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Music and Self-Imposed Poverty Discourses in Tanzania: Insights from Identified Songs

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Abstract

This article explores the role of songs in addressing self-made poverty[2] in Tanzania, a persistent and complex issue affecting many developing nations. While existing studies have approached poverty and its alleviation from various perspectives, numerous Tanzanian songs provide unique discourses on the subject. The article is framed by theories of individual deficiencies, cultural belief systems, and poverty subculture. Through thematic and content analyses, it examines how songs engage with poverty-related issues. The findings reveal that some songs consent to poverty, while others defy it through different approaches. Notably, certain songs critically examine how self-imposed poverty impacts Tanzanians, offering a perspective that has often been overlooked in studies of song lyrics, especially within the context of Tanzania. The article suggests that poverty must be addressed from multiple angles, considering the lived experiences of those affected.

1.0 Introduction

Poverty has been defined in various ways by scholars, reflecting its multifaceted nature. Bradshaw (2007) characterizes it as the deprivation of basic necessities, including shelter, food, healthcare, clean water, and safety. Wilson and Letsosa (2010) incorporate the lack of education, employment, and access to clean water to poverty. Townsend (2006) defines poverty as a condition in which individuals are deprived of income and essential possessions necessary to achieve a minimum standard of living. Lister (2004) links poverty to a sense of powerlessness, insecurity, and the loss of dignity and respect. While these definitions are diverse, they all converge on the central idea that poverty is tied to the absence of basic human needs or the income required to secure them (Laderchi, Ruggeri and Stewart 2003; Lawless, 2019; Kamruzzaman, 2021).

In both developed and developing countries, including Tanzania, poverty remains a significant concern, with the number of individuals living below the

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[2] Self-made poverty, sometimes known as self-inflicted poverty or self-imposed poverty is poverty resulting from personal acts, mainly caused by individual's misleading mentality or ignorance (Javnyuv, 2021).

poverty line continuing to rise (Addae-Korankye, 2019). Research indicates that poverty can be attributed to structural, fatalistic, and individualistic factors. Structural perspectives emphasize that poverty is a societal issue, with certain individuals being disproportionately disadvantaged due to systemic factors. Fatalistic views, conversely, attribute poverty to external circumstances such as illness, war, or accidents, framing individuals as innocent victims of bad luck. Individualistic perspectives focus on personal behaviors and cultural factors, asserting that poverty arises from an individual's lack of ability, intelligence, or a problematic lifestyle (Grobler and Dunga, 2016).

While there are external forces that contribute to poverty, the eradication of self-imposed poverty and the liberation from poverty can only be achieved when individuals play required role (Townsend 2006). Therefore, raising awareness of self-inflicted poverty is crucial. In developed countries, for example, certain individuals' economies are adversely affected by addictions such as gambling and alcoholism. In contrast, many developing countries struggle with the misuse of public wealth by government leaders, corruption, and civil conflicts (Moore, 2021). Despite receiving substantial foreign aid and possessing valuable natural resources, these countries remain impoverished, often attributing their poverty to external forces rather than addressing internal factors. It is essential, therefore, to first examines the personal and national contributions to poverty before attributing blame solely to external factors.

In Tanzania, certain beliefs and practices contribute to self-inflicted poverty. A notable example is the widespread belief in secretive cults, such as 'freemasonry', which some Tanzanians believe can bring wealth. Rather than engaging in hard work, individuals often seek to join these societies, hoping to, miraculously, accumulate wealth in a short period of time (Muganyizi, 2018). Additionally, a 2010 study by the PEW Research Center found that 93 percent of Tanzanians believed in the power of witchcraft to bring success (PEW, 2010). Moreover, numerous billboards along major roads in urban areas throughout Tanzania advertise the services of so-called 'experts' who claim to have the ability to make individuals rich quickly (Mgaya, 2018). In addition, some urban Tanzanians have adopted the habit of *kula bata*, a Kiswahili slang term meaning 'having a good time'. This lifestyle involves frequent extravagant outings and celebrations, such as weddings, which often lead to financial strain. Many individuals contribute heavily to fund such events, far beyond their financial means. Some even take out loans to finance these social obligations[3], further exacerbating their financial instability (Lino, 2017).

Many middle-aged individuals and youths in Tanzania spend a significant amount of time and energy on social media platforms, or *kula ubuyu* in Kiswahili slang, often engaging in activities that do not contribute to their personal or financial

[3] The minimum has been 100,000 Tanzanian shillings (about 50 US dollars) per person in a year (Lino, 2017).

improvement (Mafuru, 2016). Additionally, a growing number of youths have developed an addiction to betting and gambling, referred to as *kusuka mikeka* in Kiswahili slang, driven by long-standing misconceptions that discourage hard work in favor of seeking quick, opportunistic wealth (Fungavyema, 2019). In light of these practices, Sheehy (2013) emphasizes the importance of cultivating critical thinking to enhance one's life and, in turn, alleviate poverty.

Efforts by individuals, institutions and the government to alleviate poverty in Tanzania can be categorized into economic and humanitarian measures (Jerve and Ofstad, 2000). Mbilinyi and Nyoni (2000) argue that Tanzania has integrated poverty eradication policies across various sectoral ministries, including agriculture, trade and industry, and labor and youth development. A key aspect of these efforts is the empowerment and inclusion of the impoverished in decision-making processes, prioritizing people-centered, poverty-free development (Rahman, 1993). This approach ensures equitable access to and management of essential resources at all social levels. Additionally, social measures have been implemented to help marginalized groups overcome disempowerment and inequality, enabling them to access resources and actively participate in poverty-free development (Mbilinyi and Nyoni, 2000). Notable initiatives include the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP), the National Economic Empowerment Council (NEEC), and the establishment of Village Community Banks (VICOBA), as highlighted by Mahenge (2016).

In addition, several non-profit organizations in Tanzania address poverty through direct interactions with low-income individuals. Among the organizations I have visited that assist people, particularly youths living in poverty, are the Kigamboni Community Centre (KCC), the Baba Watoto Youth Centre, and New Hope for Girls, all located in Dar es Salaam. There are also other organizations in different regions of the country working to support youths in poverty and difficult circumstances, although I have not visited them personally. These include Sifa in Pwani, Furaha in Arusha, Hasene in Dodoma, and Husa in Morogoro. Religious organizations also play a significant role in providing financial and compassionate support to the impoverished, often using faith-based approaches. While these organizations help bridge the gap between the poor and the neoliberal world, they do not specifically address the issue of self-inflicted poverty.

Several songs address poverty in diverse ways, offering psychological healing to the poor, promoting reconciliation, and educating society about poverty and its effects (Kamruzzaman, 2021). When musicians challenge poverty in their communities, they adopt a participatory approach to poverty alleviation, recognizing that those who live in poverty are best equipped to explain and understand its complexities. Kamruzzaman (2021) further notes that the impoverished are often better positioned to comprehend the challenges they face and that with the right resources, they can manage their conditions.

In Tanzania, several musicians have used their songs to challenge poverty. Daz Nundaz and Madee, for instance, express frustration with the hardships of poverty in their songs *'Nitafanya Nini'* [What Shall I Do] and *'Yote Maisha'* [All Is Life], respectively. John Worker and Ras Lion's *'Umaskini Huu'* [This Poverty] questions the possibility of overcoming poverty. In this song, Ras Lion narrates the difficulties of his fictional poor childhood, such as his mother washing clothes using pawpaw leaves. He humorously describes his intention to shave his head to reduce the amount of soap needed for a bath. Through the child persona in the song, Ras Lion suggests the country to be sold for citizens to receive a share to reduce individual poverty.

Suma G's *'Vituko Uswahilini'* [Slum Antics] portrays life in impoverished neighborhoods of Dar es Salaam, highlighting issues such as noise, unplanned settlements, witchcraft, filthy environments, people surviving on $0.05 a day, and theft. Ben Pol's songs *'Maneno Maneno'* [Just Words] and *'Bado Kidogo'* [Just a Moment More] address poverty from different perspectives. *'Maneno Maneno'* mocks the poor, while *'Bado Kidogo'* offers hope and encouragement to those living in severe poverty. Similarly, Darassa's *'Sikati Tamaa'* [I Won't Give Up] inspires perseverance in the face of hardship. Blad Key's *'Vinapanda Bei'* [Prices Are Going Up] challenges the government's inability to control inflation. This song reflects structural attributions to poverty, linking it to the class system, poor macroeconomic policies, and government failing systems (Grobler and Dunga, 2016).

Many of these songs highlight the social class divide between the rich and the poor, often showcasing the subcultural norms and practices of impoverished communities. Songs like *'Umaskini Huu'*, *'Maneno Maneno'*, and *'Yote Maisha'* express 'social empathy', largely through lamenting the marginalized and underprivileged positions of those who experience it (Segal, 2007). On the other hand, songs such as *'Sikati Tamaa'* and *'Bado Kidogo'* encourage people to take proactive steps toward overcoming poverty through 'life course agency'. These songs suggest that individuals can reconstruct their lives to achieve their goals by adapting to their current circumstances (Hitlin and Elder, 2007). However, these songs do not focus on self-inflicted poverty, the one often more difficult to recognize, and the one still affecting many Tanzanians.

2.0 Theoretical Support

This study is guided by three theoretical frameworks: the Theory of Individual Deficiencies, the Theory of Cultural Belief Systems, and the Subculture Theory of Poverty. The Theory of Individual Deficiencies asserts that individuals are responsible for their own poverty through their personal attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors (Sameti, Esfahani and Haghighi, 2012). This theory places the onus on the poor to resolve their own poverty by making better decisions, demonstrating hard work, and improving their circumstances through personal effort.

The Theory of Cultural Belief Systems posits that the transmission of beliefs and behaviors that perpetuate poverty contributes to its persistence (Bradshaw, 2006). According to this theory, the poor internalize certain psychological behaviors associated with poverty, which then reinforce their entrapment in it. Music, as a medium, is a significant means through which these beliefs and behaviors are transmitted (Bradshaw, 2006).

The Subculture Theory of Poverty, on the other hand, suggests that several poor do not passively accept their poverty situation hence, develop various mechanisms to deal with it. This theory emphasizes that acknowledging and accepting one's poverty can foster the courage and the need to address it (Wilson, 2016).

Collectively, these three theories guided this article in examining Tanzanian songs and understanding how they reflect the causes of poverty. While the theories acknowledge a range of factors contributing to poverty, they primarily focus on personal causes, a starting point for addressing poverty (De Antuñano, 2019).

3.0 Data Presentation and Analysis

To achieve the objective of this article, I began by conducting a thematic analysis of Tanzanian songs that focus on poverty. I then performed a content analysis, examining the lyrics and categorizing the approaches these songs use to address the issue of poverty (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The analysis revealed that some songs endorse poverty, while others challenge it. Additionally, other songs negotiate and accommodate poverty, reflecting different strategies for dealing with self-inflicted poverty.

3.1 Songs which Endorse Poverty

These songs promote behaviors that can lead individuals to self-inflicted poverty, primarily by encouraging reckless spending. The songs motivate listeners to aspire to a seemingly better lifestyle than the one they currently experience, a tendency making sung songs highly popular. However, this lifestyle often leads to poverty to listeners and the musicians (Taubel, 2017). Songs like '*Mikasi'* [Scissors] by Albert Mangwea, '*Nataka'* [I Desire] by Godzilla, and '*Nakula Ujana'* [Enjoying My Youth] by Nay wa Mitego exemplify this trend.

In '*Mikasi'*, the musician describes a carefree lifestyle triggered by having some cash on hand. Upon realizing he has money, he quickly shifts into celebration mode, gathering friends for a night of indulgence. The focus turns to pleasure of drinking, using drugs and casual relationships. However, the artist makes it clear that this lifestyle comes with a price, that only those who can financially contribute are welcome to join in. In '*Nataka'*, the musician paints a picture of excess and confidence when he enjoys throughout the night, calling on the waiter to keep the alcohol flowing. He is not only drinking for himself but generously covering drinks for others too. He has a desire to appear at every major party spot in the city to boost

up his visibility and reputation. With his no-worries attitude, he does not care of bills hence urging everyone to keep partying at his cost. Likewise, in '*Nakula Ujana'*, Nay wa Mitego expresses a philosophy centered on living 'in the moment', emphasizing that life is brief and should be fully enjoyed at present. He portrays himself as generous when intoxicated, often buying drinks for his male friends and spending freely on women who catch his eye. He sings that his preferences for women shift with time, meaning that he changes them every day. For him, doing such acts, he just rewards himself after earning some money. There is a reckless edge to his lifestyle; he admits to being confrontational and willing to resolve issues with money. His youthful phase is one of constant, carefree enjoyment.

Similarly, in '*Nikiokota Hela'* [If I Land on a Jackpot] by Wakuja, the musician imagines a sudden rise to wealth and describes the extravagant, almost surreal lifestyle he would adopt. No longer interested in traditional investments like building a home, he would instead splurge on luxury cars and seek attention from celebrities. To mark his transition from poverty, he envisions hosting a grand celebration. His fantasies grow even more outlandish such as funding bizarre research, influencing politicians to say his name in parliament, and making absurd changes like controlling how people look and how tall they are. Underneath the humor and exaggeration lies a deeper sentiment: a desire to reclaim dignity and power, especially in the face of those who once treated him poorly.

The lyrics in these songs prompt reflection on financial mismanagement as a key issue faced by many musicians, particularly popular ones in the *Bongo Fleva* genre. Young artists, after gaining fame and acquiring wealth, often exhibit behaviors such as moving from nightclub to nightclub throughout the night, spending cash stored in the boots of their cars rather than depositing it in a bank (Akaro, 2017). This culture of 'spendthrift'[4] behavior is frequently validated by phrases such as: "We were not born with money, so we should spend it, not save it," or "Spend money so it becomes familiar with you," while investing is sometimes seen as a sign of fearing life's uncertainties. Such statements not only justify reckless spending but also encourage a lifestyle of excess, which ultimately leads to financial instability. In Tanzanian nightclubs, DJs and bar attendants also play a role in reinforcing these spendthrift attitudes, often encouraging patrons to continue spending recklessly. For example, a common phrase heard in these spaces is: "Don't buy iron sheets to build a house, because life is too short. Enjoy life before those iron sheets hurt you and make you vulnerable to tetanus." This narrative, which prioritizes immediate pleasure over long-term financial planning, reflects the same mindset that can perpetuate cycles of poverty. Many Tanzanian musicians, like their counterparts worldwide, face significant financial struggles. Despite earning substantial sums, they often fail to maintain their wealth due to poor financial decisions (Mwakibete, 2019). The attribution of poverty in most of the above songs

[4] 'Spendthrift' is a term for people who spend money in a careless or wasteful way.

is 'individualized', focusing on personal acts (Sameti et al., 2012; Grobler and Dunga, 2016). The song '*Nikiokota Hela'* by Wakuja exemplifies individualistic view, that financial success comes by luck and opportunity rather than consistent hard work or wise decision-making (Grobler and Dunga, 2016).

3.2 Songs Instructing Financial Management

These songs provide valuable lessons on financial management, emphasizing the importance of prudent financial decisions to avoid self-inflicted poverty. They often encourage listeners to adopt a disciplined and strategic approach to wealth accumulation, avoiding the temptation of living beyond one's means. One such example is '*Bakhresa'* by Harmonize, which offers a cautionary tale about the dangers of boasting about wealth and overspending. The song uses the figure of Mr. Said Bakhresa, a prominent Tanzanian business magnate, as a model of financial success. The musician highlights a quiet, disciplined character, Bakhresa, whose impact is felt through the products people consume, even though they may never have seen or heard much about him. Unlike many wealthy individuals who seek recognition through media or flashy lifestyles, Bakhresa stays focused on business and gives back to society humbly, helping those in need without publicity. He avoids the usual traps of wealth - alcohol, fame-seeking, and wasteful spending. The musician presents him as a role model for financial success, emphasizing his preference for meaningful investment over showy gestures. While others chase urban glamour, the singer states, Bakhresa directs his energy and resources to developing rural areas, where change is often most needed.

In *Darubini Kali* [Powerful Telescope/Binoculars], Afande Sele sings: "It is irresponsible for Tanzanian musicians to constantly glorify luxury lifestyles in their songs while many people in rural areas are suffering from extreme poverty". Similarly, in *Sina* [I Have Nothing], Harmonize vividly portrays the consequences of excessive and unwarranted spending through the story of a once-rich individual who ultimately goes bankrupt. The singer uses Tanzanian musician Mr. Nice as an example, who was successful in the early 2000s but lost his fortune due to lavish spending[5]. Thus, the song serves as a cautionary tale for listeners, urging them to reflect on their own financial behaviors and avoid similar pitfalls. Other songs such as '*Nimefulia'* [I Am Broke] by Benjamin wa Mambo Jambo and '*Utanipenda?'* [Would You Still Love Me?] by Diamond Platinumz, also address financial management, underscoring the consequences of living beyond one's means. In '*Tunda Special'* [Special Fruit] by Muumini Mwinjuma, the lyrics "*mkulima kala mbegu anataka kutuua njaa*" [the farmer has eaten all the seeds, this may make us starve to death] criticize self-destructive behaviors that can lead to poverty.

The songs' suggestions on financial management are important in shaping people's attitudes and cultural norms thus the songs align with the Theory of

[5] Mr. Nice explanations on D'Weekend Chat Show of Clouds TV on 25th July 2017.

Cultural Belief Systems (Bradshaw, 2006). But many of these songs evoke feelings of avoidance or shame in relation to poverty, aiming to influence listeners to distance themselves from such conditions (Scheff, 2003; Lister, 2004). In this case, I explored other songs which have a different approach to poverty, as explained below:

3.3 Songs of Contemplative Thought to Poverty

In the third category of songs, I have found that these songs take a more introspective approach to poverty. These songs utilize concepts like discursive consciousness, capability, and livelihood approaches, which encourage individuals to recognize their self-worth. The specific songs found under this category are the song '*Nyumbani ni Nyumbani'* [Home is Home] by Wanaume Family and '*Hatuna Kitu'* [We Have Nothing] by Rich One.

3.3.1 Song *Nyumbani ni Nyumbani* Promotes Patriotic Compliance to Poverty

This song acknowledges the existence of poverty, and suggests for recognizing one's lower socio-economic status and, subsequently, taking proactive steps to improve their situation. It presents a unique and subjective perspective on self-inflicted poverty, offering a form of 'positive psychology' that encourages individuals living in poverty to confront and accept their current realities. Rather than framing poverty solely as a source of shame or as an insurmountable life threat, the song reframes it as a social reality that must be acknowledged, with the potential for improvement (Scheff, 2003). This shift in perception can be empowering for those experiencing poverty, enabling them to face their circumstances. The song exemplifies a 'participatory approach' (Peterson and Chang, 2003; Laderchi et al., 2003) by providing an authentic and empathetic perspective of poverty, offering lived experiences from those who are directly affected.

In contrast to some of the previously discussed songs that tend to blame and victimize the poor, thereby deepening their suffering and contributing to their depersonalization (Shweder, 2003), this song fosters a better approach. By shifting the focus from victimization to a sense of agency, it promotes the idea that people can take control of their lives, despite circumstances. As Akaro (2017) observes, many Tanzanians in poverty often resort to living 'fake' lives where they engage in grandiose talk and actions to project wealth and self-exaltation. Shweder (2003) advocates for recognizing the extent of personal control over their own conditions and encourages people to negotiate through these conditions, which this song supports.

The song's lyrics in the second verse "We are poor, but we can manage our lives" and "Do not disrespect where you live", emphasize acceptance and resilience. It also offers practical advice for alleviating poverty, urging listeners to adopt a proactive mindset with lines like "…let us work hard and not lose hope", "You will succeed only if you work hard", and "Work hard and you will earn enough to

improve your home". These messages not only validate the struggles of those in poverty but also inspire hope and agency, ultimately encouraging a productive and resilient approach to overcoming difficult circumstances.

The song embodies the concept of 'discursive consciousness', which means the ability to express knowledge and experiences vocally (Goldenstein and Walgenbach, 2021), as it seeks to enhance self-confidence and self-esteem among people living in poverty. This is achieved when encouraging them to articulate their realities without shame. Additionally, the song reflects the 'capability approach' (Sen, 1999), which emphasizes the freedom people have to pursue lives that align with their values and capabilities. According to this approach, two fundamental claims are made: first, that the freedom to achieve well-being is of primary moral importance to individuals; and second, that well-being should be understood in terms of people's capabilities and their functioning (Sen, 1999). In this context, functioning refers to the activities and conditions that contribute to one's well-being (Alkire, 2002).

In the first verse of the song, the lyrics "at our home, beans taste better than meat, especially those cooked by my mother" illustrate the 'capability approach'. In households with limited resources, where purchasing 'rich food' such as meat is not feasible, the family values what they can afford; beans, in this case. This valuing of what is attainable contributes to a sense of well-being, reflecting the capability approach by highlighting the importance of appreciating and making the best of available resources. Furthermore, this message challenges a common misconception in the country, that having money means one can eat meat every day. Not only is this belief misguided, but it also overlooks the importance of a balanced diet. Foods often associated with poverty, such as vegetables and beans, are in fact essential for good nutrition and overall health.

Moreover, the song also aligns with the Subculture Theory of Poverty (Bradshaw, 2007), which suggests that the poor develop coping strategies that help them adapt to their economic circumstances. Through such perception, poverty is dealt without panic, a condition allowing poor individuals to improve their status at their own pace. This approach to poverty helps individuals focus on their internal resilience rather than external comparisons, fostering a sense of agency.

In an interview conducted on 10th October 2021, Juma Nature, the leader of Wanaume Family, elaborated on the song's message and its relevance to real-life experiences. He explained:

> What is sung in *Nyumbani ni Nyumbani* is a real-life lesson. If you develop your 'home', that is what I call 'true development'. It is a shame that some people do not respect where they come from. Home is just home. If you have one meal at home, don't disrespect that. Just work hard and pray to God. Tomorrow you will eat more than that. I come from a low-income family and I live in a poor neighborhood, but I feel proud of myself, my life, and my home. I am not treating myself as poor.

> I see myself as rich in terms of love, thinking, lyrical composition, and singing talent. So back to the story, this song insists on patience, respect, and on avoiding coveting other people's lives or properties because you don't know how they got what they have. You cannot develop if you deny your reality.

At another level, Juma Nature is widely recognized by his pseudonym *Msitu wa Vina*, which literally translates to 'the forest of rhyme' in Kiswahili. This nickname reflects his deep poetic skill and lyrical creativity. He is also affectionately known by his peers as *Tajiri wa Mashairi*, meaning 'a tycoon in lyrics'. These pseudonyms are indicative of his lyrical prowess and contribute to his distinguished identity within the music industry. These aliases align with the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) theory, popularized by John McKnight and Jody Kretzmann, which posits that development should focus on various assets such as talents, skills, and human capacities of individuals and communities (Phillips and Pittman, 2009). Juma Nature's pseudonyms highlight some assets he possesses, such as his lyrical ability and creative talent, which are valued equally alongside material wealth. The song's message also extends beyond personal development and touches on broader social and political implications. It can serve as a critique of poor governance in many developing countries, where leaders often fail to create sustainable development, instead engaging in corrupt practices such as embezzling public wealth and transferring it abroad. As Juma Nature aptly puts it, 'true development' comes from self-reliance and hard work.

3.3.2 The Song *Hatuna Kitu* 'Celebrates' Poverty

This song, whose titled '*Hatuna Kitu'* (literally meaning - We Have Nothing), complies with poverty in two significant ways: first, by acknowledging the harsh reality of the poverty situation, and second, by addressing the consequences of mismanaging money. It then offers insightful commentary on how individuals should navigate their financial circumstances. Moreover, the song presents a pragmatic approach to dealing with poverty, urging people to work hard regardless of the job they pursue. In the second verse, the line "My friends, just work hard so that you get something for your life. Don't choose jobs, just work hard" highlights the detrimental habit among some Tanzanians of focusing exclusively on white-collar jobs such as doctors, lawyers, and bankers, which are traditionally viewed as more prestigious. This selective attitude often leaves people feeling disillusioned when they fail to secure such positions, contributing to a cycle of joblessness and self-inflicted poverty. The song thus emphasizes the importance of adaptability and hard work in any field, including arts, sports, entrepreneurship, and blue-collar jobs, as avenues to improve one's livelihood.

These messages reflect the concept of 'discursive consciousness' (Day and Fiske, 2019), which involves the ability to express and negotiate one's circumstances, encouraging individuals to engage in self-reflection and take control

of their economic situation. Furthermore, the song aligns with the 'livelihood approach' (Maceda, Stasiak, and Berre, 2009), which emphasizes organizing one's life around available resources and opportunities. By acknowledging the challenges that come with financial scarcity while also proposing practical solutions, such as hard work and the rejection of job-based elitism, the song encourages its listeners to take responsibility for their own well-being and make the most of what they have. Ultimately, the song advocates for a mindset shift in which people embrace their current reality without self-pity and focus on building their future through diligence, humility, and respect for all types of work. It serves as a powerful reminder that the path out of poverty requires both practical effort and a change in attitude toward money, success, and opportunity.

As with the previous song, further robe into what made Rich One comply with poverty through this song, he explained the inspiration behind his song during an interview held on 3rd October 2021 thusly:

> Many individuals struggle to accept their actual standard of living due to societal pressures. This denial of their true financial situation often leads them to pretend to be wealthier than they are, which in turn causes more problems. For instance, one might boast about having money, but when friends in need ask for financial assistance, they may harbor resentment if help is not provided, unaware that the individual is unable to assist. Moreover, this false portrayal of wealth can attract unwanted attention, such as robbery attempts, as others may believe the person has hidden money. These circumstances highlight the importance of accepting one's real-life situation rather than living in denial.

Ironically, while the song is titled 'We Have Nothing', the musician refers to himself as 'Rich One'. In the interview, the artist explained that he does not consider himself poor, despite living what can be termed a 'normal life', essentially a life marked by poverty. Similar to Juma Nature, who adopts the pseudonym *msitu wa vina* (the forest of rhyme), the name 'Rich One' aligns with the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) theory, which emphasizes the importance of talent, skills, and human capacities as assets, rather than just material wealth (Phillips and Pittman, 2009). Through this lens, Rich One does not attempt to distance himself from poverty by ignoring or denying its existence (Lott, 2002); rather, he confronts it directly in his song.

Both songs serve to empower individuals living in poverty by offering valuable insights through informal or semi-formal education, particularly regarding how to navigate and cope with their economic realities (Lawless, 2019). Furthermore, these songs emphasize the importance of self-esteem which is critical when addressing poverty, especially self-inflicted poverty. This focus on self-worth aligns with the Subculture Theory of Poverty, which stresses the need to value one's identity and capabilities, even within a context of economic hardship (Bradshaw, 2007).

4.0 Conclusion

This study highlights the significant yet underexplored role of songs in articulating and contesting self-made poverty in Tanzania. The research reveals a nuanced landscape of musical narratives, ranging from aligning to resistance. These songs not only reflect the complex social realities of poverty in Tanzania but also contribute to the broader discourse on poverty by emphasizing personal agency, cultural values, and the internalized dimensions of economic struggle. Importantly, the findings call for a multidimensional approach to poverty alleviation; one that incorporates cultural expressions and the lived experiences of affected communities.

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