

**ECHOES OF CRIMINALITY IN CONTEMPORARY
IGBO RAP MUSIC: PHYNO'S *UMUAKA HIGHWAY*
AND NUNOZIGI'S *CHUPADIA* IN PERSPECTIVE**

BY

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Abstract

This paper is analytical research that interrogated the echoes of criminality pervading contemporary Igbo Rap music using Phyno's *umuaka Highway* and Nuno Zigi's *Chupadia* as case studies. The lyrics of their sampled music were found to depict so much criminality and suggestibility for illegitimate and desperate pursuit of wealth that apparently portend serious dangers for their teeming youthful fans and the society at large. Such obnoxious ideas as *Fastlife mana nwoke adi ebu onu* (ferocious pursuit of wealth) and *Okorobia obuna akpatara ego bu jonsin melu ya* (vehemence is the guaranty for wealth) littered the lyrics of their respective albums. Data which was sourced via interviews with the artists and literature were carefully analyzed using the analytical method. Findings show that the two famous contemporary Igbo rap musicians (Phyno and Nuno) have created sensitive lyrics laced with the suggestibility of brazen pursuit of opulence which is gradually driving youths into criminality. The paper suggests that educators should engage in an emergency drive for musical conscientization from the cradles and all tiers of learning using folk songs, didactic songs, sacred songs, to the end that the practice would aid in conditioning and raising individuals who can understand, discriminate, listen to, create,

appraise and relate to music based on its educative, informative, and normative essence.

[keywords: criminality, Igbo Rap music, suggestibility, conscientization]

Introduction

The history of rap music is traceable to the quest for change in the social and musical status quo across societies of the world. The dominance of religious, traditional, classical, and country music has been perceived by teeming youths as irrelevant to their cause and insensitive to their struggles over identity, self-actualization, unemployment, abuse, stigmatization, racism, cultural identity, class consciousness, and other youthful exigencies. Rap is actually a revolt to the dominance of other musical genres which have become unfashionable and unattractive to youths and who saw the need to create a genre which can project their voices to the world. This explains why the rap genre is popular amongst Blacks and Black Americans who saw the genre as a means of voicing out against racism and white Supremacist ideologies against blacks in the West. The world has witnessed several accomplished rappers such as Tupac Shakur, Notorious B.I.G, 50cent, Busta Rymes, Snoop Dog, Ashanti, Usher, Y-clef and so many others who have led a musical revolution, amassed so much wealth, and mesmerized the world with their adroitness in the rap genre.

In the Nigerian scene, we have such stars as Tuface Idibia, Nigga Raw, Davido, Burna Boy, MI, Techno, and now Phyno and Nuno Zigi who are making serious waves now and drawing unprecedented followership within and beyond the shores of the country.

Statement of Problem

Although Rap music has become popular over the ages particularly as it has been employed by its exponents in

exposing several societal aberrations but the concomitant drug abuse, vulgarity, nudity, sexual wantonness, drug addiction, and criminality associated with the genre has become a problem to the society it set out to reeducate. Contemporary Igbo rap musicians have decorated their lyrics and music with unprecedented associative criminality that has waked the attention of this paper as it interrogates Phyno's *Ụmụaka Highway* and Nuno zigi's *Chupadi* as case studies.

Brief History of Rap Music

Rap music was born out of the class struggles of African-Americans of the United States who resorted to the music as a means of raising consciousness against the prevalent racism in their time. Bond (2005) explains that:

Music played a vital role in the ongoing struggle for racial justice throughout the world, particularly in the United States.

All three genres had to overcome considerable resistance, much of it either blatantly or subtly racists. Yet the appeal of this music ultimately transcended racial lines, even if the process was slow. There can be no doubt that Elvis Presley's enormous success was due to the fact that he was white and therefore vastly more marketable to the white public in 1956 than the black artists of the time who performed in much the same style (Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Chubby Checker, James brown, and others). African –American artists had been relegated to the less widely distributed category of “race records,” but within a decade, they too were being marketed just as aggressively in the economic mainstream and no longer under the label of *race*....

With the progress of the civil rights movement beginning in the 1940s and the end of legal segregation in the 1960s, the black-white divide in jazz and rock, although it remained present, became less pronounced. When rap music, a new idiom rooted in the black experience,

emerged in the 1990s, it encountered, like its predecessors, a round of racially tinged criticism. Like its predecessor, it too was soon adopted by white musicians (pp. 493-494).

The Nature of Rap

‘Rapping or rap is a kind of rhythmic talking accompanied by a disc jockey who imaginatively alternates between recordings on two turntables’ (Kamien, 1988). Rapping or rap is also a musical form of vocal delivery that incorporates ‘rhyme, rhythmic speech, and street vernacular’, which is performed or chanted in a variety of ways, usually over a backing beat or musical accompaniment, the components of rap include ‘content, ‘flow’, and ‘delivery’ (Wikipedia, 2021).

From the various definitions of the concept of rap or rapping, one thing is central to the rap genre: it is a revolutionary music with rhyming words meshed with street vernacular and sung as rhythmic speech. It commands enormous followership from the youthful societal strata who embrace it as pop culture and a tool for interrogating parental control, societal regimentation and governmental repression.

The theory of Hypnotic Suggestibility and its significance to the Paper

Hypnotic Suggestibility is a trait –like, individual difference variable reflecting the general tendency to respond to hypnosis and hypnotic suggestions (Milling, 2008).Hypnotizability has been operationally defined as responsiveness to suggestion following a hypnotic induction. This definition shall form a working framework for the expatiation of this theory in the paper. There ensues some kind of responsiveness to suggestions echoed in a given genre of music when the respondent has become fully absorbed (hypnotized by the music).

Musical Hypnosis and Suggestibility

Truly, music hypnotizes and suggests. Some music can seduce and lull us to various emotional states like pity, somberness, excitement, anger, happiness, depression, ecstasy, etc. Some music also can be suggestive of love, sex, vulgarity, hate, peaceful coexistence, deviance, irrationality, criminality, etc. Any music that lacks these powers has lost its existential force and taste. Humans and animals submit to these benign and sometimes malignant seductions of music unconsciously and sometimes consciously. Music is so powerful that we usually find it extremely difficult to extricate from its allurements and hypnotization. This explains why music has always been in man, with man, and man in music. From the earliest times of human history to the present post-modern period and from the mediaeval ecclesiastical sacred musicology to the contemporary musical radicalism, the relationship has been a most complicated one.

As matter of fact, the function of music in the religious milieu is the hypnotization of people into some kinds of religious and spiritual obeisance. All genres of music effuse various degrees of hypnotism.

Copeland (2002) expatiates that:...all music has a certain meaning behind the notes and that the meaning behind the notes constitutes, after all, what the piece is saying, what the piece is about... music expresses, at different moments, serenity or exuberance, regret or triumph, fury or delight.

It expresses each of these moods, and many others, in a numberless variety of subtle shadings and differences. It may even express a state of meaning for which there exists no adequate word in any language(pp.9-10).

It is this meaning behind the notes, as expressed by Copeland, that thrills, enthralls, sways, and hypnotizes, as it were. Komar(1980) writes:

The feelings that Beethoven put into his music were the feelings of a god. There was something Olympian in his snarls and rages, and there was a touch of hell-fire in his mirth. The human personality enjoys the capacity for a wide range of emotional states. Music, of all the arts, is supreme in depicting variations of feeling (p.343).

Komar (1980) expatiates further:

The power which music wields over men is not a new idea, either in literature or philosophy; Plato specifically warned against listening to Phrygian and Lydian music (the Phrygians and Lydians were defeated peoples brought back to Greece as slaves because these modes tended to make men effeminate and depraved (p.356).

Ascertaining the veracity of Plato's submission is not central to this paper but the inference from the foregoing is that music has the power to influence our minds with subtlety.

Suggestibility in Rap

The origin and nature of rap music (A revolutionary music with rhyming words meshed with street vernacular and sung as rhythmic speech and popular among youths) makes it an effective medium for suggestibility. Youths easily identify with deviant trends in fashion, social norms, social life, language, fraternity, and music in defiance to established societal etiquette. Most rappers subtly embellish their lyrics with ideas suggestive of criminality with argot street vernacular that only initiates can decipher based on the principle of mutual intelligibility.

Dunbar and Kurbin (2016) report that:

Rap music has had a contentious relationship with the legal system, including censorship, regulation, and artists being arrested for lewd and profane performances. More recently, rap lyrics have

been introduced by prosecutors to establish guilt in criminal trials. Some fear this form of artistic expression will be inappropriately interpreted as literal and threatening, perhaps because of stereotypes (p.1).

The issue is that rap did not start off with the farrago of expressions found in its contemporary stereotypes. It was a novel musical genre in the early 90s employed by African Americans in the New world to register their displeasure against suppression from White supremacists. But the predominant echoes of vulgarity, drug abuse, sexual rascality, brigandage, and criminality pervading contemporary rap and particularly Igbo rap have become worrisome.

The Music of Africa

Traditional Africans perceive music as a means of social integration, entertainment, education, communication, and communal bonding. Rarely was music employed for vulgarity, wantonness, and gangsterism but rather for inculcating and preserving ethical principles. Nketia (1974) explained that:

In traditional African societies, music making is generally organized as a social event. Public performances, therefore, take place on social occasions- that is, on occasions when members of a group or a community come together for the enjoyment of leisure, for recreational activities, or for the performance of a rite, ceremony, festival, or any kind of collective activity such as building bridges, clearing paths, going on a search party, or putting out fires- activities that, in industrialized societies, might be assigned to specialized agencies (p. 21).

From the above explanation, we understand that music in typical African societies has been for communal fellowship and integration. Such music has no traits of vulgarity or

criminality compared to contemporary African rap music. When music is composed and staged for communal fellowship and entertainment, it clearly precludes all elements of disenchantment, brigandage, revolt, gansterism, or criminality. Regarding music and the role of the musician in traditional Nigerian society, Okafor (2005) explains that:

Here, the musician has a role as a keeper of public conscience and as a man who has his hands on the social control lever. He guides the society, drawing, of course, from the collective wisdom and pool of knowledge and proverbs of his people. He foresees events like any poet, for a poet can point the way to come, even though the people following may not see it for the time being. The musician, therefore, has an acceptable role in many of our traditional societies. He could rise to any height by excellence, by hard work, and by other criteria of merit. And so, in the traditional society, the musician is an educator. Many of our social comments, moral codes and guides are couched in music and songs. He has a role; he has a place; he has his privileges as a full member of the society (pp.6-7).

The exposition above is typical also of the Igbo society of South Eastern Nigeria where the musician embodies the cultural heritage, norms, musical idioms and echoes them in his music. But the emergence of contemporary Igbo rap genre has brazenly shifted the locus of the Igbo musical heritage.

How Several Western musical genres like Rap diffused to Africa

Nketia (1974:14) reports that, “No less far-reaching was the contact with Europe established through trade, Christianity, and colonial rule, for this set in motion, new forces in acculturation that have helped to reshape Africa.” The point here is that contact with the West reshaped virtually all facets of the African society through the

phenomenon of acculturation. African Music was not spared as some African musical instruments were jettisoned for Western musical instruments. Nketia (1974:14) further bemoans this:

As the economy grew, Western instruments originally introduced through the church and the military became available in shops for the few adventurous musicians who were willing to play them. The adoption of the western guitar by traditional musicians in some parts of Africa followed this general trend. All these developments were encouraged and strengthened by the activities of the church, which preached against African cultural practices while promoting western cultural values and usages. It adopted a hostile attitude to African music, especially to drumming, because this was associated with what seemed to Christian evangelists “pagan” practices (p.14).

This account is significant in understanding the historical foundations of the musical transformations that transpired within Africa from the contact with the West. But something peculiar, the slave trade factor, birthed such genres as hip-hop and rap and their subsequent diffusion to Africa as Nketia(1974:14) reports again:

It was not only political change that contact with Europe generated, but economic change as well. Indigenous trade was promoted by the new demands of foreign traders. The slave trade, for example, flourished and paved the way for the transplantation and growth of African and African-derived music in the New World (p.14).

The concept of ‘transplantation and growth of African and African-derived music’ echoed here is pertinent to the trace of

Rap from the West to Africa. The fact is shown that rap was created by African slaves in the New World(America) who employed the musical genre as a means of revolt against racism and the pervading suppression at the time. But the music genre finally found its way back to Africa through electronic media (Television, music channels, radio, etc.).

Biography of Phyno

Chibuzor Nelson azubuike, a native of Awka, Anambra state, Nigeria; born 9th October 1986, and better known as Phyno Fino, is a Nigerian rapper, singer, songwriter and record producer. He started his music career as a producer in 2003, and is renowned for rapping in the Igbo language (Wikipedia, 2021)

Phyno's Music

Phyno raps in Igbo language which is usually interlaced with English, Pidgin, slangs, and street argot. Some of his popular albums are: 'Deal with it', 'No Guts No Glory', 'Playmaker'. The title 'No Guts No Glory' is suggestive of the bravado and brazen obduracy characterizing internet fraud, gansterism, and drug peddling.

Biography of Nuno Zigi

Okechukwu Obiora Ayadinuno, popularly called Nuno Zigi, is a multi-talented indigenous rapper born in Anaku, Anambra state, Nigeria on 8th October, 1996.

Nuno Zigi's Music

His notable skill is his unique rap technique where he combines English language, Pidgin English, Igbo, and street argot just like Phyno. Among his popular hits are '8th mode', *Thotiana* (freestyle), *Isiaja*, 'Commando', *Nyem Space*, and now *Chupadija* which is our case study.

Relationship between Phyno and Nuno Zigi

There exists a relationship of mentor and mentee between Phyno and Nuno. Phyno signed him into *PentHauze*, Phyno's label company, in 2017 though Nuno has been making good music covers before then. Nuno zigi reflected on his signing as a dream come through as he did a mind blowing freestyle on Phyno's 2018 hit single.

Both artists have done some musical collaborations and this also explains the semblance in their themes and lyrics.

Echoes of Criminality in Some of their selected Works

Phyno's and Nuno's works have serious traits of criminality which is echoed through the lyrics of their respective songs. The songs are analyzed critically below:

Notes on the Analyses

- Excerpts of the lyrics are lifted for emphasis and not the entire lyrics
- The lyrics are numbered in order to make lucid references to them
- Not all the excerpted lyrics were analyzed but only those that echo pertinent points.

Analysis of Phyno's *Umụaka Highway* (excerpt)

• Lyrical translations and Interpretations

Lyrics	Denotation	Connotation
1. <i>Agu adị eri agu</i>	lion does not feed on lion	Being a gangster I cannot be subdued by any other
2. <i>kechibe maka isi'm na-enwu oku</i>	Wrap it up because my head is charging hot	I need those hard drugs now
3. <i>Fastlife mana nwoke adị ebu onu</i>	One should work fast to succeed	Desperate moves guarantee success

4.9 <i>abani bu oge anyi ji agba ogwu</i>	9pm is usually the time we take our drugs	Nighttime is the best time to take hard drugs
5. <i>Phyno onye highway</i>	Phyno the highway way	Phyno the gangster
6. <i>Umaka highway</i>	guys on the highway	Gangsters on the prowl
7. <i>Chelum na high way</i>	Wait for me on the highway	Be reminded of our clandestine meeting point
8. <i>Owam na highway</i>	My vehicle is on the highway	I am on the way to our clandestine point
9. <i>Nchubia na highway</i>	I am in pursuit on the highway	My success relies on gangsterism
10. <i>Men choba okporo obanye highway</i>	Men seek out ladies on the highway	The gang is not lacking in sluts
11. <i>No come dey wine me</i>	Do not disturb me	the orgy cannot entertain distractions.
12. <i>I fuluonwe gi na uncompi</i>	You found yourself in the uncompleted building	Welcome to the gang
13. <i>Ezege na street no uncompi</i>	The most successful man on the street is in the uncompleted building	Even the street gangster is a member of this gang
14. <i>Mana I tinyelu m anya ita conkri</i>	But if you interfere with my life I will fight you back	You dare not expose the ways of the gang or you

		would be killed.

Phyno on lyric 1 introduced the song with a declaration that he has attained a level of invincibility that should be a deterrent to every invader or enemy. The declaration also serves as a reassurance code to his teeming fans that they are well fortified in the society or ‘hood’ in street parlance. One interesting thing about rap is that it is wrapped in slangs and street argot which is scintillating to the fans but can be bamboozling to non-initiates, and this is called mutual intelligibility in language communication. One, therefore needs to listen and analyze the genre carefully to decipher the nuances involved.

On 2, we hear the artist saying ‘*kechibemakaisi’ mna-enwuoku* which connotes active engagement in hard drugs which is concomitant with contemporary rap musicians and fans. The English literal translation of the expression is ‘wrap it up because my head is charging hot’ raises the questions about what is to be wrapped and why is the head charging hot? The explanation is clear and points clearly to hard drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, methamphetamine or ecstasy ($C_{11}H_{15}NO_2$) which is an illegal drug used as a stimulant and which is notorious for causing hallucinations in people. This drug has been found to be a trending hard drug among pop-musicians with the vernacularized tag *mkpulummili*(water seeds) because of its crystalline texture and solubility in water.

Phyno on 3 brazenly unleashed the command for untethered pursuit of opulence with the line *Fastlife mana nwoke adi ebu onu*. ‘Fastlife’ is the street argot for illegal adventures such as drug trafficking, internet fraud, robbery, sexual escorting, and many others. ‘Fastlife’ syndrome has eaten deep into the Igbo youth strata who easily resort to criminality as alternative to unemployment and as a general way of life. This is the major

cause of several incarcerations of African and Igbo youths in Western societies.

9 abanị bu oge anyị ji agba ọgwụ denotes that 9pm is usually the time they take their drugs but the connotation is a signal for all initiates to always remember the imperatives of nightlife to gansterism. The Igbo Rap milieu has been regrettably enmeshed in a vicious cycle of music-clubbing-drug abuse-gansterism –criminality as echoed in line 4. Club houses and clubbing operate under the pretext of musical partying but a lot has been found to transpire within the clubbing enclaves such as crime -suggestive music and drug abuse which are germinal to criminality.

On lines five through to ten (5-10) we see the rapper strongly pushing for a life of banditry, brigandage, and racketeering with the metaphor ‘highway’. The slang and argot expressions ‘*Phyno onye highway*’ *Ụmụaka highway*, *Chelum na highway*, *Owam na highway*, *Nchubia na highway*, and *Men choba okporo obanye highway* have all the connotations of brigandage.

Phyno on 12, 13, and 14 (*Ifulu nwegi na uncompi*, *Ezege na street no compi* , *Mana itinyelum anya ita conkri* presents to his fans the idea of street life (uncompi), *ezege*, and the repercussions of espionage, betrayal and disloyalty to the gang. *Uncompi* denotes an uncompleted building which connotes the ruggedness of street tryst and rendezvous. *Ezege* is an appellation for the most successful streetwise person and who is approached with optimum respect as a role model and who can brutally exterminate whoever disrupts or disregards his way of life or exposes the tracks of the gang.

Analysis of Nuno zigi’s *Chupadià*(excerpt)

• Lyrical translations and Interpretations

Lyrics	Denotation	Connotation
1. <i>Okorobia o buna akpatara ego bu jonsin melu ya</i>	A fainthearted youngman can never be wealthy	Every Youngman must be prepared to take any level of risk to become wealthy
2. <i>Kee ihe n'eme</i>	What is going on?	Why the placidity and complacency regarding quick wealth?
3. <i>Ezege no here by the way nwanne Aii</i>	Our opulent friend is around	Our opulent gangster is here with us
4. <i>January to December mu Eburo ride bata, kee ifem ga akolu my mother</i>	What will I tell my mother during December that I have not yet bought a car ?	How will my mother react to my abysmal failure of not owing a car by the end of the year?
5. <i>My silver spoon fulu efu m'e pick tero ya, kee ife m ga-akolu my mum</i>	How will I explain to my mother that I failed to recover my lost silver spoon?	How do you I explain to my mother that wealth evaded me in my youth?
6. <i>4 years for unizik m wenata so degree, kee ife m ga-akolu my mother</i>	How do I explain to my mother that I brought only a	How would my mother take me for returning home poor after

	degree certificate home after graduating?	4 years in the university?
7. <i>Yak am ji Chupadĩa</i>	That's why I am in close pursuit	This is the reason I am fiercely in pursuit of wealth
8. <i>Chupadĩa, Chupadĩa, Chupadĩa, Chupadĩa, Chupadĩa, Chupadĩa,</i>	I am in close pursuit of	I am fiercely in pursuit of wealth at all costs no matter the risks involved
9. <i>Ubiyam buezigbo nsogbu make I solve the puzzle</i>	Poverty is a problem and a puzzle I must solve	I must break the puzzle of poverty by all means
10. <i>M jesĩa gbalu aka kee ihe m ga-akpo</i>	What will I say If I return empty handed?	I have no time for long explanations over poverty
11. <i>O gbajuo dọlu nwa kee onye m ga-akpo</i>	Who do I beckon when financial challenges overwhelm me?	Who would come to my aid during financial difficulties?
12. <i>Ego a bụlu ma size oversize bu size m</i>	If money is sized, oversize is my size	I do not just want money, my clamor is for opulence
13. <i>Achọọ m ibụ convoy with guys guys m</i>	I wish to ride in convoy with my	My desire is to always cruise in

	friends	convoy with my gang
<i>13.Fix ie my eyes on the prize</i>	My eyes are fixed on money	My gaze is fixed on making money no matter the cost
<i>14.Yea this money bata m ga-akpo olili</i>	There will be celebration when the money arrives	Celebrations await my gazillion wealth
<i>15.Chukwu ekwena ka olum gwuo mmili</i>	God will not allow my labor for wealth to flop	Nothing will flop my clandestine efforts for wealth
<i>16.Kedu mgbe m ga ekonuko the whole city</i>	When will I draw out the entire city	When will I successfully swindle the entire people and hit a fortune
<i>17.I ga-amapu iru ogu welu obi gi</i>	Be courageous when engaging in a fight	Be fiercely courageous in engaging in risks for achieving opulence
<i>18.Ma oo ugbo aturapu m n'isi mmili kam nogide juba chukwu ajuju</i>	If the ship capsizes will I retire querying God?	What will I do if the cartel bursts?
<i>19.Uwa lukaam afia m tipia ha achunaam</i>	when detractors soil my business and send me packing	When law enforcement agents round me up along with the cartel
<i>20.Order m Uber ka o</i>	Ordering Uber	When

<i>būnaa m</i>	taxi to send me home	immigration agencies order my deportation
<i>21.Mchupagide ha nwoke ezu ike</i>	I will be in pursuit without relenting	I must relentlessly pursue wealth at all costs
<i>22.Maka onye a n'akwanyelu ugwu bu onye ji ife</i>	People accord more respect to a successful man	It is the wealthy man that deserves respect
<i>23.As I dey hustle ife sikwuo ike Munwa abannye obodo oyibo je bute ife</i>	If things do not favor me around, then I emigrate to the Western world to make ends meet	My gaze is on abroad to jet out and succeed at all cost whenever here is no longer favorable

On 1 Nuno zigi subtly suggests that cowardice is the only militating factor against realizing quick wealth among youths. This is echoed in the line *Okorobia o būna akpatara ego bu jonsin melu ya*. This is pure musical hypnotical suggestibility as most of his fans, lulled by the rhythmic vibes of his music, get swayed and succumb to the suggestion. The line clearly suggests that ‘every youth must be prepared to take any level of risk to become wealthy’ and the import of this is simply the brazen engagement in drug trafficking, racketeering, brigandage, internet fraud, gangsterism, and several of them. It is worrisome that youths, who are supposed to be preoccupied with their education or skill acquisition, are coerced into accepting that wealth acquisition is the paramount pursuit at their age and stage in life and that their seeming insolvency is attributed to laziness or even a curse! It is incongruous with societal ethics to laden minors and youths

with economic responsibilities which should be attended by their parents and basic social amenities that are the responsibility of the government.

This malaise has pervaded the entire Igbo youth culture and is a major drive of the quick wealth syndrome among Igbo youths.

On 2 we hear the reechoing of the idea of *Ezege* (successful street Kingpin and role model of the youths) which was highlighted earlier in Phyno's music.

On 4, 5, and 6 we see some disturbing lyrics in Nuno zigi's work: *January to December mu Eburo ride bata, My silver spoon fulu efu m'e pick tero ya, kee ife m ga akolu my mum, kee ifem ga akolu my mother* which have the following connotations: 'How will my mother react to my abysmal failure of not owning a car by the end of the year?'. And how do I explain to my mother that I failed to acquire a car after four years stay in the university? These expressions sound cajoling on the surface but the connotations portend so much danger for the youths and society at large. Nuno Zigi released this album towards the end of his stay in the university and so the premise of his song and the target audience were not in doubt. Why should undergraduate students be bothered and burdened with the pressure of owning cars to impress their mothers? What is the actual motive behind sponsoring people to the university: to amass wealth or to garner learning and basic skills for self-actualization? What kind of legitimate work or business can financially imbue an undergraduate with the financial capacity to acquire cars or the kind of opulence echoed in the highlighted lyrics? These are just a few of the farrago effusing from Nuno zigi's music *Chupadija*.

Throughout 7 and 8, we hear the emphatic echoing of *Chupadja* (ferocious pursuit of wealth) thus: *Yak am ji Chupadja, Chupadja, Chupadja, Chupadja, Chupadja, Chupadja, Chupadja.*

Nuno employed the musical device of repetition to drive home his message to his audience that wealth must be vehemently pursued and acquired no matter the cost. This negates the ethics of hard work, integrity, honesty, patience, perseverance, and branding which are the basic prerequisites for wealth. One wonders whether life is all about making money and being wealthy?

Effects of their songs on youths

Youths, invariably, are the major consumers and fans of rap music as it suits their youthful exuberance and fits into their niche for social revolution. This paper necessitated a field work on *keke* operators around Awka and Onitsha environs and discovered that rap music is their preferred music as it is always heard blasting away from their tricycles through heavily propped speakers and Bluetooth devices.

Incidentally, there has been unprecedented rise in crimes such as robbery, kidnapping, blindfolding and abduction etc., perpetrated with the *keke* tricycles all around South Eastern Nigeria in recent times. This has warranted the recent ban by the Anambra State police command that all *keke* tricycles must have their hoods half-open so that any criminal activity going on inside any would be visible to the public. *Keke* tricycle has also been banned from certain areas in the state; some areas also do not allow its operation within some stated hours for security reasons.

This paper is not submitting that all *keke* operators are criminals or that *keke* transport business in Southeastern

Nigeria is laden with criminality but the rise in criminal incidents involving youths with *keke* is worrisome. Is there any connection between the sensitive rap blasting in most of the *kekes* and the predominant crime rate associated with it? Clearly there are some ties between the two variables which a recent squabble that ensued between a youthful *keke* operator and the researcher attests to.

I boarded a *keke* one fateful morning in the course of this research paper and noticed that the rap music was blaring noisily and on the request to have it tuned down, a squabble ensued.

“Why should the music be turned low?”. “Is it any of your business that it is high or low?”, retorted the young man. I was bewildered at his retort particularly the insensitivity to the fact that as his passenger, I should be made comfortable en route the journey. I allowed the issue lie and pretended to enjoy the music which seemed to make him calm but in preparation for the main throb of question which was: ‘What is the music about?’. To my amazement, the question thrilled him as he took time to educate me on the world of rap, rap musicians, and opulent youths hailed in the music. He struck a chord and when he intimated that the rapper in question was a famous opulent youngster who crashed into a particular building at Awka road Onitsha, Anambra State a few weeks ago with his exotic Lexus jeep and repaired the building, and restored it to the owner in just two weeks.

I got interested and asked him the youngman’s line of business which he responded: ‘He hit his millions online’. I prodded further on the legitimacy of the online business and to my shock, he asked me to alight from his *keke* immediately! And that was the end of the conversation but I had already gotten the information I needed to supplement my research data.

This encounter evidently points out some pertinent issues in this paper and these are:

- Rap music commands a large youth fan base in contemporary Igbo society of south Eastern Nigeria.
- Several Igbo rap artists have emerged and taken over the Igbo musical cosmos with the rap genre
- The youths see rap as means of interrogating perceived social imbalances, *parental* control, social ethics and etiquette, family regimentation meted out to them.
- Nigeria's high unemployment index and economic plight has pushed most youths towards *keke* transport business for survival.
- Wherever these youths find themselves they engage in rap for escape from the harsh realities of life in Nigeria and also absorb the rhythm and lyrics in forging a pop culture.
- The lyrics and theme of contemporary Igbo rap with its peculiar suggestibility lure these youths towards various forms of criminality such as robbery, abduction, kidnapping, and even some reported cases of rape inside the *keke*.
- The pervading emphasis on internet fraud, illegitimate engagements, and ferocious pursuit of wealth echoed in this rap genre has also misled so many youths into the suggested vices.
- There is the general perception and misconception among these youths that the most rational way to recompense the society and government for their ineptitude is to unleash, criminality. This is seen in the unprecedented cases of hacking of government data bases and websites, bank and internet heist, fraud,

robbery, kidnapping for ransom, etc., besieging our society today.

A work about Music Censorship in American titled *A brief history of music censorship in the United States, from the present back to 1934* (published in NATIONAL COALITION AGAINST CENSORSHIP ncac.org) gave these reports:

Feb 2014, Lyrics Used in charge against rapper

California rapper, Tiny Doo's album 'No Safety' (released in February 2014) landed him "criminal street gang conspiracy" charges after he rapped about violent crimes and gang life. Tiny Doo, whose real name is Brandon Duncan, could actually be facing a life sentence after the court drew connections between his lyrics and actual shootings dating back to April 2013.

This report shows the concerted efforts of musicians to fight censorship but there are glaring relationships between suggestive lyrics and violence which actually attracted the sentence.

Implications of their songs in Contemporary Nigerian Society

Nigeria is currently on the throes of insecurity and banditry along with all sorts of criminality, and therefore, any form of music that suggests further criminality and banditry sabotages all efforts towards the restoration of the system.

The Issue of modernism, musical pluralism, Pop-Culture, and the futility of Censorship

The social stage of music in the contemporary world has become so complicated that several weird musical styles have emerged and continue to emerge. This development is due to issues emanating from such forces as modernism, musical pluralism, and pop culture; and these forces have, as it were,

made censorship difficult and redundant. Those forces are underscored below:

Modernism refers to a global movement in society and culture that from the early decades of the twentieth century sought a new alignment with the experience and values of modern industrial life (Tate.org.uk, 2021).

Modernism has peculiar characteristics such as ‘individualism’, ‘experimentation’, ‘absurdity’, ‘symbolism’, and ‘formalism’. Musical individualism and experimentation are seen in rap music where the theme is centered on the individual with his experimental struggles with social standards.

Musical pluralism is a term drawn from the comprehensive concept of social pluralism which Stark (1987: 614) sees as “A system or a society in which power is dispersed among many competing elites who act to limit one another’s power and therefore minimize the repression and exploitation of members”.

The import here is the ‘decentralization’ or ‘dispersion’ of power which, when applied to music, would mean the rise of several genres of music in revolt to existing musical styles. Against the antediluvian musical forms like sacred music, folk music, classical music, traditional music, ritual music, etc., there have arisen so many genres in the world such as reggae, afro beat, blues, rock & roll, rock, *fuji*, *zigma*, *ogene*, highlife, disco, hip-hop, pop, and rap, each one bearing its peculiarity and divergence from existing musical styles.

Another aspect of musical pluralism is the blend of various different musical idioms in one genre which is peculiar to contemporary music such as rap. Rap combines elements of

irregular rhythm found in jazz, accented beats peculiar to hip-hop, and cultural idioms found in the society of its locale. Here we find a bewildering mix of musical styles peculiar with contemporary music (Wikipedia, 2021).

The interesting thing about musical pluralism is that it is a fallout of pluralism in the larger society which is natural with societal dynamism. Art paces social developments and transformations. As the society is changing into complex forms, so is music also changing into various forms to mirror the society. The easiest way to understand the state of a given society is to observe its arts. Contemporary Rap invariably mirrors the decadence, imbalance, disorder, negligence, and governmental ineptitude encompassing our societies presently. The concept of pop-culture refers to a way of life that is popular among a given group in a society at a given time. For instance, most people who smoke or ever smoked did that because it was a popular culture amongst their peers at the time of the engagement. The relationship between pop-culture and censorship is an upsetting paradox in modern societies. Some governments warn against the dangers of cigarette smoking but ironically are complacent in enforcing any laws against it because of huge sums of money accruing from cigarette. Cigarette menace has become extremely difficult to control because it is a pop culture among a good percentage of the society and also because of the financial gains it promises governments. Cigarette marketing companies pay huge sums of money to government in order to sustain their license.

Rap music also is difficult to submit to censorship because of its teeming fans and the money it generates for music producers, managers, marketers, the electronic media, and the government which collects huge sums of money for the incorporation, licensing, and copyrighting music entrepreneurs and broadcasting corporations.

On censorship, songs are often edited for broadcast on radio and television to remove content that may be considered objectionable to an outlet's target audience- such as profanity, or references to subjects such as sex and drug usage (Wikipedia, 2021). But this practice has not been sustainable in modern societies where modernism sees defiance as norm. In some societies music censorship is not constitutional. It is regarded as infringement on the right of freedom of speech. In the United states for example, government-sanctioned censorship is prohibited by the constitution, so the more common way is through pressure from special interest groups.

Currently the Nigerian media space is agog with Big Brother Show with its infamous wantonness, vulgarity, nudity, debauchery, lecherousness, etc. Several calls for ban have come from censorship bodies, religious organizations, scholars, educators, and various conscience groups to no avail. The program's season five was estimated to have cost about three billion five hundred billion Naira (N3.5 Billion) for the production and it is also estimated to generate more billions for the Nigerian government and economy when aired. There is also a grand prize of ninety million Naira (N)90 million) for the winner. This explains why it is would be difficult for the program to be banned no matter whatever occurs in the episodes and the pressure of various conscience groups.

Raising censorship parameters over perceived vicious social trends is different from enforcing it and it is this disconnect that is the point of the argument above. Enforcing a censorship or ban is quite difficult over a trend that has become a pop culture particularly amongst teeming youths of a society. On the other hand, how does an inept government that has failed to provide employment for its youths manage to censor what the youths have found as means of escapism and source of income?

From the foregoing revelations, it is clear that contemporary Igbo Rap music will be difficult to be censored or even banned despite evidences of more criminality suggested in the lyrics.

Conclusion and Recommendations

As contemporary Igbo rap music has become inundated with echoes of criminality, it becomes imperative for scholars, educators, and leaders in the Igbo society to chart some way out of the malaise. The rate youths are embracing this genre of music and internalizing the criminality suggested in the lyrics is disturbing and portends grave danger for the entire society. The desperate pursuit of wealth and opulence reiterated in most of this type of music has led many youths to various kinds of illegitimate engagements such as internet fraud, drug abuse and peddling, gangsterism, and brigandage.

It is also upsetting that Igbo rap musicians have found themselves enmeshed in promoting inglorious themes in their music which is incongruous with the normative ideologies peculiar with Igbo people and their society. The Igbo race is famous for championing entrepreneurial apprenticeship where people get engaged with masters in different fields of endeavor to painstakingly learn trade, craft, music, etc. with the hope of settling down and become independent after learning the art. Why then are Igbo rap musicians jettisoning this proven old practice and are pushing for brigandage as a means for self-actualization?

This paper does not recommend censorship or ban on unscrupulous Igbo rap music, because this approach has never worked as highlighted earlier but the paper pushes for conscientization from the cradle through music. That is, engaging infants and children with folk music, traditional music, didactic rhymes, educative songs, right from the cradle to the end that such music would mold and enhance their

appreciation of musical aesthetics as early as possible. This would go a long way in conditioning and raising individuals who can understand, discriminate, listen to, create, appraise and relate to music based on its educative, informative, and normative essence.

Government should also address the ‘insurmountable’ and recurrent problems of unemployment, economic hardship, suppression, insecurity, and bad governance which are the cause of youthful restiveness expressed through such revolutionary music as contemporary rap.

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