions are understood by Nigerian, especially those who are grounded in street discourse. Since these expressions are not understood by everyone, they serve as a unique medium of communication between the youth that identify as Marlians. In excerpts 2& 6, Naira Marley uses "yahoo boy" (a term for internet fraudsters in Nigeria) and "maga" (a term for someone who is easily deceived) to question the identification of his gang with a fraudulent identity. Although he denies being associated with the cybercrime, he states that he could be contacted through a yahoo mail and also that the source of his income is from a maga (a victim of cyber fraud). By these statements, the artiste confirms the public insinuations that he is involved in cyberfraud but challenges those who think so to provide the evidence. He expresses the wish that his victim (maga) will continue to pay. The subtle conflicting ideas presented in the excerpts reinforces the unrepentant identity of the social group identified with the artiste.

Malyuga and Yermishina (2021) further note that such language is characterised by its emotional and expressive qualities, typical of stylistically non-standard vocabulary. Terms like "Q," "ounce," "bando," and "Popo" (police) reflect the vernacular of street culture and the underground economy. This linguistic choice authenticates the persona's voice and creates a strong connection with listeners who share or understand this linguistic code. Therefore, these codes are a means of inclusion and exclusion. While those who understand the code are perceived as belonging to the social group, others, who are unable to decode the meaning of the expressions are perceived as outsiders.

4. Symbolism

Symbolism uses an object to represent a concept, idea, action or belief. According to Saint-Dizier (2020), through its macro and micro structures, music communicates various symbolic elements, including characteristic numbers and proportions. These elements can be identified within the structure of motifs or the framework of musical development. These symbols help to construct a narrative that critiques societal structures and celebrates individual agency. Symbolism is used in Excerpt 1 to convey indirect meanings. The "tollgate" which serves as a point where people pay to access an area is used in excerpt one to mean bribe. It symbolises the fact that Naira Marley who represents his group needs to bribe some people to gain access into some areas or escape sanctions. The fact that he decides not to pay the bribe leads to his constant attempt to escape from the police officers. "Popo" (police) in the same excerpt symbolises authority, while "japa" symbolises freedom as well as resistance. Symbolism is also used in excerpt 2 as captured in "guns" and "straps" which symbolise power, danger, and the ever-present threat of violence, while "main man in a box" is a grim metaphor for death and loss.

The analysis of these scenes demonstrates the strategic use of visual elements, such as objects, participants, actions, angles, and proximity, to symbolically represent themes of crime, dominance, and rebellion.

5. Objects

Objects are significant items in a picture that are used to encode meaning. The following pictures are examples of scenes that contain objects suggesting crime in the selected songs:



Image 3: The artist pouring a liquid substance on someone forcefully held down.



Image 4: A gangster pointing a broken bottle

In image 3, the primary focus object is the liquid substance being poured on a victim. The body posture of the actor who is pouring the liquid and that of the victim who is the receiver of the action emphasise the power difference between the two actors. The object is the symbol of control which is used to subdue the victim.

The primary object in image 3 is the broken red bottle held by a young man. This object suggests violence or threat commonly associated with aggressive or defensive actions in a conflict situation. The bottle's red colour intensifies the danger it symbolises. Another significant object is uncompleted building where the aggressive act is being performed. The house symbolises secrecy often associated with aggressive behaviour and crime and isolation which could be responsible for the aggression. The primary object in image 4 is the gun and the box with which it is packed. The presence of a gun suggests violence and danger. The unboxing suggests that the actor recently purchased the object which could be to defend themselves or attack others. It also signals that there could be a new development that necessitated possessing such ammunition. The image reveals the artist in a dark room with light only focused on the artist and the gun. While darkness depicts secrecy, lightning is used to foreground the artist and the gun while other items or persons in the room are backgrounded. The implication is that both the artiste and the gun are the focus of attention. The gun in the image amplifies the message of the spoken words: "How many men have I put underground? "How many men have we sent to Baba God?" The artiste subtly suggests that they have killed many people, he also reveals the gun as the weapon used to achieve this action.

6. Participant

Participants are the social actors present at a physical location and involved in the performance of an action. There are two participants in image 3. The performer of the action holds a bottle and tries to force the receiver to take the content of the bottle. The image reveals the power relations between the participants with the performer of the action holding more power than the receiver. There is only one participant in image 4 and this participants holds a broken bottle in an offensive way. His aggressive posture and pointing to the broken bottle portrays him as fearless and ready to attack as a way of protecting himself.



Image 5: Gang members running to engage in violence (As E Dey Go, 0:50)



Image 6: Members of a gang performing an action (As E dey Go, 2:03)

Participants in image 5 are running out of a bush. Their body posture and gesture symbolises escape. While this could interpret as freedom or liberation, it could also mean rushing out to engage in a form of violence or escaping from a violent scene. The bush in the background is significant to the interpretation of the image. The participants presents a united front with a form of synchronism in the body posture and gesture which suggests that the bush is a place of common action and the participants have a common goal. This can be a hideout or a place where they jointly committed a crime. The synchronism is also seen in image 6 where the participants adopts the same body posture, head movement and hand movement. These modes signal that they are united in their actions and reveals that they belong to the same group. The dim light in the room obscures the action being performed. The choice of lightning reveals that the action has to be concealed from the public gaze. Apart from the light which intensifies the feeling of secrecy and danger in the room, the barricade made from iron and the small window contributes to the meaning of the site as a place of restraint.

7. Actions and Indexical Link

‘While photographs depict persons and settings, they also depict actions and behaviours which could be read through indexical signs’ (Ledin and Machin 2018, p. 73). Actions refer to the movements and gestures performed by the participants and these actions could index their emotional, mental, verbal or material processes.



Image 7: A container for soap

In the case of the “Soapy” dance, the actions involve a specific dance moves that is sexually provocative and indexes masturbation. Also, the bottle in image 7 clearly has soapy written on it. Although the bottle is a container for soap which should ordinarily be used for washing, the soapy on it indicates that it is used for other purposes in this case masturbation as suggested by the lyrics in excerpt 7 below:

Excerpt 7

This brother is dancing 'soapy'
 Soapy (Soapy)
 Are you also soapy?
 Soapy (Soapy)
 A single father is dancing 'soapy'
 Soapy, don't use OMO when you go soapy
 (Soapy!)

In image 4, the action of holding and pointing a broken bottle indexes aggression and threat. These gestures suggest imminent violence or a challenge to power. The participant's stance and body posture convey his readiness to act and his intent to intimidate or harm. The action of unboxing a gun in Image 2 is significant as it implies preparation for a violent act. How the participant handles the gun and his body posture are pointers to his intentions and emotions. He looks intently at the gun with admiration and one could see that his thought is focused on either how the gun looks or what he could use the gun to do. Images 5 and 6 also index crime and violence. The fact that the participants in image 5 are running implies that they are running out to engage in a criminal act or violence. Excerpt 8 reinforces this assertion.

Excerpt 8

You know as e dey go
Oun yo igo n'waju awon oro
(You brought out a bottle before a violent gang)
Wa dorun bo
(You will have a near death experience)
O tun ni se iru e mo
(You will never repeat the act)

8. Angles and Proximity

Angle is the viewpoint from which a camera points to an object, and proximity is the distance and closeness of an object to the camera. There are the vertical, horizontal and oblique angles of shooting which places items or participants on different levels of proximity. Both the angle and proximity of taking a picture or shooting a scene add different layers of meaning to the general meaning communicated by the image. For instance, the angle and proximity of the participant and object in the image suggest a level of intimacy and direct involvement with the object. The fact that the viewers are made to view the gun in close proximity and from the front implies that the viewers are involved in the action. The angle and proximity here is meant to strengthen the message of violence and looming danger that the song conveys.

The angle in image 3 conveyed power dynamics between the participant and the implied viewer or other participants in the narrative. The viewer is made to view the participant from the front which draws the viewers into the action being performed. Also, the vertical angle places the main participant where the viewers and other participants look up to him. This angle establish the main participant as superior to the other participants in the scene. In image 4, the shooting angle which compels the viewers to view the participant from the fronts draws the viewers closer to both the participants and his actions. The viewers are made to feel involved in the actions being performed such that the feeling of impending danger is communicated through the pointing of the broken bottle to the camera. The point of shooting in this image refers to how close the participant is to the viewers space. The spatial relationship communicates the immediacy of the threat, with closer proximity increasing the sense of danger and urgency.

The angle and proximity in image 5 reveals the escape or running from a location towards the camera which represents the viewers space. The movement towards the camera suggests that the participants are negotiating the viewers space and since the general theme of the song is violence, it suggests that the participants are about to invade the viewers space for violent act. Both the proximity and the angle draws the participants into the scene of the action. Image 8 below has an angle different from the other analysed images. The oblique angle introduces a sense of playfulness to the presentation of an otherwise serious issue.



Image 8: A participant holding a broken bottle

The use of angles and proximity in the imagery enhances the intensity and narrative focus, establishing power dynamics and evoking emotional responses from the viewer. For example, close-ups of weapons or confrontational stances emphasise immediacy and threat, while presentation of a group suggest organised violence and collective identity. This visual storytelling not only reinforces the glamorisation of criminality but also potentially normalises antisocial behaviour. The portrayal of violence and defiance in these scenes normalises rebellion against societal norms and desensitising viewers to the consequences of such actions. These representations challenge society's moral and corrective objectives by promoting an alternative narrative where power and dominance are achieved through crime and aggression.

Conclusion

This study explores the multimodal discourse strategies employed by Naira Marley in selected songs to represent crime and discourse the forms of identities advanced through the multimodal representations of crime. The analysis of the verbal and non-verbal elements in the songs reveals how crime is overtly and covertly constructed through linguistic choices, visual imagery, and rhetorical devices. The findings demonstrate that repetition, rhetorical questions, colloquial expressions among others are key tools Naira Marley employs to emphasise crime, challenge societal norms and establish his stance and personal identity. These elements work together to portray crime as an act and a lifestyle. Also, the multimodal strategies subtly influence listeners, embedding messages that celebrate evasion of law enforcement, making money through illicit means, and breaking social, moral and cultural boundaries. This portrayal raises concerns about the potential impact on listeners, particularly in a socio-cultural context where crime and youth delinquency are pressing issues.

Furthermore, colloquial language and culturally specific slang situate Naira Marley's music within a distinct Nigerian sociolinguistic framework, fostering group identity while reinforcing the themes of rebellion and street authenticity. Naira

Marley's songs exemplify the complex interplay between music, language, and socio-cultural issues. While the songs articulate specific cultural and social realities, they also perpetuate narratives that could influence behaviours and perceptions regarding crime. The study amplifies the importance of critically engaging with popular music and its multimodal discourses, as they significantly shape social attitudes and identities in contemporary Nigeria.

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