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NIGERIAN GOSPEL MUSICIANS' PERCEPTION OF ILLNESS, HEALING AND ITS RELEVANCE: SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL REALITIES

Taiye Shola Adeola
Department of Performing and Film Arts
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria

adeola.ts@unilorin.edu.ng / taiyeadeola@gmail.com

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Abstract

The popularity and influence of gospel music grows by the day in Nigeria and has drawn scholars' attention generating discussions on different aspects of it. However, the theme of illness and healing in the content of the Nigerian gospel music is an ongoing discourse. The focus of this paper is therefore, to discuss the relevance of the perception of the Nigerian gospel musicians on illness and healing to the social, economic and political realities of the country. The qualitative methodology is engaged with content and discographical analysis of some Nigerian gospel songs in order to discuss the manifestations of illness and healing in the songs and to discuss their relevance to the social, economic and political realities of the country. Interview with some gospel musicians is also employed. The paper relies on George Soros' reflexivity theory as its theoretical framework. It is observed that there are terms, descriptions and symbolic representations in the gospel songs for illness and healing that are not unconnected with the expressions used in the context of the culture and traditions within which the musicians grow. The paper concludes that the gospel musicians' perception of illness and healing is relevant to the social, economic and political realities of Nigeria because they help in the identification of the dimensions of illness, give insight into the real state of affairs, air the views of the citizens, react to the situation that they identify and proffer what they perceive as solution to the identified problems.

Keywords: *Nigerian gospel music, illness and healing, musicians' perception, political realities*

1. Introduction

The dominance of music as part of the people's culture and the attraction and attachment of the society to it at various levels is strong enough to arouse a sociological curiosity. Current trends

as evident in music performance and patronage in Nigeria reveal that religious music has gained prominence and has become a force to reckon with and a subject of academic discourse. The popularity of various forms of religious music in Nigeria grows by the day and one of such musical types that have developed over the years and has become popular in Nigeria is Gospel music. The Nigerian gospel music has become an instrument in shaping the country's cultural and spiritual landscape. With its blend of traditional and contemporary styles, Nigerian gospel music has become an integral part of the Nigerian identity engaging various themes and discussing contemporary issues as they find relevance from time to time and offering a message of hope, comfort and redemption to the patrons. However, beyond the entertainment and spiritual values, Nigerian gospel music also reflects the complex social, economic and political realities of the country.

Gospel musicians as influential voices in Nigerian society play a crucial role in shaping public discourse and influencing attitudes towards health, illness, and healing. Their music often reflects their own experiences, hopes and struggles, providing a unique window into the complexities of Nigerian life. Through their lyrics, Nigerian gospel musicians address issues such as poverty, sickness, and injustice, offering messages of hope to their audiences. This paper examines the intersection of Nigerian gospel music, illness and healing and explores the Nigerian gospel musicians' perception of illness and healing and its relevance to the country's social, economic and political context.

2. Theoretical Framework and Review of Related Literature

The theoretical framework for this paper is reflexivity theory, which is a concept in social sciences and philosophy that examines how individuals and researchers' own thoughts, feelings and experiences influence their understanding of the world. According to investopedia.com (2025) Reflexivity theory as propounded by George Soros describes how people's perceptions and actions influence reality, and that reality, in turn, shapes their perceptions, creating self-reinforcement in social and economic systems. This theory is relevant to the exploration of the perception of the Nigerian gospel musicians of illness and healing especially in relation to the country's social, economic, and political context because it suggests that individual's beliefs, values and experiences shape their understanding of reality.

In the context of Nigerian gospel music, reflexivity theory can help us to understand how musician's perception of illness and healing are influenced by their own experiences, cultural background, and social environment. In this regard, we gain insight into how musicians perceive illness and healing and how these perceptions relate to the broader social, economic and political context.

As observed from Adeola (2025), the constantly growing popularity and influence of the Nigerian gospel music has drawn the attention of many scholars generating discussions on different aspects of it ranging from historical, structural, musical, sociological, textual, and theological to extramusical, performance and ethnomusicological. Obi (2020) explores the history and development of Nigerian gospel music, from its roots in traditional church music to its current global popularity. The author notes that Nigerian gospel music has become a significant part of popular culture, providing a sense of relief and hope for many Nigerians. Ayorinde and Ajose (2022) in their discussions on music and spirituality in Africa explore gospel music as one of the ways people negotiate spirituality and everyday meaning-making in Lagos. The authors provide insight into ways in which people perform spirituality and negotiate wellbeing amidst Nigeria's social, political, and economic uncertainty. Agbo and Sylvanus (2023) focused their discussions on how trends in contemporary Nigerian popular gospel music shape religious pedagogy, presenting evidence of convergence between the sacred and popular

culture to reveal both engaging and emerging ways for communicating theological truths in Nigeria. Adedeji (2023) in a paper titled “Rhythm and Beat in Contemporary Nigerian Music: Gospel Music as a Case Study” establish, describe and analyse the theory and practice of rhythm and beat in Nigerian gospel music as a hybrid of church and popular music. The author shows that there are diversities of rhythmic and beat structures, and patterns drawn from Western and African styles. In addition, there are features that are common to some gospel styles just as there are distinguishing features. The author concluded that rhythm and beat constitute parts of stylistic elements of Nigerian gospel music. Motito, et al. (2025) discussed “Code mixing in the gospel songs of some Nigerian Music Artistes”. The authors explore and examine the various reasons why codemixing is employed in the gospel music industry in order to identify the limitations inherent in the conveyance of thoughts.

Despite the scholastic engagements in the study of various aspects of its history (Adjagbara, 2023; Obi, 2020), sociology (Osugwu, 2023), music (Adedeji, 2023), ethnomusicology (Oikelome, 2010), theology (Ayorinde & Ajose, 2022; Agbo & Sylvanus, 2023), Codemixing (Motito et al., 2025) and so on, the theme of illness and healing in the content of the Nigerian gospel music is still an ongoing discourse to which this paper is contributing. We have in previous works discussed the Concepts and Symbolic Representations of Illness and Healing in Selected Nigerian Gospel Songs (Adeola, 2019) and Factors Responsible for the occurrence of Themes of Illness and Healing in Selected Nigerian Gospel Songs (Adeola, 2020). The focus of this paper is to discuss the relevance of the perception of the Nigerian gospel musicians on illness and healing to the social, economic and political realities of the country.

3. Methodology

The qualitative methodology is engaged with hermeneutical and content analysis, musicological and discography in order to discuss the manifestations of illness and healing as they are presented in the songs and to examine the gospel musicians’ perception of illness and healing. Firstly, some recordings of ten purposively selected Gospel musicians made between 1980 and 2007 were collected from archives of recording studios in Ilorin, Ibadan, Lagos, and Akure. These recordings were analysed in terms of their themes, theological contents, gender categorisation and historical context. Secondly, interviews were conducted with the selected gospel musicians to obtain information about the development of gospel musical groups, processes of recording, distribution of gospel music, the theology underpinning their songs, the impact they are making among Nigerians and their perception of illness and healing. Data collected were analysed contextually and hermeneutically. Lastly, secondary sources such as books, articles in learned journals, newspaper articles, internet resources, were consulted. The paper relies on George Soros’ reflexivity theory as its theoretical framework.

4. Discussion of Findings

4.1. Conceptualising Illness and Healing

It is important that a definition of the terms, illness and healing be given in the specific context of this discussion in order to be guided in the use of the terms. Illness is a state of disorder or dysfunction which is manifested in physical, psychological, spiritual, political, economical and social lives of the people. Healing is the process and methods of rectifying or restoring the various disorders identified as illness to normalcy. Mbiti (1969) submits that it is a common believe among Africans that sickness, like all cases of misfortune, finds its true explanation in mystical cosmic reality. This position is corroborated by Oguntibeju (2025), who stated that “African culture believes that illness is not solely physical but also involves spiritual and

emotional imbalance” (p. 18), therefore, traditional healing practices often include rituals, ceremonies and spiritual interventions. Schiefelbein citing Rucker (1999) also submits:

Illness and Healing in African cultural contexts presuppose a world view distinct from the mechanistic-rational and scientific world view of the west. Nevertheless African intellectuals remind us that the basis of their cultural identity is neither primitive nor lacking in scientific logic, but that it questions the exclusivity claimed by western science. (p.14)

This African world view about the causes of physical illness is also carried into every sphere of the African life. Social disorder, political instability as well as economic problems are believed to have mystical dimensions as such the cure or resolutions of all these problems are pursued exploring spiritual means. This is rooted in the African worldview expressed in the symbiotic relationship between the physical and the spiritual worlds. As revealed in the works of many scholars the various religious inclinations of Christianity, Islam and African traditional religion all hold these views of the mystical or spiritual dimensions of the causes and cure of illness.

Illness is perceived by the Nigerian gospel musicians either as a temporary or permanent damage that has been caused to individuals or the country as a result of personal carelessness, leadership selfishness, individual godlessness and national sinfulness. The use of symbolic representations by the musicians relating the subject of illness to various aspects of individual, communal and national lives implies that several things, issues or situations are referred to or regarded as illnesses from which individuals and the society have to be healed. Some examples of things for which people require healing are sin, poverty, laziness, hunger, political instability, economic failure and crisis, insecurity, social disorder or evil in the society, set back of any kind in business, academics, corruption, and religious unrest. Physical or bodily infirmities and sicknesses are also referred to and presented in form of prayer songs requesting that God will not allow sickness to afflict them or pray that it is taken away if it already occurred. One can conclude that in the mind of the gospel musicians illness is considered not only in terms of loss of physical health which will require medical attention but also in terms of things not working as it should be in individual’s life, communal and national lives. It is often perceived as a state of disorder characterised by hardship, suffering, chaos, poverty, and other adverse conditions affecting individuals, communities, or nations. Such a condition is understood to require not only spiritual or divine intervention but also political, economic, and social renewal in order to achieve meaningful healing and liberation. Healing is simply the restoration, repair, recovery or divine intervention that brings relief from all the pains and other consequences of the illness. For some illnesses, healing is considered to have taken place when provision is made for the things that were lacked. For example, healing comes for joblessness the day that the one plagued with the ailment of joblessness gets a job. While in other cases it is considered in terms of termination of some things such as removal of leaders perceived as evil or wicked. It is also considered in terms of restoration of things such as physical health, wealth, joy, peace to a nation and such other things. Healing is also considered in terms of method and process of healing; people that will bring the healing and timing of the healing. Hastings (1976, p. 60) observes and rightly so that “African concepts of health and sickness were an absolutely integral part of the single mesh of social structure and religious consciousness inside which people lived unhesitatingly”. Healing is regarded as relevant or needed in all spheres of the individual’s and nation’s life namely political, economic, spiritual and social. For example, the reign of political leaders that are considered not to be fulfilling the yearnings of the electorate is regarded as a period of illness for which people will pray to be delivered. As soon as such political leaders are removed healing is believed to have taken place. The authoritarian military era is a good example of a time when Nigerians considered

leadership as a form of illness from which Nigerians prayed fervently to be healed. The jubilation that greeted the death of General Sani Abacha, the Nigerian military head of state 1993 - 1997 is a proof of this position.

The method of healing refers to the means through which healing is being sought or will come. Usually it is both divine and human. Although greater emphasis is placed on the divine by asking God to step in and use his power to turn the situations around, reference is also being made to the human dimension and the kind of healing it can provide, such as calling on the government to equip the hospitals, citizens to be law abiding, youths to shun vices, civil servants to be committed and faithful and so on. The process of healing refers to the stages that have to be passed through before healing will take place. It is common to hear in the gospel songs a call for people to pray, humble themselves and seek the face of God so that he (God) can deliver them from their predicaments and heal the land. Individual and national revival, political stability, good leadership, good electoral process are some of the processes that are believed will bring the desired healing.

God, the people and institutions are the instruments to be used for the healing and the timing relates to the duration of the healing. Generally, Gospel musicians believe that God is powerful and with him nothing is impossible, that is why reference is constantly being made to divine healing for all forms of illnesses. Individuals in their capacities are believed to have spheres of influence in bringing about healing especially to the nation. Institutions like government establishments, religious bodies, and educational institutions are also believed to have roles to play in bringing healing. Reference is often made to how long the suffering (illness) of a person or nation have lasted, how long they have waited for healing and the expression of hope that it will soon be over and the desired healing will come. It is common to hear requests through songs for immediate and total healing. The kind of people needed for national healing include God fearing leaders, dedicated work force, faithful and honest business men and women, committed spiritual leaders, personal commitment to good living such as avoiding what is considered sinful and anti-social acts like smoking, drinking, sexual immorality, embezzlement, laziness at work and so on.

4.2 Perception of Illness and Healing in Nigerian Gospel Music

Evangelist Bola Are in one of her songs gives insight into the meaning of illness and healing as perceived by the Nigerian gospel musicians. An excerpt is given below:

SÙGBÓN KAN NÍ BE LÁYÉ MI ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Chorus:

<i>Sùgbón kan ní be láyé mi</i>	There is a predicament in my life
<i>Èmi kò fě e mó látòní lo</i>	I do not want it from today henceforth
<i>Oba tó wo sùgbón Jábésì</i>	The king who healed Jabesh's but
<i>Wo sùgbón ayé mi</i>	Heal the predicament in my life

Solo:

<i>Àìlówó lówó, sùgbón ni</i>	Poverty is a predicament
<i>Àìrómobí sùgbon</i>	Childlessness is a predicament
<i>Gbèsè àti àgbàná, sùgbón ni</i>	Depth and waste
<i>Àìtegbé n kó?</i>	Not measuring up to one's equal
<i>Àìréni-boni-lásìírí</i>	Not getting help
<i>Ìsòro àtódúmó dún</i>	Persistent problems
<i>O n sísé bí erin</i>	Working like an elephant
<i>Ò n jẹje ilíri</i>	But eating like a tiny ant

<i>Àìlòko gidi</i>	Not having a responsible husband
<i>Àìláya rere</i>	Not having a good wife
<i>Àìlówó lówó,</i>	Not having money
<i>Èmí èsè nínú ayé re</i>	The spirit of sin in your life
<i>Àinísé lówó sugbon ni</i>	Joblessness
<i>Ài tégbé ñkó</i>	Not measuring up to one's equal
<i>Ó je tàárò kò sí talé</i>	Eating breakfast and unable to eat dinner
<i>Àìlálàáfíà ñ kó?</i>	Not having good health
<i>Àìkólé ñkó?</i>	Inability to build a house
<i>Jésù jòwó ràn mí lówó</i>	Jesus please help me
<i>Kójú ó t'elégàn mi láyé</i>	Let my mockers be put to shame
<i>Oba tó wo sùgbón Jábésì</i>	The king who healed Jabesh's predicament
<i>Wo sùgbón ayé mi</i>	Heal the predicament in my life

The above song by Evangelist Bola Are is based on the Biblical story of Jabesh (recorded in 1Chronicles 4:9-10) who was named a child of sorrow because of the circumstances surrounding his birth and as a result was not doing well. However, after he prayed to God, everything was turned around positively for him. Bola is based in Ibadan, Oyo State known for her unique style of praise and prayer songs is one of the leading female gospel musicians in Nigeria. She used figurative and symbolic expression in this song to paint the picture of illness and healing. “*Sugbon*” which literally means “but” is referred to in this song as a question mark, limitation or inadequacy in a person’s life that has to be healed by God. The illness which can manifest in form of poverty, not being able to feed well, joblessness, barrenness, and difficulty in getting a wife or husband, is being presented in form of a prayer to be healed by God.

Reference to healing in this song is specifically in the last two lines of the chorus even though all those things listed as “*Sugbon*” (but) are things for which healing is required. “*Oba to wo sugbon Jabesi, wo sugbon aiye mi*” (The king who healed Jabesh’s “but”, heal the “but” in my life) The term king is usually used in reference to God and this is obvious because the story being referred to says “And Jabesh called on the God of Israel...And God granted him that which he requested” (2 Chronicles.4:10a KJV) “*Wo*” in this song means heal. In the Yoruba context of traditional medicine “wo” can also literally mean look after or take care of, all in the context of healing. “wo” from the Yoruba word “iwosan” (healing) or “wosan” (heal) is used in the overall context of the need for healing or restoration. In the song the previous state of Jabesh before he prayed to God is regarded as illness and after he prayed, he was healed and consequently became prosperous and more honourable than his brethren. The same picture is being painted in this song by Bola Are that one who is poor, jobless, childless, without a wife or husband though one is of age or even one who is married but the partner is not responsible or doing well, is sick and needs the healing that will turn around those negative situations into positive ones. Reference is also made to lack of sound health in the song. “*Ailalafia*” (lack of good health) is considered a ‘but’ that needs to be healed. According to Bola Are, this song was inspired by the Biblical story of Jabez as well as the reality of people’s negative situations and experiences that needs divine intervention.

Another song by late Bayo Adegboyega also gives us insight into the gospel musicians’ concept of illness and healing. An excerpt below:

IRE OWÓ, OMO, ÀLÁÁFÍÀ	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
Chorus:	
<i>Má fì kan gbà kan lówó mi</i>	Do not give one and take another

Ire owó, omo, àlááfíà ni mò ñ fé o

I want the blessings of money, children and health

Solo:

Bówó bá ti dé, kómo má mà kú

My child should not die when I become rich

Bówó bá ti wà, ká lálàáfíà

When I have children let me have sound health

Báfinisùn bá fejó mi sùn ó

When the accuser reports me to you

Bàbá mí mó má se gbó o

Holy father do not listen

Kókóró olá, kókóró iyè

Key to wealth, key to life

Owó Olórun lo mà wà

Are in the hand of God

*Èdá, yéé léri mo nígbà tí Olórun ti jù
ó lo*

The creature should stop bragging because God is greater than you

*Alèpara-má-lè-pokàn mi ò gbára lé o
mó*

I no longer trust one who can kill the body and cannot kill the soul

*Nípa igbàgbó o, olúwa yóó sèyí tó
dára*

By faith God will do that which is good

Chorus is repeated

Solo:

*Wàhálà, idààmú, ipónjú, mo mà ñ fé
kó dópín.*

Problems, troubles and tribulation should come to an end

*Àseèrì, àsedànù, àgbàná, kó dohùn
ìgbàgbé*

Fruitless labour, wasteful efforts wasteful spending.

Àránsí, àsàsí ayé ò, kélèrù kó forí gbé

The wicked one should be the one to bear his wickedness.

*Èmí mí mó kó tó mi sònà láti sèfè
Olórun*

The holy spirit to direct me to do the will of God

Olórun mi, jàre tó mi sònà

My God please guide me aright

Ìràwò mi lo lé òtá gbé ládugbó rodò

The enemy carries a bucket at the sight of my star

Ìràwò mi ló yo o asebi fa korobá lówó

My star is shining and the wicked one Carries a water jar

E bá mi kílò fún kénimámàní

Help me warn the envious one that

Ìràwò mi kò séé bómi pa

My star can not be quenched with water

The importance of good health and the need for its sustenance is emphasised in the above song by late Bayo Adegboyega. The song also rendered in form of a prayer suggests three blessings that humans hope for and can receive from God. “Owo” (money or wealth); “Omo” (Children) and “Alafia” (good health). These three things are considered very important and anyone who lacks any of these is considered incomplete, deficient, afflicted or cursed. The prayer request in the song is that none of these three will be missing in one’s life. “Alafia” (good health) among the Yoruba is described as “Baale oro” (chief of wealth or riches) or “Ipekun oro” (the height of wealth or riches) meaning that one is unable to enjoy any other form of wealth if “Alafia” (good health) is missing.

In the second verse of the song, reference is made to specific problems that can befall a man for which healing has to be sought. “Wahala” (Troubles), “Idamu” (chaos), “Iponju” (tribulation), “Ase iri” (Fruitless labour), “Asedanu” (wasteful efforts), “Agbana” (wasteful spending) are examples of what healing is required. This is the reason for the prayer in the song

that all of these should come to an end. “Baba je ko dopin” (Father let it come to an end) is a plea to God for healing.

The above songs by Bola Are and Bayo Adegboyega (late) give us insight into the gospel musicians’ perception of illness as a state of disorder, inadequacy, lack, limitation, sinfulness, suffering, poverty, and physical ailments, And healing as the removal, redress or restoration of the abnormal situations. This agrees with Mechanc’s (1968) definition of disease as some deviation from normal functioning, which has undesirable consequences because it produces personal discomfort or adversely affects the individual’s future health status. Saborido and Zamora-Bonilla (2024) also submits that disease is “a social problem that affects large groups of people, and is shaped by cultural and social factors and involves a collective response to address it”, One may then draw a conclusion that diseases are not just biological conditions but also social constructs influenced by societal norms, values and power dynamics. Hence, any unusual or abnormal situation which can be sudden, persistent, temporary or permanent and brings discomfort, disgrace, hindrances, limitations or other undesirable consequences in the life of a person, group of persons or nation is a form of illness. Healing is simply a restoration of the abnormal situation to normalcy.

4.1. Specific Areas of Illness and Healing Mentioned in Nigerian Gospel Songs

Analysis of some gospel songs reveals that the subject of illness and healing is related to specific areas of human and societal lives that illness can affect and that healing is required. Such areas include physical illness and healing; Spiritual Illness and Healing; Social illness and healing; Political illness and healing; and Economic illness and healing.

4.1.1. Physical illness and healing

Physical illness and healing is expressed in the concern and prayer for deliverance and healing from sicknesses of all sorts. References are usually made to “Arun” (infection) and “Aisan” (illness) in gospel songs. The collapse of the Nigerian health services has aggravated the exposure of the citizens to more danger and lack of the healing that they require. Many Nigerians have taken to tradomedical method of healing which has become popular in the past decade as government health services continue to fail. Nigerian radio, television and news papers are constantly carrying adverts of these people because it has become a big business. That the gospel musicians sing about this is also a signal to the prevalence of physical illness in the country as it shows their concern for an amelioration of the situation.

The reality of physical illness and the need for physical healing is illustrated in the excerpt of a song by the Good Women Choir with the lyrics cited below:

ARA MI YÓÒ YÁ GÁGÁ

Chorus:

*Bí mo bá fowó kan iséti aso rè
Ara mi yóò yá gaga
Ìgbàgó la fì ñ ríre gba lówó baba
Sá figbàgbó rò méni tó lè gbà ó arakúnrin
Figbàgbó rò méni tó lè gbà ó arabínrin
Kó gbogbo àniyàn re lólúwa sá ti gbàgbó
Obinrin onisun eje to f'igbagbo to Jesu wa

Nibè ló ríre gbà, ìsun èjè sù dúró láí*

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

If I touch the helm of his garment
I will be made whole
We receive good things from God by faith
Brother hang on the one that can help you
Sister hang on the one that can help you
Just believe and cast all your cares on God
The woman with the issue of blood who
came to Jesus with faith.
There she was blessed, the issue of blood
seized

Torí pò gbàgbó, ara rẹ̀ sì yá gágá x 2

Because she had faith Her body was made whole

This song is a declaration of faith for healing from physical sickness. Giving Biblical examples of people who were healed from sicknesses and delivered from situations that are considered unusual or abnormal, the song encourages people to demonstrate their faith in order to get healed as the people mentioned in the song also did. The central theme of the song is on healing. The chorus and the first verse is based on the Biblical story of the woman with the issue of blood who got a miraculous healing from Jesus. According to Biblical records in Matthew 9:20 – 21, the woman purposed in her heart to receive healing by touching the hem of Jesus' garment. She did that and she was healed of her sickness and this has become a good example to illustrate faith for people who desire healing. "Ara mi yio ya gaga" (my body will be made whole) refers to expectation for physical healing after touching Jesus by faith. "Ara" refers to body- the part that is usually affected or infected with diseases and "ya" means healed while "gaga" implies the totality or perfection of the healing. By touching Jesus, it is implied in the song that the body of the afflicted will receive total healing.

4.1.2. Spiritual Illness and Healing

Spiritual illness is mentioned in respect to the subject of sin which is believed to be responsible for other forms of illnesses and the spiritual state of the people. Spiritual illness is manifested in the prevalence of sin, insensitivity to the things of God, worldliness, lack of zeal for the things of God, fighting in the church, disobedience of all sorts. Spiritual illness is evident in the moral decadence in the society, the state of the church and Christians, unrighteousness in the nation, general tendency to be ungodly, lack of faith which makes people especially Christians to trust in other gods or idols for help. It is believed that it is because there is spiritual sickness that things have gone wrong with the nation and with individuals.

The state of the Christian church is generally assessed by the quality of the lives of individuals that make up the church and this is usually cited as a reflection of the spiritual state of the nation. The misdeeds, misconducts and shortcomings found in the church and in the lives of those who profess to be Christians are considered to be spiritual illnesses and repentance from these vices is believed to bring about the required healing. An examination of the next excerpt from a song by Evangelist Bola Are gives a clearer picture of what the gospel musicians perceive as spiritual illness.

***NÀÌJÍRÌÀ PADÀ WÁLÉ**
Nàìjírìà padà walé o ojó ñ lo
Nàìjírìà padà walé o baba re ñ retí re

Epo tá a gbójú lé ti tán
Kòkó, obì, òpe, kofí
Kò mà mú èso wá mó-òn
E rántí pé nìgbà tómo onínàákúnàà parí ogún

Ó sá padà wálé baba rẹ̀
Nàìjírìà ronú kó o pìwàdà lónìi o
Nàìjírìà padà wálé o, baba re ñ réti re

Ìwo ilè Nàìjírìà, gbórò olúwa*

ENGLISH TRANSLATION
Nigeria return home, time is going
Nigeria return home your father is
expecting you
The crude oil you trust in is exhausted
Cocoa, Kolanut, Palm trees, coffee
No longer yield fruits
Remember that when the prodigal son
Exhausted his inheritance
He ran back to his father's house
Nigeria, think and repent today
Nigeria return home your father is
expecting you
Oh! Land of Nigeria, hear the word of the
Lord

<i>Ìwo èdá inú rè, gbórò olúwa</i>	All creatures in it, hear the word of the Lord
<i>Ó tó géé kí o yí padà sí Olórun tó sèpìlè re</i>	It is time for you to turn to the Lord your maker
<i>Alámò tó mo Nàìjíríà ló ñ pè é kó padà wá silé</i>	The potter who formed Nigeria is calling her to return home
<i>Kó má baà tú ká yángá...</i>	So that it will not scatter...

From the above song, we can infer that spiritual illness to the gospel musician is perceived to be turning away from God either by an individual or a nation and depending on other things like wealth as presented in this song. In the case of Nigeria, it trusted in crude oil and other agricultural products which brought her wealth. Repentance is usually advocated in a state of spiritual illness and this is the call made in the words “*Nigeria ronnu ko piwada loni o*” (Nigeria should think and repent today). According to this song by Bola Are, spiritual illness is also manifested in disunity among the Christian churches and religious leaders, hence the call for unity. It is also evident in religious crisis which usually comes as a result of lack of understanding, tolerance and misguided zeal by adherents of various religious groups in the country.

4.1.3. Social Illness and Healing

When social vices become prevalent in the society, the society is said to be sick because the wellbeing of the society is threatened by such vices. Youths are particularly enjoined to shun social vices like cultism, drugs, rubbery, laziness etc. The social structures are also referred to as being sick when they are not in place or not functioning optimally. When social amenities like water, electricity, good roads and shelter are not readily available; such becomes the concern of the citizens expressed through various means one of which is the songs of the gospel musicians. Gospel musicians address the issue of social illness directly by mentioning the things they consider not functioning as they should and indirectly through satires by telling stories in their songs or painting vivid pictures of the situations and calling for solution.

In the next song, late Bayo Adegboyega paints a picture of what was wrong with Nigeria as a nation in different spheres of her life namely: Economic, political and spiritual.

<i>ÀÌRÍNÁ, ÀÌRÍLÒ OLÚWA JÉ KÓ DÓPIN</i>	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
Chorus:	
<i>Ipá èsù gbogbo kó dópín</i>	All of Satan’s power should cease
<i>Àìríná, àìrílò tó wà nígboro</i>	Poverty, lack that is prevalent in the town
<i>Àìrise, àìríje tó gbayé kan</i>	Joblessness, hunger that has overtaken the world
<i>Èmí òkùnkùn tí ñ gbéraga níwájú ìmólè</i>	The spirit of darkness that brags before the light
<i>Isé èsù ni, a fě kó dópín</i>	It is the work of the Satan, we want it to cease
Solo:	
<i>Gbogbo onígbagbó e jé ká sera wa lókan ni</i>	All Christians let us be one
<i>Gbogbo eni molorun oye ka se rawa lokan ni</i>	All who know the Lord we should be one
<i>Ká yé é bára wa lò bí orogún mó</i>	Let us stop relating as rivals
<i>Òkan ni wá níwájú baba</i>	We are one in the sight of the father
<i>Ká yé é bára wa lò bí orogún mó</i>	Let us stop relating as rivals
<i>Òkan ni wá níwájú Olórun</i>	We are one in the sight of the father
<i>Bóyá ipò ni o, tàbí owó tá a dáyé bá,</i>	If it is position or money that we met in the world

*Tá ó fì silè sáyé
Ló ñ fàjà lágbò onígbàgbó,
E jé ká rora se
Èwo ni kónígbàgbó bára won jà
Kí wón kóra won lo síwájú kẹ̀fẹ̀rí
Kó bá won parí ìjà
Àwa ni yó jorò kẹ̀fẹ̀rí ni iwé mímó wí...*

Solo:

Ilè tò ñ sà̀n fún wàrà àti fún oyin ni Nigeria

All:

*Sùgbón àwon jegúdíjerá
Won ti so 'lè yìì dahoro*

Solo:

*Bóbá ayé kò mú won,
Won ò le bó lówó oba òrun*

All:

Orí aláìsè tò ñ j'iyà lówólówó á dá won léjò

Solo:

Ni asiko yi t'oro aje wa o se dede

All:

Ki gbogbo Nigeria ka tera mo se agbe

Solo:

Ni àsikò yìì tí owó epo ñ se ségesège

All:

Kí joba Nàìjíríà ko mú iwúrí bá isé àgbè o

Solo:

*Ká gbóhun ti wa láruge,
Ká gbésé owó láruge
Ká yé fojú témbélú, témbélú,
Eni tó lè fogbón orí sisé
Sùgbón tí kò níwèé èrí dání
Bí òfin ilè yìì ti wí, ká fàyè gbara wa
Láti sèsìn tó bá pé wa o
Olórí tí yóò fòtító inú
Àtibèrù Olórun sàkóso wa
Ni k'Ólórùn máa fún wa
Níwòn bí òrùn àti òsùpá yó ti pé tó ará mi*

*Nàìjíríà yó máa gbèrú síi ni nínú ohun tó
dára*

And will be left behind in the world
That causes quarrels among the Christians
Let us be careful
Why should Christians quarrel
And take themselves before unbelievers
For settlement
The holy book says we shall inherit the riches
of the heathen...

Nigeria is a country flowing with milk and
honey

But the destroyers (Spendthrift)
Have made the rich house to be desolate

If the earthly king does not catch them
They can not escape the king of heaven

The head of the sinless who is suffering will
judge them

This time that our economy is not doing well

Let all Nigerians work hard in farming

This time that crude oil price is unstable

Nigerian government should encourage
farming

We should patronise our own thing
We should encourage craftsmanship
We should stop looking down
On those who have skill
But do not have certificates
As the country's constitution state
Let us allow freedom of religion
A leader who will administer with truth
And the fear of God
It's who God should always give to us
My people for as long as the sun and moon
shall last
Nigeria will excel in good things

The first part of the song makes direct reference to the predicaments of the citizens exhibited in poverty, lack, hunger and other negativities. The song writer prays for divine intervention because he saw those things as the works of Satan and also gives suggestions of practical human steps to be taken for restoration. The predicaments listed in the song include "Airina" (Poverty);

“Airilo” (Lack); “Airise” (Joblessness); “Airije” (hunger); this was the situation in Nigeria in 1986 when late Bayo Adegboyega released the album. It was a time when the military ruled the country and things were really difficult for the citizens mainly because of the dictatorial style of the military and the sanctions placed on the country by other countries as a protest against military rule which affected the economy of the country negatively. The song also discussed the political situation of the country particularly the financial recklessness of the leaders which more or less ruined the economy of the nation. It is sad to note that almost forty years after the recording and release of this song by late Bayo Adegboyega, the social, political and economic situation in the country has not improved. This is presented in the phrase “*Ile to nsan fun wara ati fun oyin ni Nigeria, Sugbon awon jegudujera won ti so’le yi dahoro*” meaning Nigeria is a blessed country flowing with milk and honey but the destroyers or wasters have turned it to a desolate country. “*Wara*” (milk) and “*Oyin*” (honey) are symbolic objects signifying blessing and abundant resources with which the country Nigeria is blessed but the dividend of the resources are not enjoyed by the citizens because of the corrupt leaders who embezzle and mismanage those resources. These are referred to as “*Jegudujera*” which translated literally means one who eats without leaving a trace. “*Won ti so’le ola d’ahoro*” is a description of the extent of destruction done to the economy of the nation by the leadership of that time.

4.1.4. Political Illness and Healing

The political situation of Nigeria is plagued by many vices which make not only the gospel musicians but every citizen to say that the Nigerian political system is sick. The politics of money, tribalism, thuggery and other negativities that characterise the political institutions in Nigeria all point to the fact that all is not well. The dynamics of the Nigerian politics could be described as being plagued by corruption, killings, tribalism, bad leadership and embezzlement. It is also plagued by not fulfilling promises made during political campaigns, insensitivity to the needs of the citizens and so on. All of these are illnesses that the gospel musicians refer to in their songs which give rise to other problems like economic crisis, political unrest, poverty, hunger, political killings and so on.

It is a fact in Nigerian politics that people get to power without the necessary qualifications. ‘God fatherism’ is a bane in Nigeria’s politics today. Rigging of elections and installing men even against the wish of the populace are all forms of illnesses that plague the politics of Nigeria. All of these have grave consequences on the citizens and are criticised by gospel musicians. The songs by Bola are - “*Nigeria Pada Wa’le*” and Bayo Adegboyega - “*Airina, Airilo, Oluwa je ko dopin*” cited earlier discuss issues of political illness and give us insight to the gospel musician’s perception of political illness.

4.1.5. Economic Illness and Healing

Economic crisis in the country which breeds poverty in the nation is a major subject of concern for the gospel musicians. When the economy is not doing well, it is said to be ill and needs healing which will come in form of a positive turn around of the economy. Economic illness is manifested in the citizen’s inability to make ends meet or get the basic comforts of life. It is also evident in the collapse of people’s business, joblessness, and inability of people who work to feed well and save enough to do other things like buying themselves good cars or build houses. One of the dynamics of economic illness is the inflation that is prevalent in the country and the weakness of the Nigerian currency when compared to other country’s currency such as the U S dollars that now sells at the rate of between N1, 450 to N1, 500 to one dollar and pound sterling selling at over N2, 000 to one pound. This is illustrated in the next song “*Ilu le Koko*” by Bayo Adegboyega

ÌLÚ LE KOKO

*Ìlú le koko o, Olórun wá sòlú dèrò
Ká rí je, ká rí mu, ká rí ná, ká rí lò
Ká rówó fì sìn ó
Olórun wá sòlú dèrò*

Solo:

*Ìlú o déédé le, àwon aráábí ni e bi
Àwon jegúdújerá, àwon aráábí ni e bi
Àwon àfèmi, àfèmi, àwon aráábí ni e b
Àwon bó-ti-le-rí-ó-rí, àwon aráábí ni e bi
Gbogbo àwon ajunilo, àwon araábí ni e bi
Àwon kénimánii, àwon aráábí ni e b
Àwon igi dá, eye fò, àwon aráábí ni e
Ìlú le débi wí pé
Baba ò le bi omo bóyá ó ti yó
Ayàfi bóyá ó ti jeun
A ò lè jehun tó wù wá mó,
Ohun tí a rí là ñ je
A ò lè sisé tó wù wá mó,
Ohun tí a rí là ñ se
A ò le gun mótò tó wù wá,
Okò tí a rí là ñ gùn o
A ò lè woso tó wù wá mó,
Aso tí a rí là ñ wò o
A ò lè gbélé tó ù wá mó,
Ilé tí a rí là ñ gbé o
Oluwa wá pàgbà yìi dà x 2
Kó o bá wa múgbà tó dùn wá
Baba bojú wolè n, dákun wá pàse itura*

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

The country is very hard, God come and soften it
Let us have enough to eat, drink, spend and use
Let us have money to serve you
God come and soften the country

The country is not just hard, ask these people
Those who eat and finish everything
Those who knows only about themselves
Those who don't care what happens
All those who are big
Those who don't want others to have
Those who fly when the tree brakes
The country is hard to the point that
A father cannot ask if the child is filled
But whether he has eaten
We can no longer eat what we desire
We eat what we find
We can no longer have a job that we desire
We do whatever job we find
We can no longer ride the car of our desire
We ride whatever car we find
We can no longer wear clothes that we desire
We put on whatever clothes we find
We can no longer live in the house that we desire
We live in any house that we find
Lord come and change this season
Bring to us a good season
Father look down, please command refreshing
time to us

In the above song, Bayo Adegboyega sings about the poor state of the Nigeria economy in 1987 when he released the album and the attendant effects on the citizens manifesting in joblessness, hardships, inability to do what one desires because of financial constrains etc. The situation has not improved till date, but rather getting worse. In 2025, joblessness has brought about other vices in the country especially among the youths such as cyber crime, Yahoo Yahoo, Yahoo plus and so on. He also talks about the cause of economic illness which fundamentally includes corruption by the leadership and over dependence on crude oil. He goes further to give suggestions of what he thinks are the way out. The song prays for healing of the economy by asking God to change the seasons of lack and poverty and bring a season of refreshing to the country.

The gospel musician's perception of illness and healing is a clear reflection of the socio-economic and political realities of the Nigerian situation. When all is not well, illness is believed to be in operation. Most of the songs are reactions to socio-economic realities of the nation. The gospel musicians being members of the society react to the situation in the country which they experience from time to time. Apart from issues that may be considered strictly spiritual raised in their songs, most of the issues raised in gospel songs are influenced and

inspired by circumstances of the musicians' existence which cannot be separated from the situations and events in the country.

4.2. Relevance of Gospel Musician's Perception of Illness and Healing to the Nigerian Social, Economic and Political Realities

The relevance of the gospel musicians' perception of illness and healing to the Nigerian socio-economic and political realities can be summarised as follows:

- (1) Identification of the problem or form of illness
- (2) Insight into the state of affairs or present condition
- (3) Stating the mind or fears of the afflicted
- (4) Reacting to the situation
- (5) Suggestion of solution.

Using the works of Bayo Adegboyega and Evangelist Bola Are cited earlier as examples, we can draw the above relevance from the songs of the gospel musicians.

4.2.1. Insight to Dimensions of Illness - Identifying the Problem

The forms of illnesses that are prevalent in Nigeria are identified through the songs by the gospel musicians. As we have discussed earlier, one can identify dimensions of problems referred to as illness plaguing individuals and the country as a whole through the content of the Nigerian gospel songs. In Bayo Adegboyega's "Ilu le koko" the illnesses identified include hardships, poverty, and inability to have the basic comforts of life and so on. In identifying the dimensions of illness Bayo Adegboyega in the song is able to show that illness is capable of affecting the economy, social life, political life and religious lives of the people. Bola Are also identified bad leadership, religious intolerance, abandoning God and over dependence on the natural resources with which the country was endowed as the illnesses plaguing the country which has its impact negatively on the citizens of the nation resulting in economic recession and poverty in the nation.

4.2.2. Insight into the State of Affairs in the Country

The perception of the gospel musician of illness also gives insight into what really goes on among the people describing the state of affairs through the kind of picture they paint and how they describe the situations. One is able to sense the degree of damage, pain and suffering of the people. Through the pictures painted by the gospel musicians in their songs one can know how bad the situation is and when it is improving. The real state of affairs is described using direct expressions or making satirical statements which give a clear picture of what the situation really is. For example, Bayo Adegboyega in "Ilu le koko" described the real state of affairs when he said "Ilu le de bi wipe Baba o le bi omo boya oti yo o, a ya fi boya o ti jehun" meaning the situation of things have gone so bad that a father cannot ask the child if he/she has eaten to satisfaction, he can only ask if the child has eaten. This is a description of the extent to which things have degraded and the impact on the lives of the citizens.

4.2.3. Stating the Mind of Fears of the Afflicted

The Nigerian gospel musicians like their secular counter-parts serve as the people's mouthpiece to air the views of the citizens. The platform of performance and recording is used for this purpose. As we have observed earlier, gospel music is influenced greatly by the realities of the time within the context of the society in which they live. They therefore bring to the fore the feelings of the ordinary people in the society and other citizens. According to Ojo (1988), the utilisation of songs as a tool for social and political critique represents an advance in the utility of gospel music in the country. While church-based musical groups have (by occasionally using biblical symbolism) spoken of a general dislocation in the society caused by sin, gospel music

now has become a vital public voice of expression and dissent for people who could otherwise never be heard in public. Titles given to the songs and its content communicate the minds of the citizens. For instance, songs by Bayo Adegboyega, Niyi Adedokun and Ojo Ade bear titles like “Ilu le Koko” (The town/Country is hard), “Esan ko gbogun” (Retribution has no antidote) “Ogboju Ole” (Bold thief) respectively

4.2.4. Reacting to the Situation - Criticism of System

The reactions of the gospel musicians are usually expressed in their songs and it is a blend of their personal views with that of the citizens which they represent. Their reactions come in form of criticism and description of the effects of what is wrong on the people. Often time the reaction of the gospel musicians is to pray that God will intervene and bring deliverance, restoration or remove whatever the problem is or it will come in form of appeal to the people or the government to do what is humanly possible to be done for healing to take place. The reactions of gospel musicians to the situation in the country have made some of them to make pronouncements that are considered radical or anti government and some of them have been looked at as critics of the government or crusaders of a sort.

4.2.5. Offering of What They Consider as the Solution

Another area of the relevance of the gospel musicians’ perception of illness and healing is the offering of what they consider to be the solution. For every problem raised by the gospel musicians in their songs, possible solutions are given by the musicians as they react to the situation. For Bola Are, in her song, “*Nigeria pada wale*” (Nigeria come back home) the solution offered is for the country to return to the Lord through repentance. This is implied in the chorus which is the central theme of the song.

NÀÌJÍRÌÀ, PADÀ WÁLE	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
<i>Nàìjírìà, padà wá, o ojó ñ lo</i>	Nigeria return home, time is going
<i>Nàìjírìà, padà wálé o, baba ñ retí re</i>	Nigeria return home your father is expecting you
<i>Epo tá a gbójú lé ti tán</i>	The crude oil you trust in is exhausted
<i>Kòkó, obì, òpe, kofí</i>	Cocoa, Kolanut, Palm trees, coffee
<i>Kò mà mú èso wá mó</i>	No longer yield fruits
<i>E rántí pé nígbà tómo onínàákúnàà</i>	Remember that when the prodigal son
<i>Parí ogún</i>	Exhausted his inheritance
<i>Ó sá padà wálé baba rè</i>	He ran back to his father’s house
<i>Nàìjírìà, ronú, kó o pìwàdà lónìi o</i>	Nigeria, think and repent today
<i>Nàìjírìà, padà wálé o, baba re ñ retí re</i>	Nigeria return home your father is expecting you

The phrase “Nàìjírìà Padà Wállé o” is emphasised several times in the context of what is said to have gone wrong with the nation. One can thus draw the conclusion that the song writer is saying that the lot of Nigeria will change for good, the same way the destiny of the prodigal son was changed when he came back to the father. In the case of Bayo Adegboyega, the solutions offered include empowering the farmers by the government and the government itself embarking on large scale farming. An excerpt is given below:

	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
<i>Àsikò tépo ñ fawó tó jójú wolé</i>	Now that crude oil brings in good money
<i>Ó ye ká rèro ìgbàlódé</i>	We ought to buy modern equipment
<i>Ká sisé Àgbè ní yanturu</i>	And embark on agriculture on a large scale

A common solution usually offered by the gospel musicians is to present Jesus Christ through their songs as the only solution to all problems. In fact, it is obvious that when the musicians personalise the problems, it is to Jesus that they call or cry for help and solution to their problems.

5. Conclusion

Attempt has been made in this paper to analyse the content of some gospel music recordings to bring out the manifestations of illness and healing as perceived by the musicians thereby bringing out concepts of illness and healing in the gospel songs. Issues about illness and healing in Nigerian gospel songs touch specific areas of human lives that are capable of being infected with one form of illness or the other namely physical illness, spiritual illness, social illness, political illness and economic illness. It has been observed that there are terms, descriptions and symbolic representations in the gospel songs for illness and healing and that these representations are not unconnected with the expressions used in the context of the culture and traditions within which the musicians grow. Ideas for compositions and issues raised in the Nigerian gospel music are drawn from the daily occurrences in the society and are reflections of the social, economic, and political realities of the country.

Manifestations of illness are evident in physical breakdown or disorder of the human body, social structures, political institutions, economic failures and the occurrence of negative things in the human life or that of the country. Every form of evil is a kind of illness for which healing is sought either physically or spiritually. Healing is manifested in the restoration of everything that has gone wrong. The gospel musicians' perception of illness and healing is relevant to the social, economic and political realities of Nigeria because they help in the identification of the dimensions of illness, they give insight into the real state of affairs, they air the views of the citizens, they react to the situation that they identify and proffer what they perceive as solution to the identified problems.

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Discography

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