

# Intermodal Synergy in Nigerian Popular Culture: The Therapeutic Nexus of Music–Comedy Fusion in Stress Relief

Authority, O. A. U.

Department of Music, Faculty of Humanities,

Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.

ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-9433-3801>

Web of Science Researcher ID: OOM-9035-2025

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/110.47772/IJRISS.2025.91200205>

Received: 19 December 2025; Accepted: 23 December 2025; Published: 06 January 2026

## ABSTRACT

This article examines how music–comedy fusion in Nigerian popular culture helps people reduce stress and understand everyday challenges. Many Nigerians face social and economic pressure, and performers now combine music, humor, storytelling, and audience interaction to create relief and shared meaning. Using a qualitative interpretive design, the study analyzed 24 live and digital performances and gathered insights from 36 audience interviews, alongside social media engagement. Guided by Episto-Musical Pedagogy Theory (EMPT) and decolonial perspectives, the study shows how sound, humor, and cultural knowledge work together as tools for healing and learning. The findings reveal that intermodal synergy, the blending of musical and comedic elements, produces emotional release, communal participation, and cognitive reframing. Music–comedy fusion offers both immediate relaxation and deeper resilience by helping audiences reinterpret their experiences. The article proposes the *Episto-Therapeutic Intermodal Synergy Model (ETISM)* to explain these processes and highlights the cultural value of Nigerian creative expression in supporting well-being. The study is limited to selected performances and audience groups, which may not represent all regions of Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Intermodal Synergy, Music–Comedy Fusion, Nigerian Popular Culture, Stress Relief, Therapeutic Nexus

## INTRODUCTION

Music and comedy have always been important parts of Nigerian life. They entertain, teach, comfort, and help people understand everyday experiences. In recent years, many performers have started combining music and comedy in new ways, through live shows, online skits, concerts, and social media content. This fusion has become a major feature of Nigerian popular culture, attracting large audiences who often describe these performances as relaxing, uplifting, and emotionally refreshing. Understanding why this fusion feels therapeutic is especially important today, as many Nigerians face high levels of stress linked to economic hardship, insecurity, and social pressure. Recent reports show that more than 70% of Nigerians experience significant daily stress, with financial strain and insecurity being the leading causes (World Health Organization, 2023; Nigeria Bureau of Statistics, 2022).

Although scholars have written extensively about African music, humor, and performance, very little research has examined music–comedy fusion as a unique expressive form or explored its therapeutic value. This gap makes it necessary to study how this fusion helps people cope with stress and make meaning in their daily lives.

Scholars of African music have long argued that music in African societies is not separate from life but deeply connected to social experience, emotional expression, and communal identity (Merriam, 1964; Nketia, 1974;

Nzewi, 1997). African performance traditions often blend music, dance, storytelling, humor, and ritual into one expressive event (Euba, 1989; Nketia, 1998). This blending, referred to in this article as *intermodal performance*, creates a rich environment where sound, movement, and narrative work together to shape meaning. In Nigeria, this intermodal approach is especially visible in music–comedy fusion, where rhythm, melody, parody, satire, and audience participation combine to create a powerful shared experience (Omojola, 2017).

This study is guided by Episto-Musical Pedagogy Theory (EMPT), which explains how music functions as a way of knowing, learning, and healing in African contexts. (Authority, 2025a, 2025b). The study also draws on decolonial perspectives, which call for African cultural practices to be understood through African knowledge systems rather than Western frameworks that may overlook context, community, and indigenous meaning (Agawu, 2003; Bohlman, 1993). From this viewpoint, humor, satire, and musical storytelling are not simply entertainment; they are cultural tools for coping with hardship, challenging power, and strengthening social bonds (Chinweizu, 1988).

By bringing together EMPT, decolonial theory, and the idea of intermodal synergy, this article explores how Nigerian music–comedy fusion works as a therapeutic and epistemic practice. It examines how performers use sound, humor, and cultural references to help audiences relax, reflect, and reframe their experiences. It also investigates how audiences participate in and interpret these performances in both physical and digital spaces. Through this approach, the study shows that music–comedy fusion is not only entertainment but also a meaningful cultural strategy for stress relief and communal resilience in contemporary Nigeria.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Music in African Societies: Communal, Functional, and Embodied

African music is widely understood as a social practice that shapes identity, emotion, and community life. Classic studies by Merriam (1964), Nketia (1974), and Nzewi (1997) show that African music is functional, participatory, and embedded in everyday experience. It teaches values, strengthens social bonds, and supports emotional expression, helping explain why Nigerian audiences respond strongly to performances that blend music with humor, storytelling, and commentary.

### Humor, Satire, and Social Commentary in African Performance

Humor and satire serve long-standing roles in African expressive culture as tools for critique, coping, and cultural education. Chinweizu (1988) highlights humor as social commentary that helps communities confront hardship and challenge power. In Nigeria, comedy often addresses political tension, economic pressure, and social expectations. Omojola (2017) notes that Nigerian performance spaces are dialogic, enabling audiences to laugh, reflect, and co-create meaning, making humor a key emotional and cultural resource.

### Intermodal Synergy in African Expressive Cultures

African performance traditions commonly blend music, dance, storytelling, gesture, and ritual into unified expressive events. Nketia (1998) and Kwami (1994) emphasize that artistic modes are rarely separated; instead, sound, movement, and narrative work together. This intermodal synergy is central to Nigerian music–comedy fusion, where performers combine rhythm, melody, parody, satire, and audience interaction across live and digital spaces to create multi-layered, embodied experiences.

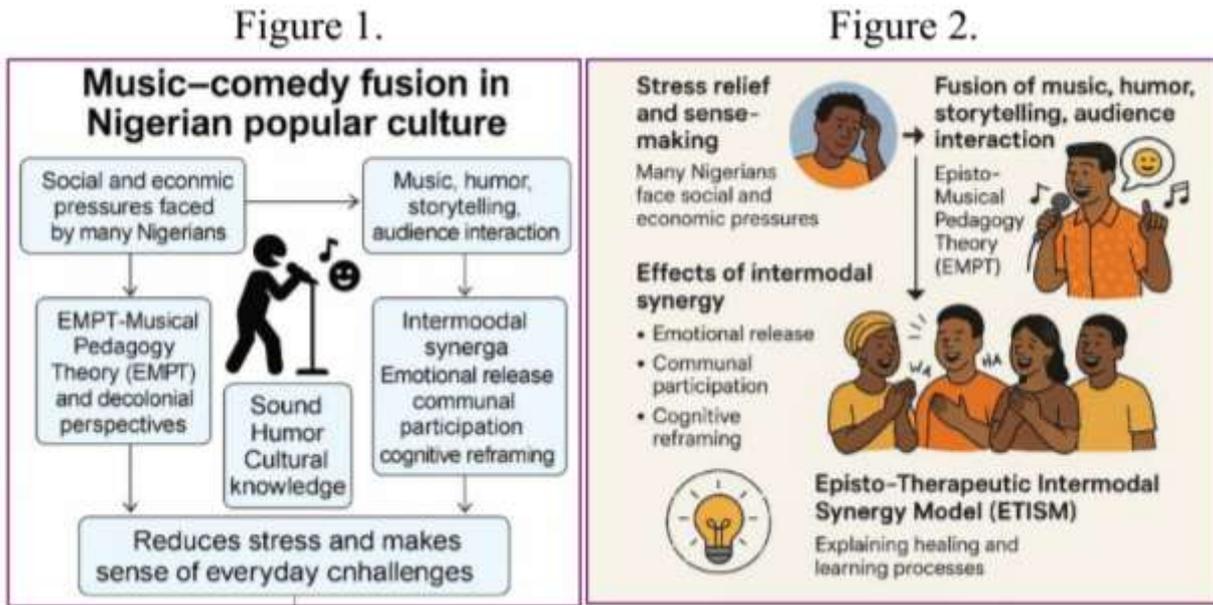
### Gaps in Literature

Despite extensive work on African music, humor, and performance, key gaps remain. Little research examines music–comedy fusion as a distinct expressive form in Nigerian popular culture. Few studies explore the therapeutic and epistemic outcomes of intermodal performance. No existing model integrates EMPT, decoloniality, and intermodal synergy to explain how sound, humor, and participation support stress relief. This study addresses these gaps by proposing the Episto-Therapeutic Intermodal Synergy Model (ETISM) and applying it to Nigerian music–comedy fusion.

Figures 1 & 2.

*Music–Comedy Fusion in Nigerian Popular Culture*

Source: Original Concept Designed by the author.



These figures illustrate how music–comedy fusion operates as both a creative form and a cultural practice within contemporary Nigerian entertainment.

As shown in Figures 1 and 2, music–comedy fusion sits at the center of Nigerian popular culture, blending sound, humor, gesture, and social commentary into a single expressive form. Figure 1 highlights the structural features of the fusion, how performers combine rhythm, melody, and comedic timing, while Figure 2 maps the cultural and social spaces where this fusion thrives, including live shows, digital platforms, and community events. Together, the figures demonstrate that music–comedy fusion is not just an artistic style but a dynamic cultural practice that shapes how audiences engage, interpret, and find relief in everyday Nigerian life.

**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is anchored in *Episto-Musical Pedagogy Theory (EMPT)* and broader *decolonial frameworks* that foreground African epistemologies, communal meaning-making, and embodied knowledge systems. The fusion of music and comedy in Nigerian popular culture is conceptualized not merely as entertainment but as a *therapeutic, epistemic, and socio-cultural practice* through which individuals and communities negotiate stress, articulate lived realities, and co-construct resilience. To theorize this process, the study adopts the *Episto-Therapeutic Intermodal Synergy Model (ETISM)*, a five-stage framework that explains how intermodal artistic practices generate both emotional relief and cognitive reframing.

**Episto-Musical Pedagogy Theory (EMPT)**

Episto-Musical Pedagogy Theory positions music as a mode of knowing, a site of cultural memory, and a pedagogical tool through which communities negotiate identity, meaning, and well-being (Authority, 2025a, 2025b). EMPT argues that sound is not merely aesthetic but epistemic: it teaches, heals, critiques, and re-orders social experience. This aligns with longstanding African musical scholarship that emphasizes the integrative, communal, and functional nature of music in African societies (Nketia, 1974; Nzewi, 1997; Euba, 2001). Within EMPT, knowledge is embodied, relational, and emergent through performance rather than abstracted into detached theoretical categories.

In the context of Nigerian music–comedy fusion, EMPT provides a lens for understanding how performers and audiences co-create meaning through sonic, linguistic, and gestural interactions. The theory also supports a shift

away from Eurocentric therapeutic paradigms that privilege individualism, clinical detachment, and textual analysis (Bohlman, 1993; Born, 2010). Instead, EMPT foregrounds collective participation, embodied expressivity, and cultural resonance as central to healing and stress relief.

### Decolonial Commitments

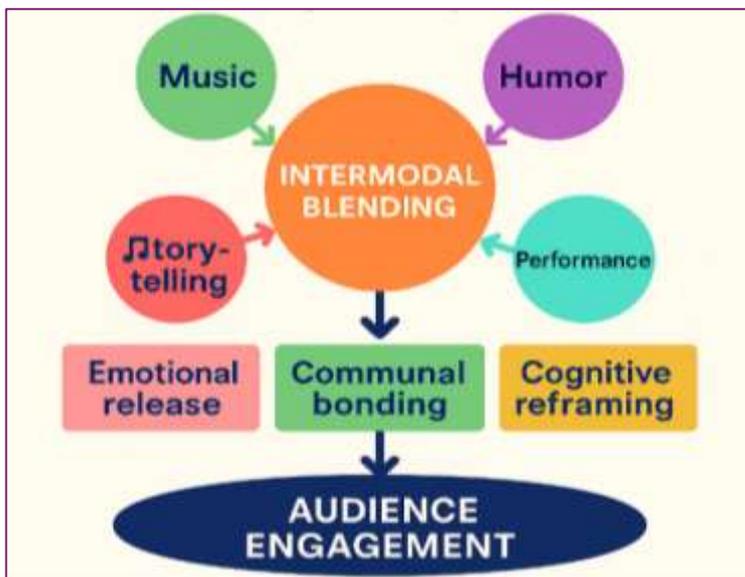
The study is further grounded in decolonial thought, which challenges the dominance of Western epistemologies and affirms indigenous African knowledge systems as legitimate, rigorous, and contextually relevant (Agawu, 2003; Authority, 2025c). Decoloniality in this context involves:

- **Reclaiming indigenous expressive forms**, such as satire, call-and-response, and rhythmic storytelling, as valid therapeutic and pedagogical tools.
- **Resisting epistemic dependency** on Western psychological models of stress and coping.
- **Recognizing performers and audiences as epistemic agents**, not passive consumers of entertainment.
- **Valuing communal, relational, and performative modes of knowledge** over individualistic, text-based frameworks.

This aligns with broader African scholarship that emphasizes the social, political, and pedagogical functions of music in everyday life (Ekwueme, 2004; Omojola, 2017; Jayeola, 2015). Nigerian popular culture, particularly its hybrid forms of music and comedy, serves as a fertile site for decolonial knowledge production, where humor and sound become tools for critiquing power, reframing hardship, and sustaining communal resilience.

Figure 3. ETISM Map

Source: Original concept designed by the author.



This figure gives an overview of the ETISM framework and its key components. As shown in Figure 3, ETISM maps show how cultural elements, intermodal blending, audience participation, cognitive reframing, and lingering emotional effects work together as a continuous cycle. The visual model helps clarify how Nigerian music-comedy fusion supports both healing and meaning-making through interconnected cultural and performance processes.

### Intermodal Synergy in Nigerian Popular Culture

Music-comedy fusion in Nigeria is characterized by intermodal synergy, the dynamic interaction of musical, comedic, linguistic, and performative elements. This synergy is not incidental; it is a deliberate aesthetic strategy

rooted in African performance traditions where art forms are rarely isolated (Nzewi, 2007; Merriam, 1964). Performers weave rhythm, melody, satire, mimicry, and narrative pacing into a cohesive, expressive tapestry that resonates with audiences' lived experiences.

This intramodality is particularly potent for stress relief because it engages multiple sensory and cognitive channels simultaneously. Rhythm regulates bodily states; humor triggers laughter and emotional release; linguistic play fosters identification and cultural intimacy; and communal participation amplifies affective synchrony. Together, these elements create a polyphonic therapeutic environment that exceeds the sum of its parts.

### **The Episto-Therapeutic Intermodal Synergy Model (Etism)**

This study introduces the *Episto-Therapeutic Intermodal Synergy Model (ETISM)* to explain how music-comedy fusion generates therapeutic and epistemic effects. The model consists of five interconnected stages.

### **Cultural Loading**

Cultural loading refers to the indigenous musical idioms, linguistic resources, comedic traditions, and sociopolitical references that performers draw upon. Nigerian artists routinely use pidgin English, ethnic languages, satire, parody, and rhythmic motifs from highlife, Afrobeat, gospel, and Afropop. These resources form the performance "curriculum," echoing EMPT's view of sound and story as core pedagogical materials (Authority, 2025a).

This stage aligns with African musicological scholarship on cultural memory and indigenous aesthetics (Akpabot, 1986; Echezona, 1963; Nketia, 1998) and reflects decolonial commitments by centering African expressive logics over imported frameworks.

### **Intermodal Composition**

Intermodal composition captures the deliberate blending of musical and comedic elements. Performers time punchlines with rhythmic breaks, embed jokes in melodic structures, parody familiar songs, and use musical exaggeration to heighten humor. This creates a layered expressive field where music and comedy reinforce one another.

Such fluidity mirrors African performance traditions that blur boundaries between art forms (Euba, 1989; Nzewi, 1991) and aligns with EMPT's emphasis on polyphonic, multisensory knowledge-making.

### **Communal Activation**

Communal activation describes audience participation through call-and-response, collective laughter, dancing, clapping, and digital interaction. African musical traditions have long treated participation as central to performance (Nketia, 1974; Kwami, 1994), and Nigerian popular culture extends this ethos into online spaces where audiences comment, remix, and circulate clips.

Within EMPT, communal activation is a core pedagogical principle: knowledge is co-created rather than transmitted (Authority, 2025b). Therapeutically, it fosters co-regulation, shared emotional release, and collective resilience.

### **Episto-Therapeutic Reframing**

Episto-therapeutic reframing captures how humor and music re-narrate stressors. Performers address economic hardship, insecurity, gender expectations, and political tensions through satire, parody, and musical storytelling. By naming and mocking these pressures, they allow audiences to confront difficult realities in a safe, culturally resonant way.

This reflects African traditions of using humor and music for critique and emotional processing (Omojola, 2017; Chinweizu, 1988) and supports EMPT’s claim that sound-based practices generate new ways of seeing and feeling (Authority, 2025a).

### Residual Regulation

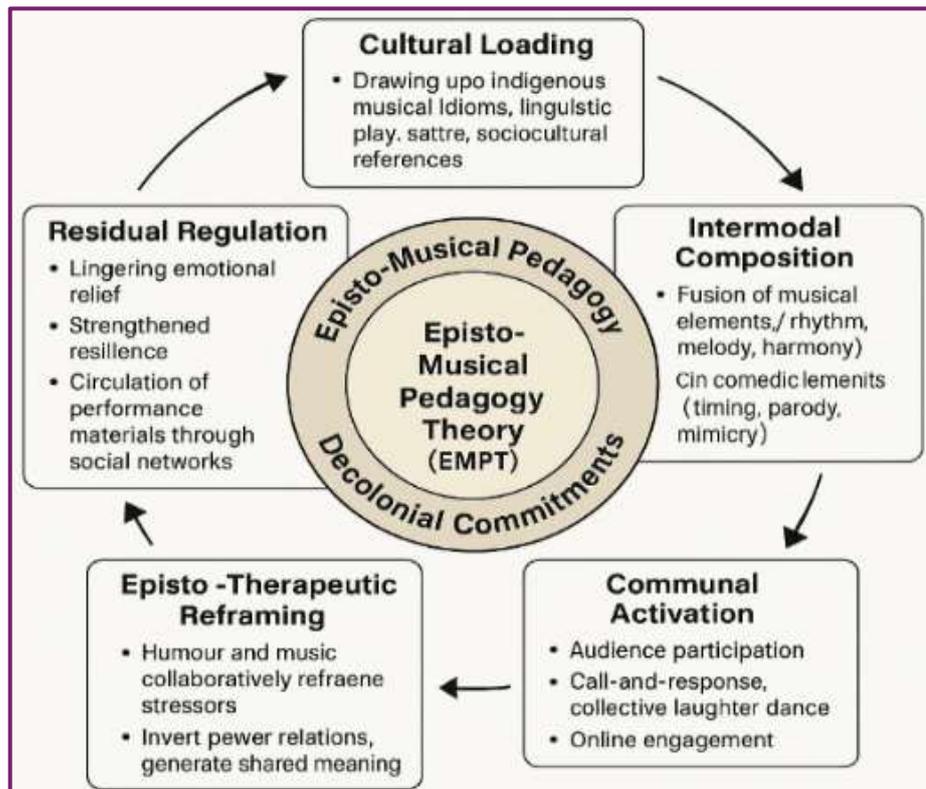
Residual regulation refers to the emotional, cognitive, and social benefits that persist after performances. Audiences often describe feelings of lightness, hope, and renewed strength. Jokes, hooks, and memes circulate through social networks, extending therapeutic and epistemic effects beyond the event.

This stage aligns with African scholarship on the portability of musical meaning and its role in sustaining communal identity and resilience (Ekwueme, 2004; Uzoigwe, 1998) and reflects EMPT’s emphasis on the continuity of sound-based pedagogy in everyday life.

Together, these five stages show how Nigerian music–comedy fusion functions as a decolonial, episto-therapeutic practice. ETISM demonstrates that stress relief is not only emotional but epistemic, enabling individuals and communities to reinterpret their realities. Grounded in EMPT and decolonial theory, the model affirms African expressive cultures as legitimate sites of healing, knowledge production, and social transformation.

Figure 4. Episto-Therapeutic Intermodal Synergy Model (ETISM)

Source: Original concept designed by the author.



This figure presents the full structure of ETISM, showing how therapeutic and knowledge-building effects emerge through interconnected cultural and performance processes.

As illustrated in Figure 4, the Episto-Therapeutic Intermodal Synergy Model (ETISM) is a circular framework that explains how Nigerian music–comedy fusion produces both therapeutic and epistemic outcomes. At the center of the model is Episto-Musical Pedagogy Theory (EMPT), which views sound-based performance as a source of communal knowledge and healing. Surrounding this core is a ring of Decolonial Commitments,

grounding the model in African epistemologies and resisting Eurocentric assumptions about what counts as knowledge or therapy.

The outer cycle shows the five stages through which these effects unfold. Cultural Loading draws on indigenous idioms, linguistic play, and sociocultural references. Intermodal Composition blends rhythm, melody, parody, timing, and humor into a unified expressive form. Communal Activation highlights audience participation through call-and-response, laughter, movement, and digital engagement. Episto-Therapeutic Reframing uses humor and sound to rename stressors, invert power, and build shared meaning. Finally, Residual Regulation captures the emotional relief, resilience, and continued engagement that persist as audiences revisit and circulate performance materials.

Together, these interconnected stages show how ETISM functions as a culturally grounded cycle of healing, learning, and social transformation.

## METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative, interpretive design. Because the paper explored how Nigerian music–comedy fusion creates therapeutic and knowledge-building effects, the methods focused on cultural context, local meaning, and the specific experiences participants shared. Data came from three main sources: performance artefacts, audience stories, and digital engagement.

A purposive sampling strategy was used to select both performances and participants. In total, 24 live and online performances, which blended music and comedy, and comedy. Thirty-six members of the audience took part in interviews and focus groups. Participants came from different demographic backgrounds, including gender, age (18–55 years), occupation, and ethnic groups (Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, and minority groups). Recruitment happened through venue contacts, performer networks, and online invitations posted under selected performance clips. Sampling continued until data saturation was reached, meaning no new ideas were appearing during analysis.

Live shows, concerts, comedy events, and online skits were observed using a non-intrusive ethnographic approach. Digital performances were reviewed and coded for how different modes of music, humor, gesture, and timing worked together. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups explored how people experienced stress relief, cultural connection, and communal participation. These conversations were held in English, Nigerian Pidgin, or indigenous languages, depending on what each participant preferred. Public social media comments and reactions were also collected to understand how performances spread and how their effects continued beyond the event itself.

Data analysis followed a three-stage interpretive process based on the Episto-Therapeutic Intermodal Synergy Model (ETISM). The analytic framework combined thematic analysis with elements of interpretive phenomenology to capture both repeated patterns and lived experiences. Intermodal performance analysis examined how rhythm, melody, humor, parody, timing, and gesture interacted. Communal meaning-making analysis explored audience participation and emotional responses across live and digital settings. Episto-therapeutic outcome analysis identified patterns of stress relief, cognitive reframing, and emotional regulation. Coding used both deductive categories from ETISM and EMPT and inductive insights from participant narratives. Triangulating performances, interviews, and digital data strengthened the study's credibility and trustworthiness.

Ethical procedures included informed consent, anonymizing digital data, and respecting cultural ownership and language choices. Participants were treated as co-interpreters, and the study avoided extractive or pathologizing interpretations.

### Reflexive Positionality Statement

The researcher acknowledges that his background as a Nigerian music scholar shaped how he approached this study. His familiarity with local humor, musical traditions, and communal performance practices helped him understand subtle cultural meanings. At the same time, he remained aware of the need to listen carefully, avoid

assumptions, and allow participants' voices, not his own expectations, to guide interpretation. This reflexive stance supported transparency and strengthened the credibility of the findings.

## FINDINGS

The findings are presented according to the five stages of the Episto-Therapeutic Intermodal Synergy Model (ETISM). Each stage reflects themes that were developed through a careful coding process. First, all performance notes, interview transcripts, and digital comments were read several times to gain familiarity. Next, meaningful phrases were highlighted and grouped into initial codes such as “cultural references,” “humor about hardship,” “audience co-creation,” and “emotional release.” These codes were then compared across data sources and merged into broader themes that aligned with the five ETISM stages. Themes were refined until no new ideas were emerging, showing that saturation had been reached. Short participant quotes were used to confirm and illustrate each theme. Together, the results show how Nigerian music–comedy fusion creates a culturally grounded pathway to emotional relief, shared understanding, and communal resilience.

### Cultural Loading

Across all performances studied, artists consistently drew on indigenous idioms, linguistic play, and sociopolitical references. These elements helped audiences immediately recognize familiar cultural cues and feel connected to the performance. One participant explained, “**Once he switched to Pidgin and used that proverb, I just felt at home.**” Another said, “**When they joke about fuel scarcity, it’s funny because it’s our real life.**”

Performers frequently used Nigerian Pidgin, Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo proverbs and playful code-switching. References to fuel scarcity, inflation, family expectations, and political tensions appeared in both songs and jokes. These culturally loaded elements made the performances relatable and grounded in everyday Nigerian life.

Table 1. Cultural Elements Used in Music–Comedy Performances

Source: Field Data, 2025.

Cultural Element	Examples Observed	Audience Response
Indigenous idioms	Proverbs, chants, call-and-response phrases	Recognition, laughter, vocal participation
Linguistic play	Pidgin-English switching, mimicry of accents	Increased engagement, amusement
Sociopolitical references	Economy, governance, social pressure	Shared nodding, laughter of recognition

This table outlines the key cultural resources performers drew on and shows how audiences responded to each element. As shown in Table 1, performers relied on a range of culturally grounded techniques to connect their acts to shared Nigerian experience. Indigenous idioms, including proverbs, chants, and call-and-response phrases, prompted strong recognition, laughter, and vocal participation from audiences. Linguistic play, such as switching between English and Nigerian Pidgin or mimicking accents, increased engagement and amusement, signaling how language creativity strengthens performer–audience rapport. Sociopolitical references to issues like the economy, governance, and social pressure triggered shared nodding and laughter of recognition, showing how humor becomes a way to process collective concerns.

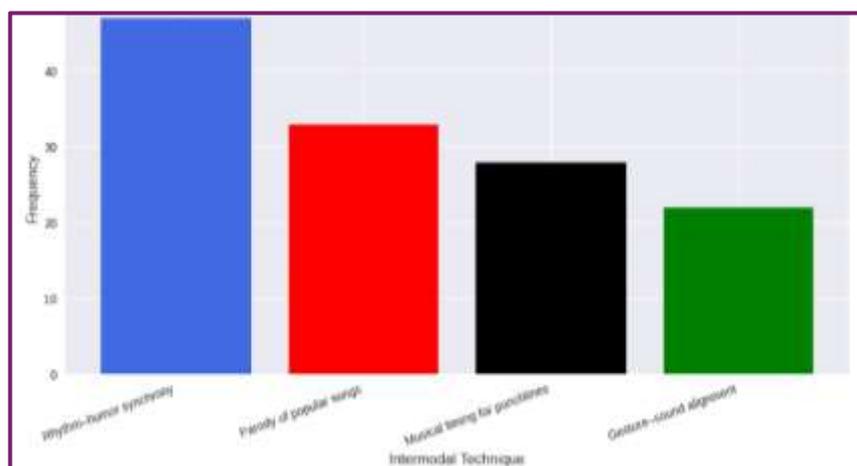
Together, these patterns demonstrate that cultural elements are not decorative; they are central tools through which performers build connection, spark reflection, and anchor their work in everyday Nigerian life.

## Intermodal Composition

The performances displayed a strong fusion of musical and comedic elements, confirming the intermodal synergy described in ETISM. Rhythm often set up punchlines, and musical breaks were used to heighten comedic timing. Parody, especially of popular songs, was a common technique.

Performers used exaggerated vocal runs, sudden key changes, or rhythmic pauses to emphasize jokes. This blending created a seamless flow where humor and music reinforced each other.

Figure 5. Frequency of Intermodal Techniques in 2025 Performances / Source: Field Data, 2025.



This figure shows how often four key intermodal techniques appeared across the analyzed performances. As illustrated in Figure 5, performers relied heavily on a range of intermodal techniques to shape audience experience. Rhythm–humor synchrony appeared most frequently (47 instances), showing how rhythmic cues guided comedic timing and audience response. Parodies of popular songs were recorded 33 times, demonstrating how familiar melodies helped performers deliver humor and cultural commentary. Musical timing for punchlines, noted 28 times, highlighted the use of tempo, pauses, and musical cues to sharpen comedic effect. Finally, gesture–sound alignment, observed 22 times, showed how coordinated movement and sound created layered meaning and enhanced audience engagement.

Taken together, these patterns confirm that performers blend rhythmic, musical, and gestural elements into a unified expressive style. This supports the broader analytical argument that intermodal creativity is central to the Episto-Musical Pedagogy Theory framework and plays a key role in shaping therapeutic and epistemic outcomes.

## Communal Activation

Audience participation emerged as one of the strongest findings. In both live and digital spaces, audiences acted as **co-creators** rather than passive observers. They clapped, laughed collectively, shouted responses, danced, and even completed punchlines before the performers delivered them.

Online, audiences extended this participation through comments, remixes, duets, and shares. This communal activation aligns with EMPT’s emphasis on learning and healing through shared performance.

Table 2. Forms of Audience Participation Across Live and Digital Spaces

Source: Field Data, 2025.

Participation Type	Live Performances	Digital Platforms
Call-and-response	Very frequent	Occasional (text-based)

Collective laughter	Constant	Expressed through emojis, comments
Co-creation	Improvised chants	Remixes, duets, stitched videos
Emotional reactions	Dancing, cheering	“This made my day,” “I needed this.”

This table compares how audiences participate in music–comedy fusion performances in physical venues and online platforms.

As shown in Table 2, audience participation takes different but equally meaningful forms across live and digital environments. In live settings, participation is highly embodied, through constant collective laughter, call-and-response exchanges, improvised chants, dancing, and cheering. On digital platforms, these same impulses appear in text-based call-and-response, emojis, comments, remixes, duets, and stitched videos. Emotional reactions are also expressed verbally through messages such as “This made my day” or “I needed this.”

Together, these patterns demonstrate that communal activation is not limited to physical presence. Whether in a concert hall or on a phone screen, audiences find ways to co-create, respond, and share emotional energy, showing that intermodal participation thrives across both environments.

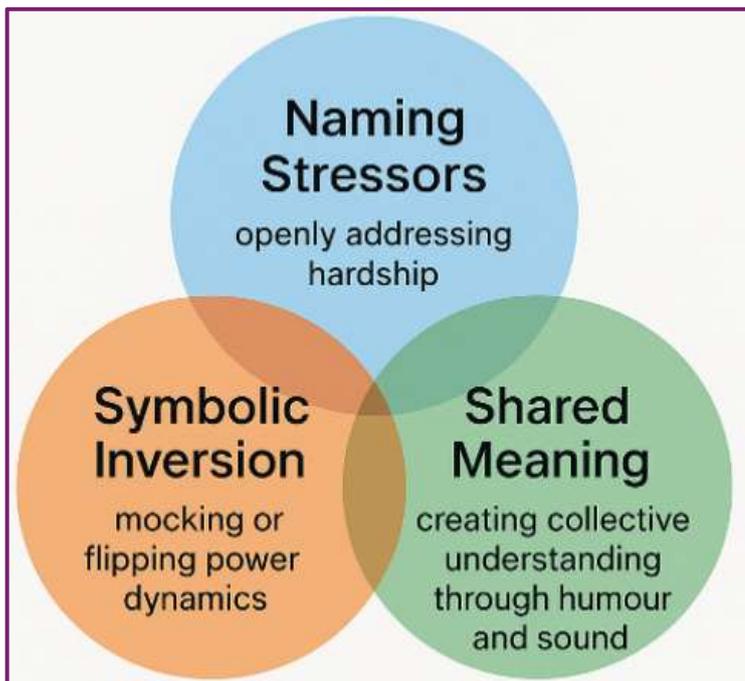
**Episto-Therapeutic Reframing**

A key finding is that performances helped audiences **name stressors**, **invert power relations**, and **create shared meaning**. Performers openly joked about hardships, such as rising prices, relationship struggles, or workplace stress, allowing audiences to confront these issues safely.

Humor softened the emotional weight of these topics, while music provided rhythm, structure, and emotional grounding. Many participants reported that the performances helped them “see things differently,” “laugh at problems,” or “feel lighter.”

Figure 6. Themes of Episto-Therapeutic Reframing

Source: Field Data, 2025.



This figure shows the three key techniques performers use to help audiences rethink difficult experiences. As shown in Figure 6, the Episto-Therapeutic Reframing stage brings together three powerful strategies that help

people reinterpret stress and regain a sense of control. The first theme, Naming Stressors, involves performers speaking openly about hardship, making challenges visible and less isolating. The second theme, Symbolic Inversion, uses humor, exaggeration, and role-reversal to turn power upside down and reduce the emotional weight of authority or social pressure. The third theme, Shared Meaning, emerges when humor, sound, and collective participation create a sense of connection and understanding among the audience.

Together, these themes show that sound-based performance does more than entertain. It actively reshapes how people experience stress, power, and community, offering new ways of thinking and feeling through culturally grounded expression.

### Residual Regulation

The final stage of ETISM, residual regulation, was strongly supported by audience narratives. Participants described **lingering emotional relief**, **renewed strength**, and **improved moods** long after the performance ended. Many said they replayed clips during stressful moments or shared them with friends who needed encouragement.

Digital circulation amplified these effects. Clips continued to generate laughter, discussion, and reinterpretation days or weeks after the original performance.

Table 3. Residual Effects Reported After Music–Comedy Fusion Performances

Source: Audience Interviews, 2025.

Residual Effect	Description	Frequency
Emotional relief	Feeling lighter, calmer	High
Resilience	Renewed motivation, hope	Moderate
Social sharing	Sending clips to friends/family	Very high
Re-engagement	Rewatching during stress	High

This table summarizes the emotional and behavioral effects that continued after the performance, showing how audiences carried the benefits into their daily lives.

In the analysis, Table 3 clearly shows that the therapeutic impact of music–comedy fusion does not end when the performance finishes. Audiences reported ongoing emotional relief, renewed motivation, frequent social sharing of clips, and repeated reengagement with the material during stressful moments, demonstrating that the effects extend well beyond the event itself.

### Synthesis of Findings

Across all five stages, the findings confirm that Nigerian music–comedy fusion operates as a culturally grounded, intermodal, and communal practice that supports stress relief and shared understanding. The results emphasize sound as knowledge and healing, and with decolonial perspectives that value indigenous expressive forms as legitimate sources of emotional and epistemic strength.

The findings strongly support the ETISM model. Cultural loading roots performances in shared experience, while intermodal composition creates a rich sensory blend of music and humor. Communal activation deepens connection by encouraging shared emotional responses. Episto-therapeutic reframing helps audiences see hardship in new ways, and residual regulation carries these benefits into daily life. Together, these elements show that music–comedy fusion is more than entertainment; it is a culturally grounded strategy for emotional well-being in contemporary Nigeria.

---

## DISCUSSION

### Interpreting Findings Through EMPT: Sound as Knowledge and Healing

The findings strongly support the views of sound and performance as forms of knowledge, healing, and communal meaning-making (Authority, 2025a, 2025b). Audiences did not simply watch music–comedy fusion as entertainment; they used it to understand their experiences, release emotional tension, and reconnect with shared cultural values. This reflects earlier African music scholarship showing that music in African societies teaches, guides, and supports emotional well-being (Merriam, 1964; Nketia, 1974; Nzewi, 1997). The performances acted as informal learning spaces where humor and sound helped people process stress in familiar cultural ways. This also aligns with wider African performance studies that describe sound as a carrier of memory, identity, and social meaning (Barber, 1997; Finnegan, 2012).

### Intermodal Synergy as a Therapeutic Mechanism

The study also shows that intermodal synergy, the blending of music, humor, gesture, and storytelling, creates a stronger therapeutic effect than using any single mode alone. Rhythm supported comedic timing, parody softened difficult topics, and audience participation amplified emotional release. This aligns with Nketia's (1998) and Kwami's (1994) observations that African performance traditions rely on multiple expressive modes working together. The fusion allowed audiences to engage emotionally, cognitively, and physically, creating a layered experience that encouraged relaxation, laughter, and new ways of interpreting stressful situations. Similar patterns have been noted in African festival and masquerade traditions, where sound, movement, and satire work together to support social healing (Okpewho, 1992).

### Decolonial Implications

#### Reclaiming African Expressive Logics

The findings show that Nigerian music–comedy fusion is grounded in indigenous expressive logics such as linguistic play, satire, call-and-response, and communal participation. These practices reflect African ways of knowing and coping that have long been undervalued in Western scholarship (Agawu, 2003; Bohlman, 1993). By centering these forms, the study contributes to the ongoing project of reclaiming African epistemologies and validating them as legitimate sources of emotional and intellectual insight.

#### Challenging Western Therapeutic Models

The results also challenge Western therapeutic models that prioritize individualism, clinical settings, and verbal analysis. In contrast, Nigerian music–comedy fusion offers a collective, embodied, and culturally resonant pathway to stress relief. This supports Born's (2010) call for relational approaches to music studies and Authority's (2025c) argument that the key theoretical lens of this study can serve as a decolonial alternative to Western frameworks. The performances show that healing can emerge from shared laughter, rhythm, and cultural storytelling, not only from formal therapy.

### Contribution to Scholarship

#### New Insights into Nigerian Popular Culture

This study adds to the growing scholarship on Nigerian popular culture by showing how music–comedy fusion functions as a tool for emotional regulation, social commentary, and communal bonding. It highlights the creativity of Nigerian performers who use intermodal techniques to address everyday challenges in ways that resonate deeply with audiences.

#### Advancement of EMPT and Decolonial Performance Theory

The study advances the primary theoretical framework of this paper by demonstrating how its principles operate in contemporary digital and live performance spaces. It also contributes to decolonial performance theory by

showing how indigenous expressive practices can support well-being and knowledge-making. The proposed Episto-Therapeutic Intermodal Synergy Model (ETISM) offers a new framework for understanding how sound, humor, and participation work together to produce therapeutic and epistemic outcomes.

### **Study Limitations**

Although the study provides strong insights, it has several limitations. First, the sample size, 24 performances and 36 participants, may not fully represent the diversity of Nigeria's many cultural regions and performance styles. Second, the study focused mainly on urban and digital performance spaces, which may differ from rural or community-based contexts. Third, self-reported experiences of stress relief may be influenced by mood, memory, or social desirability. Finally, because the study used a qualitative interpretive design, the findings are not meant to be generalized but to offer a deep, culturally grounded understanding. Future research could include larger samples, rural contexts, or comparative studies across African countries.

### **Extending ETISM Across Cultures**

ETISM can be tested and adapted in other cultural contexts by looking closely at how different communities use sound, humor, movement, and collective participation to manage stress and make meaning. Many societies already have rich intermodal traditions, such as Caribbean carnival satire, South African praise-poetry, Brazilian musical comedy, and Indigenous storytelling circles, that blend music, humor, and communal interaction in ways similar to Nigerian performance practices (Dunbar-Hall, 2006; Guilbault, 2007; Schechner, 2013). These forms show that layered performance is a global phenomenon, even though each culture expresses it differently.

To test ETISM in new settings, researchers can observe live and digital performances, interview audiences, and analyze how people describe emotional or cognitive changes after participating. This approach follows established qualitative performance research methods that link expressive practices to emotional and social outcomes (Barber, 1997; Finnegan, 2012). Researchers can also examine whether specific modes, such as rhythm, satire, gesture, or call-and-response, carry different meanings across cultures, as suggested by cross-cultural musicology and performance studies (Merriam, 1964; Nketia, 1974). This helps ensure that ETISM does not impose Nigerian patterns on other societies but instead adapts to local expressive logics.

Adapting ETISM would involve adjusting its categories to match each culture's own ways of blending sound, humor, and participation. In some places, humor may be subtle or indirect; in others, communal participation may rely more on dance, chanting, or symbolic movement. Comparative studies can show which parts of ETISM are universal, such as the idea that intermodal performance can support emotional release, and which parts need cultural modification. This process strengthens the model's flexibility and demonstrates that its core idea, healing through layered, culturally grounded performance, can apply far beyond Nigeria. By testing ETISM across cultures, scholars can build a more global understanding of how intermodal performance supports well-being, identity, and shared meaning.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrates that Nigerian music-comedy fusion is a powerful cultural practice that blends sound, humor, and communal participation to support stress relief and shared understanding. The findings show that these performances help audiences name stressors, reinterpret challenges, and experience emotional release in culturally familiar ways. The Episto-Therapeutic Intermodal Synergy Model (ETISM) explains this process by outlining five interconnected stages: cultural loading, intermodal composition, communal activation, Episto-Therapeutic reframing, and residual regulation. As a theoretical contribution, ETISM offers a clear and structured framework for understanding how intermodal performance generates both emotional healing and new ways of making meaning. It provides a foundation for future research on African expressive practices and their role in well-being.

### **Implications for Practice**

Performers can strengthen the emotional and cognitive impact of their work by intentionally using rhythm,

parody, playful language, and direct audience interaction. These creative choices help audiences feel included, think differently about their challenges, and experience collective relief. Educators and cultural practitioners can also apply EMPT principles by designing learning experiences that use sound, humor, and storytelling to support reflection, deepen understanding, and create emotionally supportive learning environments. Mental health practitioners, including counsellors and community health workers, may incorporate culturally grounded performance practices into stress-relief programs, especially in communities where Western therapeutic models feel distant or unfamiliar.

### Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies could include quantitative research to measure the specific stress-reduction effects of music-comedy fusion, cross-cultural comparisons to explore whether similar intermodal practices appear in other African or diaspora communities, and longitudinal studies to examine how repeated exposure to these fusions shapes resilience and emotional well-being over time. These directions would deepen understanding of intermodal performance and further test the usefulness of ETISM in different settings

### REFERENCES

1. Agawu, K. (2003). *Representing African music: Postcolonial notes, queries, positions*. Routledge.
2. Akpabot, S. E. (1986). *Foundation of Nigerian traditional music*. Spectrum Books.
3. Authority, O. A. U. (2025a). Episto-musical pedagogy theory: A decolonial framework for sound-based curriculum in African education. *African Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research*, 8(4), 44–60. <https://doi.org/10.52589/AJSSHR-VJWA2OEE>
4. Authority, O. A. U. (2025b). Episto-musical pedagogy theory: A framework for decolonizing African indigenous knowledge and curriculum reform through sound and story. *GRS Journal of Arts and Educational Sciences*, 1(3), 47–53. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17164496>
5. Authority, O. A. U. (2025c). Crossing borders, unlearning norms: Episto-musical pedagogy as decolonial praxis. *Global Journal of Research in Education & Literature*, 5(5), 71–77. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17461829>
6. Barber, K. (1997). *Anthropology of texts, persons and publics: Oral and written culture in Africa and beyond*. Cambridge University Press.
7. Barber, K. (1997). *Readings in African popular culture*. James Currey.
8. Bohlman, P. V. (1993). Musicology as a political act. *The Journal of Musicology*, 11(4), 411–436. <https://doi.org/10.1525/jm.1993.11.4.03a00010>
9. Born, G. (2010). For a relational musicology: Music and interdisciplinarity. *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 135(2), 205–243. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02690403.2010.506265>
10. Chinweizu, O. (1988). *Voices from twentieth-century Africa: Griots and towncriers*. Faber & Faber.
11. Dunbar-Hall, P. (2006). Culture, tourism and cultural tourism: Boundaries and frontiers in performances of Balinese music and dance. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 27(3), 261–275.
12. Echezona, W. W. C. (1963). *Ibo musical instruments in Ibo culture*. Oxford University Press.
13. Ekwueme, L. E. N. (2004). *Essays on African and African-American music culture*. Lenax Publishing.
14. Euba, A. (1989). *Essays on music in Africa: Intercultural perspectives*. Bayreuth African Studies Series.
15. Euba, A. (2001). Text setting in African composition. *Research in African Literatures*, 32(2), 119–132.
16. Finnegan, R. (2012). *Oral literature in Africa*. Open Book Publishers. <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0025>
17. Guilbault, J. (2007). *Governing sound: The cultural politics of Trinidad's carnival musics*. University of Chicago Press.
18. Jayeola, F. (2015). Indigenous music in Nigeria: Its role towards national development. *FUNAI Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(2), 102–109.
19. Kwami, R. (1994). Music education in Ghana and Nigeria: A brief survey. *Africa*, 64(4), 534–559. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1160943>
20. Merriam, A. P. (1964). *The anthropology of music*. Northwestern University Press.
21. Nigeria Bureau of Statistics. (2022). *Well-being and living conditions survey: National stress and coping indicators*. NBS Publications.
22. Nketia, J. H. K. (1974). *The music of Africa*. W. W. Norton.



23. Nketia, J. H. K. (1998). The scholarly study of African music. In R. Stone (Ed.), *Africa: The Garland encyclopedia of world music* (Vol. 1, pp. 13–73). Garland Publishing.
24. Nzewi, M. (1991). *Musical practice and creativity: An African traditional perspective*. Iwalewahaus.
25. Nzewi, M. (1997). *African music: Theoretical content and creative continuum*. Institut für Didaktik populärer Musik.
26. Nzewi, M. (2007). *A contemporary study of musical arts*. Centre for Indigenous Instrumental Music and Dance Practices.
27. Okpewho, I. (1992). *African oral literature: Backgrounds, character, and continuity*. Indiana University Press.
28. Omojola, B. (2017). Introduction: Perspectives on music and social dynamics in Nigeria. In B. Omojola (Ed.), *Music and social dynamics in Nigeria* (pp. 1–5). Peter Lang.
29. Schechner, R. (2013). *Performance studies: An introduction* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
30. Uzoigwe, F. (1998). *Ukom: A study of African musical craftsmanship*. Fasmen Communication.
31. World Health Organization. (2023). *Mental health and stress indicators in West Africa: Regional report*. WHO Press.