

The Influence of Bongo Flavour Music among Youths: A Case Study of Mbeya City

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Abstract

This research paper examines the influence of bongo flavour music in degenerating the cultural and moral values among the youths in Tanzania in its generality with special reference to the youths found in Mbeya City as a case study. The paper used both quantitative and qualitative approach in probing the matter using questionnaires with some numerical figures and focus group discussion for data collection. The numerical figures were instrumental in addressing the magnitude of the problem among the youths while non-numerical data were useful in descriptions of numerical data in words to accomplish the whole process of analysis and discussion of the findings. The analysis, interpretation and discussion of the findings from the collected data were done using stylistics literary theory. The major findings indicate that the perpetual interaction between the youths and lyric bongo flavour music severely degenerates the welfare of the youths in upholding their cultural and moral values in the societies in which they live. It is therefore, recommended that the government through its ministry and institutions responsible for monitoring and controlling music industry should censor the bongo flavour music which is detrimental to the wellbeing of youths for the sake of saving not only their lives but also their future generation.

Keywords: *Bongo Flavour, Degenerating, Cultural Values, Moral Values & Youth*

Introduction

The term Bongo Flavour is formed by merging two words; one from Swahili language namely, ‘bongo’ and the other one is from English word ‘flavour’. The word ‘bongo’ is a Swahili word that has become a nickname for Dar es Salaam and Tanzania as a whole. The Swahili equivalent for flavour is ‘ladha’ in Swahili language. Therefore, Bongo Flavour means ‘ladha ya hapa hapa or ladha ya nyumbani’ (Sanga, 2013). So, the etymological impetus is that one has to use one’s

brain in order to survive in the city of Dar es Salaam (Reuster-Jahn and Kießling, 2006). Generally, this term bongo has now come to be used by almost all Tanzanians in the whole country. The explanation of Bongo Flavour and Hip-hop is slightly challenging, as musicians may merge rap music freely with sung parts in one track, or mix rapped tracks with Reggae or R&B songs on their albums. They do so in order to delight a broad diversity of tastes, focusing on attracting a good number of consumers. The musicians themselves have different views regarding Hip-hop and Bongo Flavour. Some say that Hip-hop is part of Bongo Flavour, while others prefer to distinguish pure Hip-hop from the more hybrid and commercial Bongo Flavour category (Suriano, 2007).

Several studies have been conducted to explore Hip-hop and bongo flavour music. The roles of bongo flavour in shaping youth identities and bringing change to Tanzanian society have been studied by Suriano (2006, 2007), Englert (2008), Omari (2011), and Reuster-Jahn (2007). Similarly, the position of bongo flavour in Tanzanian politics has broadly been examined by Reuster-Jahn (2008) and Englert (2008). The function of bongo flavour as an industry, with special attention to the relationship between youth artists and the music producers has been discussed by Reuster-Jahn and Hacke (2011). Another area of research has been the form and content of bongo flavour lyrics and the connection of it to traditional culture (Englert 2003; Reuster-Jahn 2007). Nevertheless, none of the aforementioned scholars has studied the influence of bongo flavour music in the degeneration of cultural and moral values among the youths in Mbeya city in particular and Tanzania in general. It is therefore, the interest of this research paper to cover that gap of knowledge.

For the sake of clarity in this research paper, the term youth is defined in Tanzanian context. According to the African Youth Charter (2006) youth refers to a person aged between 15 and 35 years old. However, The Tanzania Youth Development Policy advocates that youth is anyone whose age ranges from 18 to 24 (Ministry of Labour and Youth Development 1996). These definitions, however, need to be revised as they do not reflect the reality that at the moment hold water on ground in Tanzanian context. A mutual understanding of youth in Tanzanian context transcends a life course perspective to include anyone whose survival depends upon his or her parents regardless of age. This means that an individual who has not established his/her own family is categorized as youth even if his or her age exceeds 45 years (Reuster-Jahn 2007). In some contexts, being a youth depends upon individuals and the way they depict themselves in a society. Once an aged person looks like a youth in either one or two of the following aspects -

namely clothing style, hair cutting style, movements and language – he or she may be labelled as youth with the special name of mzee-kijana (an elderly youth) (Sanga, 2013). In this context, the term youth has negative connotation that an individual, due to different reasons, has been unable to fully experience his or her youthful life. For this reason, he or she is trying to make up for it in adulthood (ibid). This being the case, the classification of youth in a life course standpoint, it can be argued that similar to the concept of gender and race, the concept of youth is socially constructed (Falk & Falk, 2005). Despite those disparities on the understanding of the term youth in this research paper youth refers to the one who is aged between 15 - 40 years of age. The most significant aspect to ponder is one's personal age and inclination to the use and admiration of bongo flavour music.

This research paper is significant to the consumers of its findings in three folds. Firstly, it highlights the extent to which the music is widely spread and used amongst youths in Mbeya city and thus, the spread of its content and influence. Secondly, it identifies and shows the magnitude of its influence in deteriorating the cultural and moral values among the youths and other ordinary citizens. Finally, it provides the possible alternatives of assuaging the negative influence of Bongo flavour music amongst youths for upholding better cultural and moral values. As such, this research paper is very instrumental in upholding the cultural and moral values of not only youths but also other consumers of the music in the society in which they both live hence, strengthening the society.

Statement of the Problem

Since the very beginning, Tanzanian Hip-hop and later on bongo flavour music have been used as a spokesperson for the Tanzanian youths and other ordinary citizens (Gabriel, 2011). As such, bongo flavour music has attracted so many consumers from different cultural backgrounds in the society predominantly the youths. Many Tanzanian youths adore so much singing, reciting and dancing bongo flavour music because of its content and musicality making it so hilarious to them. However, it is observed and said by many people in the streets of Mbeya city and other areas in the country that the content of this kind of music and its dancing style are closely associated with deterioration of moral values among the youths. Therefore, it is the interest of this research paper to find out the possible influence of this kind of music particularly, the lyrics in the degeneration of cultural and moral values among the youths in Tanzania with special focus on youths found in Mbeya city.

Research Paper Methodology

The research paper used both quantitative and qualitative approach. Descriptive research approach is a type of quantitative research method that aims to accurately and systematically describe a population, situation, or phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). It focuses on describing on what is happening among the youths, what the youths think, and which behaviors do the youths gain from bongo flavour music in the context of this study. Qualitative research approach is conceptualized as a type of social science research that collects and works with non-numerical data that seeks to interpret meaning from these data that help us to understand social life through the study of targeted populations or places (Punch, 2013). In this research paper this definition is so fitting because it focused on understanding ‘social life through the study of targeted population’ that is the youths thus, its application. Categorically, the research paper used a case study design which is defined as the exploration of an individual, group or phenomenon (Sturman, 1997). Additionally, Sagadin (1991) states that a case study is used when we analyze and describe; each person individually for his/her activity, special needs, life situation, life history, etc.; a group of people, such as, a school department, teaching staff, etc., a problem or several problems, process, phenomenon or event in a particular institution, etc., in detail. It is therefore, generally construed that a case study focuses on exploring in detail a specific social phenomenon or individuals in a specified locality. Thus, the paper adopted the aforesaid conception in probing the matter. In order to achieve its purpose, the paper used data collection tools namely questionnaires and focus group discussion. Kumar (1992) defines questionnaire as a written document listing a series of questions pertaining to the problem under study, to which the investigator requires the answers. In addition, Schvaneveldt (1985) defines questionnaire as a data-gathering device that elicits from a respondent the answers or reactions to printed (pre-arranged) questions presented in a specific order. There is a close ended questions that require either a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer in the questionnaires. In conducting this research paper, both closed and open-ended questions were used. In gathering data regarding the influence of Bongo Flavour music, the researcher used this tool as it was pertinent to the kind of information needed. A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is a qualitative research collection technique in which a selected group of people discusses a given topic or issue in-depth, facilitated by a professional, external moderator. This tool serves to solicit participants’ attitudes and perceptions, knowledge and experiences, and practices, shared in the course of interaction with different people (Eeuwijk and Angehrn, 2017). Focus Group Discussion involved 10 respondents who are consumers of Bongo

Flavour music for the sake of clarifying important information that needed clarifications. The aim was to solicit reliable information that probed how the music affects the youth negatively in their daily life. Purposive sampling technique was used to obtain the respondents from Catholic University College: A Constituent College of St. Augustine University of Tanzania who are ardently interested with Diamond Platinumz's music as a sample for the case study of Bongo Flavour music. The choice for this musician and his music was made purposely because his music is so much influential and venerated by many young men and women. Despite the fact that the musician is prolific in producing both audio and audiovisual music, this research paper focused only on audiovisual music because of the nature of the study. The audiovisual was pertinent in this study so as to better examine the influence of this music among the youths. This is because viewing the videos was important in determining how dressing, hairstyle and dancing style influenced the youths in their cultural and moral values as they watch and listen to the music. To be much more focused, the study engrossed lyric audiovisual music for it is the kind of bongo flavour music that is so adorable and typically influential to many youths thus, likely to negatively affect them in degenerating their cultural and moral values.

The findings of this research paper are informed by stylistic literary theory in data analysis and interpretation. Stylistics is conventionally concerned with the study of style in language. Basing on the nature of the topic of the research paper, the analysis was done using two types of literary stylistic theories which are reader response and affective stylistic theory/criticism. The reader-response literary stylistic theory/criticism is informed by the notion that the meaning of a text can, solely, be determined through the interaction between the reader and the words on the pages of the text. Therefore, the reader-response stylistics scrutinizes the reader's response to a text as a response to a horizon of expectations. By a horizon of expectations, it means that there is a miscellaneous meanings or interpretations in a text and these can be grasped by the reader according to his or her level of what Jonathan Culler (1981:25) designates as "literary competence". A reader's literary competence is informed by the social world in which a text is produced as it usually has a shaping effect on his or her interpretation of such a text. The reader response stylistics evokes a situation where individual readers give meaning to the text. This is because each reader will interact with the text differently, as the text may have more than one vivid interpretation (Ogunsiji, 2012). Affective literary stylistics is reader/ hearer – oriented i.e., its focus is on the consumers. It searches out the emotional responses that a reader or hearer makes in the course of his or her interaction with, that is, reading or listening to a text.

According to Fish (1970), in affective literary stylistics, the stylistician relies primarily upon his or her affective responses to stylistics, elements in the text. The affective domain includes the manner in which we deal with things emotionally, such as feelings, values, appreciation, enthusiasm, motivations and attitudes (Ogunsiji, 2012). The assumptions articulated above were applied in interpreting the influence of bongo flavour music among the youths in degenerating their cultural and moral values as discussed below.

Research Findings and Discussion

This segment presents the findings and discussions of the research paper focusing on the influence of bongo flavour music in degenerating cultural and moral values.

The Influence of Bongo Flavour Music in Degenerating Cultural and Moral Values

The findings from collected data show that bongo flavour music negatively influences the youths in their cultural and moral values. Culture is conceptualized as ‘the ways of thinking, the ways of acting, and the material objects that together form a people’s way of life’ (Macionis, 2012:54). Again, culture is defined as ‘that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society’ (Edward B. Taylor, 1871:1). In view of the aforesaid conception of culture, it is obvious that culture entails everything that individuals and society at large do and appreciate as things of value (knowledge, belief, arts moral, customs) in a particular society. In cementing the significance of values, Oyserman (2015) defines values as internalized cognitive structures that guide choices by evoking a sense of basic principles of right and wrong, a sense of priorities, and a willingness to make meaning and see patterns. This means that societies and other social groups have value-based norms, priorities, and guidelines, which describe what people ought to do if they are to do the ‘right,’ ‘moral,’ ‘valued’ thing. The understanding of culture and values in this context enables one to notice how bongo flour music is very important aspect of culture among societies in Tanzania.

Referring to the above conception of the word culture, it was found from the study findings that many youths are negatively influenced in their ways of thinking and acting. For instance, 66 out of 78 equals to eighty five percent (85%) respondents said that interacting with audiovisual bongo flavour music has shaped their thinking and acting in relation to sexual behaviour. It was reported that many young men and women are motivated to engage in sexual relations as a result

of listening to this kind of music. For example, the following excerpt from Diamond Platinumz's song namely 'Sona' illustrates the point in discussion:

*Girl let me show you
How much I love you
With my lips on your own
Let my lips do the talking
I never thought I'd share a bed
With a woman so fine
Usinipe kitandani leo
Nipe kwa sofa.*

A close analysis of the above quote shows how bongo flavour music entices the youth to engage in immoral acts (usinipe kitandani leo, nipe kwa sofa and sharing a bed) such as engaging in sexual relations before marriage. Other youths (men) engage in doing masturbation as a response to sexual desire aroused from images showing female's nakedness as was revealed from the study findings through focus group discussion. When the youth listens and watches the videos showing images of almost naked women several times in a long run repeatedly, as revealed in the study findings, they finally begin engaging in unlawful sexual relations. Moreover, this behaviour may result to sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV AIDS among the youths. By so doing, such acts contribute to degeneration of the morals, laws and customs of Tanzanian societies in which these youths belong.

Bad hair style and shaving as observed in the videos from the study findings is more common among the male musicians compared to female musicians. It was revealed through focus group discussion that many young men dress and shave their hairs like a particular musician (in this case, Diamond Platinumz) just because they feel much happier and satisfying to be identified with such musician(s). In this situation, it is evident from the findings that the kind of music that the youths are exposed to negatively affect them to the extent of changing their moral values from good to bad one. Furthermore, the message disseminated through this music and the style of dancing has negatively impacted many youths as reflected through the study findings (played videos). For instance, it was found that many youths engage in prostitution (29%), poor dressing and wearing styles (37%), bad shaving styles (6%) as well as social conflicts (5%). This is very true with bongo flavour music that involves love affairs as it is most liked by young men and

women. Through focus group discussion, it was revealed for instance, that some young men and women quarrel with their parents as a result of immoral acts such as bad dressing and shaving styles. The source of social conflict in many families and societies lies on the premise that the parents' viewpoint regarding hair and dressing styles are out dated according to the youths' viewpoint. According to the culture of many Tanzanian societies it is immoral to dress half naked while dancing. It is a common practice to observe female musicians dancing half naked through video or television shows. In the study findings, the videos that were played demonstrated vividly the way the dancers (female musicians) were dancing almost naked as they dressed in only the bra and underwear to simply cover their breasts and genitalia. As such, it was revealed that such kind of practices negatively affect the youth as they end up emulating such practices which undermine not only their self-esteem but also violate their cultural and moral values hence, degenerating them. This phenomenon is well explained by the affective domain of literary stylistics theory which asserts that a text (music) may affect the reader emotionally, such as feelings, values, appreciation, enthusiasm, motivations and attitudes (Ogunsiji, 2012). The bongo flavour music has negatively impacted the youths in aspects such as attitudes, values, feelings and motivations to the extent of deteriorating their cultural and moral values as discussed above. Therefore, it can be argued that the widespread of moral decay among many young men and women in the cities of Tanzania can be partly attributed to the rampant spread and consumption of bongo flavour music among the youths.

Another important finding is the fact that many youths are negatively influenced by the language used by bongo flavour musicians in their music. It was found that sixty-two (62%) of youths use informal and/or colloquial language in wrong contexts in normal everyday conversation. The words 'jealousy naturn man to sinner' in the song 'Wonder' from the following quote attests to the point heeded;

Jealousy naturn man to sinner
Jua kwa kina nimeingia mazima
Usije mtima ooh kuumimina
Kwa fitina ooh za watu wazima

The above cited example is just an illustration of a codeswitching commonly used by many youths in their daily conversation to the extent that sometimes they fail to use such words in their proper context. In the context of the song the words 'jealousy naturn man to sinner' semantically

means that jealousy may alter a man (lover) to do anything bad towards his lover (woman). Another example from the same excerpt is the words ‘nimeingia mazima’ meaning that the lover (man) has fallen in a profound love to the lover (woman). The above examples show correct contexts in which the identified words are properly used by the youths. However, in many situations, it is a common phenomenon to hear many youths use such kind of words even if it is not a proper context in which the words are used i.e., between the youths and elderly people instead of being used amongst youths in the society. Other words from bongo flavour music as was reported by the respondents include; ‘masela’ ‘washikaji’ to mean friends ‘dingi’ meaning father and many others. This kind of language is used in daily conversations among the youths and other members of the society thus, affecting the young members of the society who cannot distinguish between standard and non-standard language. They use such kind of language in such a way that they fail to distinguish the right context in which informal/colloquial and official language need to be used. For example, such language is mistakenly used when conversing with their parents instead of using it amongst young members. By so doing the moral and cultural values are violated as it is morally wrong to call an elderly parent as ‘dingi’ (though some parents/elders may endorse that) in any kind of conversation between the youths and elders in the society. The negative influence of bongo flavour music on language use among the youths can be rightly interpreted through the lens of reader response stylistic theory on an aspect which articulates that the interaction between the reader and the words (music) on the pages of the text affects the reader of the text (music) (Ogunsiji, 2012). In this context, the interaction between the words produced by the musicians through bongo flavour music and the youths has negatively affected the way youths use such language in their daily conversation. Therefore, it can be concluded that the words that musicians use in bongo flavour music has negative impact among the youths thus, degenerating the cultural and moral values of the whole society in which these youths live.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Basing on the findings of this research paper, it can be precisely concluded that the perpetual interaction between the youths and lyric bongo flavour music in the society has a negative influence to the wellbeing of many youths. The findings have clearly indicated that many youths are vulnerable to their cultural and moral deterioration if such practices are not curbed thus, degenerating the cultural and moral values which are fundamental in upholding the stability of the society in which these youths live. It is therefore, recommended that the government through

its ministry and institutions responsible for monitoring and controlling music industry should take stern measures to censor the bongo flavour music which is detrimental to the welfare of youths in order to rescue them from consuming such kind of music that severely affects the cultural and moral values of the societies in which they live. In so doing, the government will not only save the lives of these young men and women but also will uphold the cultural and moral values for the betterment of the current and future generation that will be produced by the existing youths.

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