The Effects of Rap Music on Namibian Teenagers

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ABSTRACT--- *Rap music is often identified with violent and misogynist lyric portrayals. It is hypothesized that rap music fans would focus on traits and behaviours that are self-destructive, and threats to others. This study investigated whether rap music is harmful to teenagers in Namibia. The results support this hypothesis but also reveal that the lyrics of rap music have an effect on mood, suicidal ideation, sexual misconduct and aggression of adolescents. The survey method was employed in this study coupled with group discussions and content analysis of rap music's violent and misogynist lyrics. This study was conducted in view of the public concern about the negative influences of popular music on teenagers in Namibia.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

This study examines whether or not rap music is harmful to teenagers in Namibia due to the violent lyrics encouraging disrespect towards women, lack of respect for moral ethics or authority, alcohol and drug abuse and the regular use of profanity. The main concern of this study is to establish whether there exist detrimental effects to teenagers who listen to violent and sexually graphic lyrics? Although all rap music is not the same, and there exists rap music with a "consciousness", however, it also acknowledges the existence of detrimental effects of rap music on the development of children as factor in today's society. Children exposed to the lyrics have been said to glorify the use of drugs and alcohol, violence, disrespect for authority and other negative influences and factors.

The aims of the study is to determine the correlation between Rap music and the changes observed in behavior of teenagers who listen to it, the impact of Rap music within the Namibian society, to ascertain whether or not parents are aware of parental advisory labels on these materials and to establish the impact of Rap music on teenage behavior.

Music is a universal language that reaches across the world to all cultures, countries and generations. It is an open act of expression that entertains, relaxes and excites people. In today's society, the world is swamped with artists that exercise every right to freedom of expression. Music has become a way for artists to express anger, discrimination, religious beliefs, sexual innuendos and violence. Rap music has long been criticized for contributing to teenage behavior problems. If any form of mass media influences adolescents, music is a prime suspect (Radcoy, R., & Boyle, 1. (1997)). Music tends to define teenage peer groups, and by the 11, 12 grade, it is estimated that teens have spent as much time listening to music and watching music videos as they have in school (Nattiez, Jean-Jacques. 1990)

In the 1980s, rap music was seldom studied by scholars in the academic community (Dixon T.L and Linz, D (1997). Today rap has increasingly been considered a troubling form of musical expression related to a number of negative psychological outcomes (Barongan, Gordon & Nagayama, 1995; Johnson, Adams, Ashburn & Reed, 1995; Johnson, Jackson & Gatto, 1995; Johnson, Trawalter & Dovidio, 2000; McLeod, Eveland & Nathanson, 1997). Although rap music was born in the 1970s, most critics and scholars acknowledge that it became a significant musical force in the 1980s (Powell, 1991; Rose, 1991).

Rap was almost immediately criticized for its "street" message and origins (Binder, 1993.) At the same time it was hailed for its commercial success (Stephens, 1991). Early on, most media scholars simply ignored rap. Quantitative scholars specializing in media effects were especially quiet during this era, even though many such scholars had claimed in other contexts that the examination of music as mass communication was important as stated by Linz. Most communication scholars did not change course and begin to study rap music until the early 1990s. Much of this new research focused on the cultural roots of rap music (Binder, 1993; Kuwahara, 1992; Pressley, 1992; Rose, 1991). These

scholars made two interesting observations (1) they claimed that rap music was a form of cultural expression; (2) they stated that understanding rap was rooted in understanding the cultural underpinnings of the music.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted within the Khomas Region in Namibia and used a survey methodology in which a population consisting of 20 teenagers aged between 3 and 19 years from high schools and colleges were involved. These were divided into five Focus Groups of one hour long taped sessions. A questionnaire was also administered to the same respondents two weeks before the FGD. Of the 100 questionnaires distributed, all were returned. The explicit purpose of using a questionnaire was to collect a broad range of data and social background, identity, leisure and cultural pursuit of the Namibian youth. This method was also a quick and efficient way to survey a cross section of the sample population than was offered through FGDs. The questionnaire data also provided a useful context and produced some valuable take-off points for the more interpretative FGDs that followed. The main research question of the study was to establish whether Rap music have an effect on teenage behaviour. The second question was to find out what psychological impact and consequence does this music carry? The importance of the study is based on the assumption that Namibian teenagers are heavy consumers of the popular Rap music and that there is widespread substance use and abuse among them which constitute a serious problem of violence, aggressive behaviour, suicide and profanity and that these media content includes images related to behavioural alteration.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social learning theory provides the main guidance for this study. According to this theory, media messages influence young people by providing explicit, concrete "models" for behaviors (e.g., smoking marijuana), attitudes (e.g., taking an anti-drug point of view), and feelings (e.g., fearing the effects of drug use). Whenever a child or adolescent encounters a media depiction or portrayal as in a movie or song, the potential exists for the behavior to be imitated (Bandura, A, 1986). Research on social learning theory also demonstrates that the likelihood of imitation depends on the context surrounding the portrayal, particularly consequences attached to the behavior. Generally, perceived negative consequences (e.g., someone dying of an overdose) decrease the probability of a modeling effect, and perceived positive consequences (e.g., gaining social acceptance by drinking at a party) increase the probability.

Further, young audience members are more likely to learn and imitate behaviors performed by attractive, successful, or powerful role models or associated with positive outcomes such as approval, money, power, romance, and sex. Interestingly, even the absence of a negative outcome-such as when a teen character is not punished for using drug-often has the same influence as an explicit positive consequence or reward. When teenagers watch others perform certain behaviors and see which result in rewards or punishments, they are engaging in observational learning. This type of behavior is exhibited in the cliche phrase. "Everyone else is doing it." Depending on the result, people are inclined to try behaviors acted out by others.

Two criteria must exist for this theory: a model and a result of the model's behavior. Persons with branded images, celebrities, are the model figures and their behaviors are the references used by viewers when determining which behaviors result in rewards or punishments. Four stages provide four stages that formulate observational learning. To begin with, attention stresses people cannot learn unless they accurately perceive important features within the model's behavior - on the basis of rap music we find that particular genres of music have the ability to attract rap music fans. Second, retention signifies people cannot be influenced unless they recall or internalize the behavior - certain lyrics are very catchy and teenagers find themselves humming the tune or singing along even in the absence of the song playing. Thus leaving a retained image of what the song is all about. Third, motor reproduction converts symbolic representations of the behavior into action - a number of teenagers have a very active imagination, thus when lyrics are very explicit they do form symbolic interpretations word for word. Fourth, motivation engages someone to act in accordance with a particular behavior if it results in a desired outcome-when a teenager is a member of the out-group; they will do their best to conform to the in-group standards. For this reason they imitate a number of things they hear and view in order to gain social acceptance. Going through each stage leads to a structural understanding as to why certain behaviors result in certain outcomes.

Social Cognitive Theory - Internal determinants affect behavior. External stimuli are not the sole reasons a person will perform a particular behavior in hopes of receiving a desired result. Instead, a person's beliefs and ideas, or cognition, contributes to the overall act. Both the internal and external stimuli from the model motivate actions by the observational learners. Personal characteristics from both the viewer and model affect the relationship between observing the desired outcome and actually performing the behavior that results in the desired outcome (Eyal & Rubin, 2003).

A person's ideologies will determine if the behaviors will even stimulate the viewer's attention. If a person does not agree with the underlying motives of a particular behavior, the viewer won't even attempt to decipher if the behavior of the model could result in a desired outcome or not. For example, teenagers who listen solely to rap music would not be interested in viewing country music artists' images since these behaviors conflict with their preexisting beliefs. A person's beliefs reflect to their self-efficacy and selfreinforcement. Self-efficacy describes what people believe they are capable of accomplishing whereas selfreinforcement occurs when standards people set act as substitutes for external rewards or punishments. Incorporation of self-efficacy and self-reinforcement with an observed behavior provides the linkage between one's thoughts and actions. This link exists when a teenager believes he or she is capable of interacting with a particular socially acceptable reference group. As a result, his or her continued interactions with the members of the reference group reinforce his or her preconceptions of social acceptance and provide intrinsic gratification.

Teenagers attempting to adhere to images presented in rap culture to gain social acceptance and selfreinforcement categorize themselves in particular groups. These groups become the reference points for many teenagers in evaluating themselves according to the popular culture standard at the time. Determining the essence of a teenager's behaviors and attitudes influenced by rap culture images has sparked research questions that have been addressed - hopefully solved - through the data gathered from this study.

Although rap music was born in the 1970s, most critics and scholars acknowledge that rap became a significant musical force in the 1980s (Powell, 1991). Rap was almost immediately criticized for its "street" message and origins (Binder, 1993). At the same time it was hailed for its commercial success (Stephens, 1991). Early on, most media scholars simply ignored rap. Quantitative scholars specializing in media effects were especially quiet during this era, even though many such scholars had claimed in other contexts that the examination of music as mass communication was important (Dixon & Linz, 1997). Most communication scholars did not change course and begin to study rap music until the early 1990s. Much of this new research focused on the cultural roots of rap music (Binder, 1993; Kuwahara, 1992; Pressley, 1992; Rose, 1991, 1994). These scholars made two interesting observations; (1) they claimed that rap music was a form of cultural expression; (2) they stated that understanding rap was rooted in understanding the cultural underpinnings of the music.

4. FINDINGS

Focus Group Discussions

The respondents of the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were of the opinion that music is a highly significant aspect of the youth's cultural identity throughout the world. The most popular types of music preferred by the Namibian youth by far was rap music chosen by nearly 90 per cent of the sample. This was followed by alternative music, pop, rock, dance, and metal. Only one in the FGD sample included traditional music as one of the favourites. Participants were then asked about the message they see and hear in music lyrics and videos. Their responses are summarised below:

Respondent 1: I've noticed that a lot of music puts women in a shallow light. With some of the women singers out there, there's this theme of competition, you have to look better than everyone. With the men's music, a lot of it puts women into categories like "bitches" or submissive "whores".

Respondent 2: I'm an African female-full black; I mean I'm pretty dark. I think a lot of music and videos paint this picture of the interracial or light skinned girls as the most beautiful. I think that bothers me more than some of the explicit stuff - it bothers me more than the misogyny.

Respondent 3: There's this generic image women as strippers. That's commonplace. When I turn on MTV or MTV Base, especially with the hip hop or rap music. Every woman has on a bikini and wants the guys around to look at her. That's unrealistic.

Participants were further asked to explain whether messages about women in music lyrics and videos were degrading, or whether they found themselves offended by them?

Respondent 4: I take great offense when I hear rappers call women out of their names. It offends me when women in in videos dancing around half naked. They're misrepresenting themselves and all women.

Respondent 5: I think there is something wrong. Bitch and whore are pretty overused,

Respondent 6: I'm not offended by any of it. It's not like they mean to call me a bitch or a whore. To me, it's just a term, you know, like madam. It's impersonal, so I think it's not meant to be derogative.

Respondent 7: There's this one song that I've been hearing on the radio lately and actually sing along. But f just realized what some of the words are. The guy is saying stuff like, "I like my hands around your neck" and I like your pants around your legs." Now I can't believe I actually was singing that song, it makes me kind of mad now.

Another question was asked the respondents whether the messages impact the way girls see themselves or others see

them. And their responses are listed below:

Respondent 8: You can definitely see the impact, and I go to a very diverse school. But you can see the impact it has on a lot of girls. They tend to want to be more like what's in the videos, and they don't value themselves as much as they should.

Respondent 9: I have a little sister and she wants to wear provocative clothing. I'm pretty sure some of that has to do with what she hears and sees in videos and on the radio. Maybe she thinks that's the way she is supposed to look like.

Respondent 10: I would say it impacts the way every female sees herself. They may think I don't look or act like that; so am I good enough?" I think it drops a lot of girls' self-esteem by giving them this standard of beautiful that is almost impossible to reach.

Another question was asked them whether they believed messages in music videos actually influence behaviour? Their responses were as follows:

Respondent 11: Personally, I don't think it influences me or how I behave. But J do think a lot of it sends the message that sex is OK and that using your body to get what you want is OK. And I think girls are having sex pretty early, and getting pregnant pretty early. Maybe that's not just because of the videos, but I know the videos don't help the problem.

Respondent 12: Most of it is just trying to appeal to a male audience. That's what they think the male audience wants to see. I watch them, I watch Ludacris, Eminem. I like Fifty Cent, too. But I'm not going to do something just because of what I see them doing on TV.

Respondent 13: Yeah, I'm one of those girls if I see a girl wearing something in a video and it looks cute. I will tell my best friend … and it's like, Let's go to the Mall tomorrow and buy it so we can look cute. I don't it is going to make me go out and do something bad or crazy, but I know it might make me want to go out and buy something I saw in a video.

Everyone was talking about Janet Jackson and Justin Timberlake's racy stunt at the Super Bowl. Some say they crossed the line. What's the difference in how the public has reacted to that incident and how it reacts to the racy music played on the radio and videos shown on TV every day?

Respondent 14: I think the Janet and Justin thing caught people off guard because everybody in America watches the Super Bowl. Everybody doesn't watch videos or listen to that kind of music; families don't necessarily do those things together. Maybe now, people will think about that and realize, "Hey, my child is watching MTV, my child is watching Channel 0. What kind of stuff is my child seeing there?"

Respondent 15: I think it represents where we've come as a society. Some things have gone out of control. Everybody all over the world was watching that, and I think that's why people started wanting to speak up and say, that's now how we are! But in a lot of ways that is how we are.

Respondent 16: Music has always had sexual undertones … I think that just pushed it too far. Music is made so that you can say bolder things. You can just put it out there in a way that's vulgar and over the top. Everybody has a right to free speech and free expression, but when people take it farther than they should, that gets people's attention.

Respondents were also asked whether they think parents should be involved in monitoring the music kids listen to or the videos they watch and they responded as follows:

Respondent 17: My mom and I have a good, open relationship. I love talking to her about the videos I've seen. She even took a class, a "Women in Popular Culture" class at the church; just to have a greater understanding about some of the things I'm exposed to. I think other parents should do that kind of thing. And they know what their kids are watching and sit them down, talk about it sometimes and point out what's wrong and what's right.

Respondent 18: J think parents should start talking to their kids before they're old enough to start watching all the videos. Things would be very different if moms sat down with their girls, like when they're little and playing with Barbie, telling them what messages about beauty are realistic and what messages aren't. Then, they wouldn't be looking to videos and music once they are older to learn about how to dress or how to look beautiful.

Respondent 19: That means she probably has never seen throngs of barely dressed, beautiful women gyrating in circles around one or two rich, powerful men. That means she probably has never watched a woman writhe around on her hands and knees in front of a sprawling mansion, surrounded by rows of expensive cars, just to capture the eye and fantasy of a famous rocker or rap star who lives there.

Survey questionnaire respondents

There are sufficient numbers of Rap music fans, about 90 percent, in the Khomas Region who enjoy all the different genres of rap music such as gansta rap and free style rap. Music is a form of relaxation, and has been known to ease the mind. The findings show that people listen to music when taking part in different chores. On the other hand, listening to music while doing certain chores can be disastrous, for example listening to music while doing your homework is not advised by most lecturers/teachers, listening to music in class is disrespectful to both the teachers and fellow students. The mode of listening to music has expanded into the classroom, though insignificant, about 3 percent of the Namibian learners in the Khomas Region listen to music in the classroom during class sessions. The majority, 55 percent, prefer listening to music while doing their chores and more than a quarter, 37 percent, while having meals. Five percent do so while doing their tiomework.

With regard to music preference, a number of rap music fans tend to be aligned to genre of music that has a beat similar to that of rap music. A number of the respondents place Hi-Hop (98 percent), R&B (78%), and Techno (69%) within their preferences. The research also reveals that teenagers seek to define themselves through their music, clothing, jargons, experiences, hairstyles and group association. This shows that adolescents tend to discover themselves through external rather than intrinsic stimuli. Images from rap music video often provide the external basis from which teenagers will benchmark their thoughts, opinions and associations. These images are perceived as the social norms and means to attain the social acceptance that is so vital to their personal maturation.

Preference: On the preferred medium for entertainment, it was discovered that radio, (23%) television (10%) and friend (55%) are the preferred means of entertainment. In Namibia concerts are very rare and often done by local artists who fellow Namibians are still trying to get acquainted to.

Perception: On perception of the lyrical content, about 84 percent of the research group knows the lyrical content of rap music. While most lyrics offer a very vivid imagery of sex, violence or otherwise, they are done so as poetry, most teens so it as a means of personal expression and find it very poetic and entertaining. Parents who have teenagers are totally unaware that their children understand the lyrics to the songs until the 4 year old in the house sings it before a lounge full of guests.

Profanity: There has been a significant increase in the use of obscene language in public and teenagers have been known to use profane words without giving a second thought as to what it means. The use of words such as "Nigga", "bitch", "ho", "skeezer", and so many other profane words is common. This is due to the growing interests in the rap music culture. The research reveals that 75 percent of teenagers in the Khomas Region use profane words everyday while 10 percent uses it regularly and 13 percent occasionally.

Media Influence: Adolescents see media as opinion leaders. On issues which their parents and guardians are unable to discuss with them, they look to the media for answers as quiet a number of teenagers see the media as influencers of the public. But the media does have the ability to be constructive or destructive. About 86 percent responded "yes" to media influence with only 14 percent in the "No" category.

Impact: Paul Lazarsfield, Bernard Berelson and Hazel Gaudet's 1944 study introduces a two-step flow of theory of mass communication. The core assumption of this theory is that information from the media moves in two distinct stages. First individual (opinion leaders) who pay close attention to the mass media and its messages receive the information. Opinion leaders pass on their own interpretations in addition to the actual media content. The term "personal influence" was coined to refer to the process intervening between the media's direct message and the audience ultimate reaction to that message. Opinion leaders are quiet influential to getting people to change their attitudes and behaviours. In this study, 68 percent of teenagers are influenced by music video while 32 are not.

Imitation: The priming paradigm explains reactions to both violent and misogynist tap themes. According to this perspective, controversial rap topics are structured around social ideas that are schematically represented in memory. In the course of viewing rap music videos or listening to rap music, these schemes are primed in memory. In the course of viewing rap music videos or listening to rap music, these schemas are primed in memory making them more likely to be used in subsequent judgments and interactions. In terms of violence and misogyny, these ideas are presented in memory and primed by exposure to rap. This, in turn, makes perceivers more likely to be positively oriented towards aggressive thoughts and antisocial attitudes. In this study, a significant number of the participants (97 percent) were found to be capable to imitate what they see and hear and only 3 percent indicated a "No" response. When people associate themselves with a particular music, they immediately assume a new identity that is in some senses, confined to the societal view point of that music. Teenagers in the Khomas Region were found to exemplify this phenomenon that when they listen to music by Eminem, they are creating a brand of themselves.

Substance use: There is a good deal of concern that media depictions of illicit drugs, alcohol, or tobacco inaccurately portray the true nature of drug abuse and its negative consequences. A necessary first step is determining what role, if any; media may play in promoting substance use and abuse among young people - particularly those popular with teens. Whenever these substances are depicted in music videos, a negative effect is not shown. This explains why 50 percent of the survey respondents believe the portrayal is either good or very good with 28 percent saying it is very bad. The statistics on violence provide similar findings. Namibia has become a country where violent acts tend to take place repeatedly among a small population of 2.1 million. Teenage relationships are marred by violence, date rape, and sexual misconduct. Relationships end in tragedy such as suicide, murder or the loss of a limb or body part. Street gangs have come up within the urban areas - where the brandishing of knives and guns is part of the sequel. Aggressive music has been plagued with accusations of influencing people to commit wanton acts of violence. This study reveals that 63

percent of the participants are aware of the wording and violence when they listen to the music around authority figures while 15 percent indicated they are aware every time they listen or watch music.

Sexual content: Patterns of results from the focus group discussion, the questionnaire survey and other previous studies on the topic, tend to suggest that sexual music lyrics tend to facilitate or may facilitate sexually aggressive behavior. Music with sexual depiction and connotations has a high probability of instigating sexual violence. Substance depiction is not a lesser evil, as a matter of fact, it is through music videos that a large number of teenagers learn the names of different alcoholic drinks, drugs and the perceived effects they have on the 'actors' lives. The findings of this study shows that to a large extent, ?????? substances are portrayed as having a positive influence on the mind.

Profanity: In each and every song within the rap context, much of the words are vulgar. Women are insulted as "ho's", "skeezers" and so many other abusive names. Profanity has become a worldwide problem to the extent that the expression "pardon your French (a term used to excuse one from being crude)" cannot be used anymore. Each and every second word is a curse. The use of profane language in rap music among teenagers in the Khomas Region was rated high (80 percent).

Substance use and abuse: Substance use and abuse is becoming a growing trend in Namibia, The use of ecstasy tablets at local nightclubs, and within the residential areas such as Khomasdal and Katutura has become a growing concern to authorities. The music lyrics and videos are not doing anything to alleviate such issues of public concern; instead they aggravate the issue by portraying these substances in a light that attracts users.

Sexual behavior: According to the theoretical framework used in the literature review it is highly possible that the music can and does influence teenagers to a certain extent. Images presented by the rap music culture plays a significant role in the creation of social groups and social norms. Rap musicians can be referred to as 'Opinion Leaders' in Rap Culture Fifty Cent, Eminem, The Game, Dr. Ore, P, Diddy and Justin Timberlake etc all have one thing in common, other than their successful music careers: they all have the ability to coerce individuals, especially teenagers, into buying their music. These celebrities are among the many who hold the power to structurally impact social groups, which places them among a group of highly influential persons in society. Celebrities possess three essential factors of social stratification that help create their status of grandeur: property, power and prestige (Zgourides & Zgourides, 2000). Owning the first two usually leads to the latter. Teenagers believe that celebrities have the ability to purchase whatever their hearts desire, capture large audiences, and initiate change and contract with large corporations for endorsements. All these perceptions feed into the media machine. The media's detailed attention to the movements of celebrities further increases their societal status (Lasn, 1999).

Behavioral influence and personality: Teenagers are the most susceptible group to images/lyrics presented in rap music and music videos (Boykin, 2003). Since adolescence is the stage when children are beginning and establishing beliefs of their own, they are more focused on inclusion in groups and on forming peer relationships. As a result of this need for peer acceptance, teenagers are receptive to certain characteristics such as personality, attitude and behavior which are the features that form particular social groups. The role of personality is vital when teenagers create peer relationships. When forming these relationships, individuals investigate others' personality dynamics as well as what they can achieve within that relationship-basically, their peer acceptance potential (Caprara & Cervone, 2000). These individuals make distinctions among one another by their "surface tendencies:' which are the observable variations in styles of behavior affect cognition (Caprara & Cervone, 2000), As a means of displaying their personality, teenagers will wear clothing from particular stores, talk in a pal1 icular way and walk in a particular manner or with a particular person. Teens also express themselves through the places they hang out with friends and what music and music videos they watch and listen to.

Attitude and behaviour: Cynicism exists among some teenage groups because of the images displayed in the rap music culture (g, 2003). Teenagers are more sophisticated now and have the intellectual ability to distinguish among the various images and lyrics presented to them via popular music shows such as Music Television (MTV), hit interactive shows like MTV's TRL (Boykin. 2003), During the focus group when panels of students were asked various questions regarding rap music culture and their viewpoints on its effects on their lives, many students disagreed with the stereotypes presented in rap music culture. Though the students acknowledged that the behaviors expressed in rap music culture (music videos, television shows, artists clothing) were being mimicked in their social group, they disparaged those who succumb too easily to social pressure. Teenage behavior is most noticeable when rap music or music videos become integrated into their everyday lives. Evidence exists on how many teenagers wear Sean John (which is a P Diddy Label) G-Unit (Fifty Cent Label) or listen to music by Fifty Cent or watch idols. Teenagers' decisions to either accept rap music culture and images or adapt them to their lives or to disregard them and exude individualism could determine their placement in social groups (Sewell, 2003). The underlying factor why teenagers mimic rap culture images is their need

for social acceptance. Society determines what is acceptable or not, and it is to the teenager's discretion where he or she wants to be placed on the society acceptance scale (Birley, 2003). Teenagers primarily desire the acceptance of their peers. Teenage acceptance is categorized into subgroups or cliques. Individuals have always been associated with particular social groups (racial, ethnic, gender, class, etc.). But peer associations during adolescence are a direct representation of their intrinsic values rather than a known external fact.

5. CONCLUSION

Many intervention programmes aimed at reducing the effects of rap music have been formulated and put in place by governments worldwide, for example Parental Advisory Labels, age restrictions to certain music and videos etc. Despite these legal provisions rap music and its misogynist lyrics still affect adolescents. This study has discussed the general effects of rap music on its audience, though it did not establish the size and magnitude of the problem in Namibia as a whole. The study has identified the major effects of rap music on adolescents in Namibia including the impact it has on education, vocabulary, violent tendencies, sexual misconduct, and schematic formation etc.

In particular, the survey has somewhat established that the high rate of school dropouts could also be blamed on the messages adolescents get from music and music videos, about rappers dropping out of school and making it in the music field. This can be established by the rise in Namibian rap artists who are coming up all over the country. But not many of them are still in school.

On the issue of alcohol, and drug abuse, one can formally relate this to a statement made by the Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Libertine Amadhila who said, "Namibia is a country of 'boozers'". Alcohol is being blamed for a host of problems within society. These range from rape, murder, and broken homes, under productivity, unemployment and the high rate of school dropouts.

On profanity and general use of bad language, Rap music can be noted as a major influence. Bad language and profanity have become a form of social expression due to rap music. Meanings to certain words have been altered, leaving adolescents using words and phrases carelessly and out of context.

Namibian youth are growing up in an environment that includes a variety of harsh realities, such as: alcoholism, drug abuse, various health and social problems associated with HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancies, crime and violence, physical and emotional abuse, high rates of school dropouts, and dysfunctional family lives. All these, coupled with the lyrics and videos for rap music serve as triggers and forms of 'get away places' for the youth. They find escape routes through their music and coupled with the harsh realities they undergo, they act out these out in music lyrics/videos.

Although there are potential benefits from viewing some music videos, such as the promotion of positive aspects of social behaviour (e.g., sharing, manners, and cooperation), many negative effects also can result. Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to the messages conveyed through music and music videos, which influence their perceptions and behaviours. Many adolescents cannot discriminate between what they see and what is real. Research has shown primary negative effects on violence and aggressive behaviour; sexuality; academic performance; body concept and self-image; nutrition, dieting; and substance use and abuse patterns. According to the content analysis, music and music videos contain large numbers of references to cigarettes, alcohol, and illicit drugs.

Finding ways to challenge the cultural norms that support violent behaviour and misogynist lyrics must become the central issue of prevention initiatives. The cultural forces that legitimatize and condone violent behavior and misogynist lyrics must be challenged in context, and society must find ways to replace those norms with others that affirm respect for life and society in general. This might include an approach taken to counter the lyrics and images promoted through some rap music by supporting those rap artists who produce music with nonviolent and non-misogynist messages rather than attacking the artists, the recording companies, or the young people who listen to gangsta rap. If we want to see fewer juvenile delinquents graduate to more serious forms of crime we must invest more resources into re-entry programs that facilitate the transition from prison to the streets, so that young people seeking to avoid peer groups and neighbourhood influences that reinforce misappropriate behaviour can do so with support.

Finally, if we acknowledge that youth problems are really a symptom of a larger societal preoccupation with violence, drugs, sex, and profanity then we must stop allowing kids, particularly minority youth, to be scapegoats for this problem. Young people living in the nation's slums have no control over the availability of guns or the flow of drugs into their communities. They cannot influence music makers and producers who exploit their obsession with violence, sex, profanity etc through their music and music videos.

And young people certainly have no control over the availability of jobs and educational opportunities or the continued deterioration of urban areas. We must hold young people responsible for their actions and apply clear consequences for misdeeds and bad behaviour, but we must also recognize that these youth did not create the conditions in which bad behaviour flourishes. We can do a much better job of preventing youth behavioural defects, but to do so we must begin by acknowledging our collective responsibility for challenging the cultural influences and social and economic conditions that foster and promote it.

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