

**When Vulgarism Comes through Popular music: An Investigation of
Slackness in Zimdancehall Music**

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Abstract

In Zimbabwe, popular music, particularly the *Zimdancehall* music genre, has become a cultural site where Shona moral values clash with explicit sexual lyrical content despite a censorship regime in the country. This article examines the nature and cultural consequences of the moral decadence that emerges in popular *Zimdancehall* song lyrics by several musicians. The article illustrates how vulgar language popularises *Zimdancehall* songs in unheralded ways that foster identities laced with cultural ambivalences that may portray the artists as both famous and depraved. This qualitative study does textual and content analysis of 11 purposively sampled songs with sex terms to elucidate the cultural inconsistencies in *Zimdancehall* song narratives. Analysis is informed by the Neuro-Psycho-Social theory, which recognises how socio-cultural restrictions are challenged by an emerging ghetto culture like new wine in old bottles. Alternative unsanctioned new popular music genres can be used to permeate the sociocultural system.

Keywords: immoral behaviour, popular music, slackness, *Zimdancehall*, vulgarism.

Introduction

Zimdancehall music¹ started in the 1990s and became popular among Zimbabwean urban youths after 2005 (UREKE & WASHAYA 2016). Since the emergence of the music genre *Zimdancehall* artists have laced their songs with sexual lyrics that shame people, the elderly in particular, in the public domain while at the same time attracting the interest and imagination of the urban youths. Hakim (2010, 503) says erotic capital has enhanced value in situations where public and private life can become closely intertwined, such as jobs in the media and entertainment industries. *Zimdancehall* owes its popularity largely to the advent of home studios in Zimbabwe, which ensured that music that used to be prohibited by professional studios is now recorded in these home studios. This is because, unlike the traditional professional studios, the home studios concentrate more on making money and care less about the moral fabric of the songs. Thus, though exploitation

¹ ZIMDANCEHALL music is a Zimbabwean genre that originated the early 2000s which fuses reggae, dancehall and traditional music.

of the erotic capital *Zimdancehall* music has tended to surpass the *sungura* music genre in terms of popularity despite the prevalence of markers of immoral behaviour. In the Zimbabwean context, specifically in Shona society, performance of *Zimdancehall* by youths employing implicit and explicit sex words has led to disapproval by adults. Mangeya (2022, 361) critically engages a discourse of macho masculinity that is discursively constructed in *Zimdancehall* music as laying down the rules of engagement for heterosexual encounters. Chitando and Chirongoma (2012) characterise these as 'dangerous masculinities' in so far as their naturalisation of pain and violence is considered as a yardstick of sexual gratification for women.

Zimdancehall is infamous in Shona society for the prevalence of vulgar language² and loose morals in the public domain. Music reflects society's hopes and aspirations, articulates issues characterising the populace, and is a mirror of the moral landscape. Zimbabweans relate to vulgar 'texts' differently depending on their ethical disposition. Meanings of texts are contestable and music lyrics are not produced and consumed in a social vacuum. By analysing songs that ran afoul with moralists in Zimbabwe, it is possible to see interrelationships and tensions between youth concerns and the values that Shona adults want to inculcate in youths. This essay argues that sex terms have popularised *Zimdancehall* songs in unpredicted ways that have fostered identities laced with cultural incongruities, depicting the artists as both well-known and immoral. The question for this study is: What are the factors that have contributed to the growth of *Zimdancehall* music, despite it being characterised by suggestive sexual lyrics?

This article textually analyses 11 purposively selected *Zimdancehall* controversial songs: *Zunza mazakwatira*, *Munodonhedza musika*, *Magate*, *Ita seunononga*, *Sweetie*, *kaNjiva*, *Chiita kwacho*, *Ndongosimudza musoro*, *Ane zihombe* and *Huya umbondi rider*) to show how they portray sex lingo, a taboo in Shona culture. Most of the lyrics are sung in Shona and some phrases incorporate English and slang. Translations were made since the researcher is proficient in Shona and English and understands the local street lingo. The thematic approach (IYENGAR & SIMON 1993) in examining the songs categorised them as sex songs. The songs were accessed from YouTube, transcribed and the quote parts of the songs were explained. Textual scrutiny (FIIRSICH 2009; MCKEE 2003) is steered by the fact that songs are cultural products which reflect norms and moral values in different ways.

Sex is one of the most tabooed aspects of human existence and sexual identity affects how and where a person uses sex words. The use of obscenities has liberalised in the past few decades, and the normally tabooed "four-letter" words relating to sexual activity are now accepted in the current scene (GORDON 1994). This study uses the Neuro-Psycho-Social (NPS) theory of cursing to analyse *Zimdancehall* lyrics (TIMOTHY 2000). NPS theory integrates three broad aspects

² Making explicit and offensive reference to sex or bodily functions. Used here interchangeably with 'sex words'.

of human behavior: neurological control, psychological restraints, and socio-cultural restrictions. All these three dimensions underlie human behavior and are interdependent systems. The sociocultural system subsumes the historical-social information about word use. The sociocultural system describes variables that people in a culture use to determine the appropriateness of words in a given context. Each culture has developed its own criteria for what constitutes words that are acceptable in public. What makes a sex word appropriate or inappropriate depends on a given linguistic context, family and cultural environment (TIMOTHY 2000, 19).

The first section of the paper traces the Jamaican roots of *dancehall* music before exploring how *Zimdancehall* has evolved to popularity in Zimbabwe. The main section analyses 11 *Zimdancehall* songs with sex lingo and how they receive mixed reactions from the youth and elderly. The third section discusses the factors affecting the implementation of the Censorship and Entertainment Control Act by the Censorship Board. It demonstrates how policies set by the government of Zimbabwe have impacted positively on the growth of the Zimbabwean music industry. The paper finally examines the growth of the *Zimdancehall* genre spurred by technology and government's 100 percent local content policy.

The Jamaican influence on *Zimdancehall* music

According to Pen (1992,124), Jamaican dancehall music rose to prominence when the Jamaicans rejected the People's National Party revolutionary democratic socialist regime of Michael Manley and placed their hopes instead on the Jamaican Labour Party's Edward Seaga. Since the death of Bob Marley, representation of underprivileged Jamaicans and Rastafari in popular culture has been little on conventional media. Cultural and political changes coupled with changing public tastes ushered in a new Jamaican dancehall culture, becoming an increasingly significant institution for Jamaicans. The same has happened for unemployed ghetto youths³ in Zimbabwe who perform and identify with *Zimdancehall* music. Jamaican dance-hall music can be viewed as a portrayal of cultural decay amongst youths in the way it glorifies violence, promiscuity and drug abuse in poor societies. Crawford (2010) concluded that there is a correlation between hard-core dancehall genre and the sexual and violent behaviour of adolescents. Of the 100 adolescent cases (50 males, 50 female), females (40%) were more likely to gravitate to sexually explicit lyrical content than their male counterparts (26%). Females (74%) were more likely to act upon lyrical content than males (46%).

The frequency of vulgar terms in *Zimdancehall* is viewed as a type of noise pollution and the spread of sexual and physical abuse in the ghettos can be directly linked to the rise of Jamaican dancehall over original roots reggae music (CRAWFORD 2010). However, after the death of Bob Marley, reggae melo tunes were gradually replaced by Jamaican dancehall music with faster beats and more

³ Young people from poor densely populated townships with a rich cultural heritage and a sense of shame as well as a desire to escape from economic hardships, inferior status and social restrictions associated with their environment. _

materialistic themes. Pen (1992) believes it was a daily bread attempt to reduce the potency of Rastafarianism. In Jamaica dancehall became very profitable as promoters and record producers gave preference to the genre over reggae music, leading to polarization of societies. There were now three music cultures which one would follow; members of the Bob Marley chanty, members of the Nyabingi and The Twelve.

Slack lyrics which leave nothing to the imagination can be traced back to the rebellion against fading Rastafari movement ideals. Ironically the term reflects the derisive attitude towards the fight by Rastafarians, which lacks a deeper message. There is still very good conscious music with decent lyrics coming from Jamaica which make us stronger as a people but youngsters ignore this type of music and choose to associate with the Jamaican rude boys of dancehall whose lyrics only talk about ganja and sex. They opt to listen to wrong music from Jamaica and adapt it to suit their ghetto experiences in Zimbabwe. This associates *Zimdancehall* music with sex and drugs and many artists' careers are at risk of ending early because of indulging in risky behaviour.

Some Jamaican artists such as Yellowman introduced slackness⁴ and that culture has affected young Zimbabweans who perform *Zimdancehall*. At first the genre was seen as a copycat of Jamaican culture so it was never taken seriously and recording studios shunned it saying it did not appeal or sell. The arrival of independent home studios and the advent of urban grooves in 2001 opened up the doors for various artists who released several albums. Some hard-core artists released Shona lyrics, a departure from English/Patios which proved very popular with the people and shaped a new direction for the genre. The Shona vernacular songs appeal more to the ghetto youths and have made *Zimdancehall* very popular as it has gained mass appeal. DJs have played a key role in commercializing *Zimdancehall* music. In the past *Zimdancehall* artists were isolated but they have since teamed up in shows and collaborations, churning out very popular productions.

However, Zimbabwe's newest addition to the family of popular genres, *Zimdancehall* music which started in the late eighties, has become synonymous with explicit sexual lyrical content. The songs have become loaded with vivid pornographic phrases. The genre's proponents come from ghettos such as Mbare. This is the factory where the country's reigning dancehall kings have been refined at Chill Spot Records and delivered to the country's stages to entertain hordes of ghetto youths who are eager to hear their raw and aggressive take on life. Music lyrics have a direct influence on youths. The explicit content has the potential to change the behaviour of young people because they try to live the lyrics that they hear in the songs of their favourite artists. Most, if not all of today's most admired youth artists, locally and internationally dish out music with sprinklings of obscenity or spiced up with narrations of sexual encounters.

The Jamaican influence has caused *Zimdancehall* music artists to also sing vulgar words. Cultural purists like Chihora (2016) argue that dirty lyrics sung by some of the musicians risk killing *Zimdancehall*, as they may cause the entire

⁴ Straight forward vulgar lyrics and sexual behaviour performed live or recorded.

genre not to reach where it is supposed to. However, one can argue that instead of the music being banned as suggested by others, it should be censored and promoted. Notably, the energy in *Zimdancehall* becomes very sexual, with artists and fans donning more and more revealing clothes, scandalous dance styles, and dirty lyrics from the DJs.

***Zimdancehall* songs with vulgar language**

Regionally and internationally, it is trendy right now that musicians use sex lingo, imagery and dressing in different ways to sell records. This has become fashionable. Some of these artists sexualize their lyrics to sell their music and be popular but there are exceptions to the rule. Hakim (2010, 501) says the social and economic value of erotic capital is highlighted in the entertainment occupations. In Japan, the 'entertainer' visa is granted to immigrants to musicians, artists, hostesses, and commercial sex workers in the leisure industry. In the Western world, the sex industry in its diverse manifestations is also part of the wider entertainment industry. The *Zimdancehall* songs in the sample dwell on 3 sexual issues: female body size, private body parts and erotic encounters.

Voluptuous waists

Women's waists have been objectified by *Zimdancehall* musicians. Hakim (2010, 500) says, "There are cultural and temporal variations in ideas about what constitutes beauty. Some African societies admire women with large voluptuous bodies." The songs indicate how in the Shona culture, the concept of beauty appreciates huge body frames. *Zimdancehall* artists have ridden on that value to capitalize and rise to popularity with the song lyrics shown in 1-4 below:

1. *Munodonhedza musika* (You drop the market) by Boom Betto
2. *Zunza mazakwatira* (shake your booty) by Seh Calaz
3. *Magate* (Big clay pots) by Enzo Ishall
4. *Ita seunononga* (Act as if you are picking something) by Guspy Warriar

The lyrics of (1) say *Amai munodonhedza Musika, muchizunza mutaka. Vanhu vanomira hoo pamunosvika* (Mother you drop the market, when you shake your buttocks. People stand awe-struck when you arrive). He adds that when she passes by guys freeze like there is an earthquake (*Pamunodarika maface anosticker. Kuita kunge nyika irikundengendeka*). This hit song was recorded in 2016 at Off the Stage Riddim and it was produced by DJ Levels. Its lyrics describe the beauty of a woman. The lyrics *Amai munodonhedza musika* (mother you destroy markets) describe the body of the woman's beauty as exceptional and outstanding. The controversial lyrics have been slammed for objectifying women though the song topped the *Zimdancehall* charts on radio. *Zimdancehall* artistes have become one-hit wonders because of these controversial songs and fans love them. The song implicitly talks about hip gyration in the public domain. In Shona tradition this was confined to all-night moonlit ordeals and was never publicised in broad daylight as *Zimdancehall* artists are now doing.

Also, song (2) is another case in which women are asked to shake their buttocks in provocative ways. The song received a lot of support from young people. However, after recording this not-so-explicit song, Seh Calaz was fined for contravening the Censorship and Entertainment Control Act. In the song, Seh Calaz is clearly talking about sexual conduct, but uses otherwise clean language and innuendos that can be deciphered anyhow. While he was convicted and fined \$100, Seh Calaz argued that the song was a leaked club version and he had no control over such actions. Certain songs that are uploaded on YouTube have different versions and are classified accordingly to allow users to select their favourite picks.

Another song, which even goes deeper into women's buttocks is the popular track (3) whose lyrics say *Uriwetambo pakati sekenduru, mhandu yechinomwe, une chuma muchiuo...* (You have a G-string in between (your buttocks), enemy number eight, you wear beads on your waist). Enzo Ishall gained popularity riding on the back of slack lyrics. It has become fashionable for artists to compose songs laden with sexual innuendo. Enzo Ishall argues that his songs are 'innocent' but fans interpret them to mean whatever they like. He crafts lyrics that attract sexual interpretations by followers. *Magate* created a frenzy with a social media challenge which had women seeking to out-twerk each other. That does not promote *Hunhu/Ubuntu*, and in Shona culture must not be brought into the public domain. Children have even taken part in the *Magate* challenge, which shows how pervasive music is. The lyrics are so dirty that one cannot listen to them in the presence of the elderly or *vanyarikani* (respectable people). Ishall has been put into the limelight by his witty word play. He has an implicit way of alluding to sex without mentioning the vulgar words in his songs. He has been propelled to popularity by songs that have sexual innuendo. The artiste has attained a greater height irrespective of the sexual innuendo in his music.

Yet another song which dwells at length on women's waists as objects of sexual pleasure is (4) above. He says I marvel at our pink lips, and curvy hips (*Ndospakwa nema lips ako ari pink, baby girl nema curvey hips*). He explicitly says the girl is sexy and beautiful, so she must twerk in front of him (*Une ka sexiness beauty. Ndiwainire*). The girl must come close to him and not fear but twerk and give him everything (*Uya padhuze neni bhebhi usavhunduke. Waina ndipe zvese usasirire*). He says he wants his ex-lover to envy them (*Ndoda ex-girlfriend yangu igumbuke*) and this has potential to spark a battle. The artist delves further into pornographic imagery when he sings *Inonzi seunononga kana kuti fongo* (It is called 'Like you are picking something' or doggy style). The Shona term *fongo* refers to doggy style position during sexual intercourse, and Guspy urges the girl to keep twerking repeatedly (*Ramba uchidaro!*). Primack et al (2008) say sexual content is frequent in popular music and conclude that degrading references to sexual activity are more common in popular music than non-degrading references.

The private parts

There are also *Zimdancehall* songs that objectify private parts. The music cannot be listened to by elderly people as it is uncharacteristic of Shona cultural norms and values. It is about sexual immoralities which are taboo in the public domain. The *Zimdancehall* songs allude to private parts, as shown in (5) - (7) below:

5. *Ndipowo Stonyeni* (May you please give me *stonyeni*) by Jah Signal
6. *Yekedero* (As it is/raw) by Jah Signal
7. *Ane Zihombe* (He has a big one) by Lady Bee

In song (6) above Jah Signal claims the word *stonyeni* means love, when Zimbabweans actually use it to refer to the vagina. So, his chorus *Ndipowo stonyeni* (May you please give me *stonyeni*) actually explicitly means asking for sexual intercourse. The artist has achieved his mission of dominating the annual music chart lists on TV and radio, receiving an award for his work. Jah Signal also sang '*Yekedero*' (as it is) which topped the charts but is a lurid story. His song *Kupinda mubako* is also another song which uses sexual innuendo. He sings *Ndirikuda kupinda mubako.....pinda* (I want to enter in the cave.... enter) *Asi ndichapinda yekedero.... pinda* (but I will enter raw.... Enter). *Kupinda* refers to penetration here. Youths use the expression '*Yekedero*' to refer to unprotected sex and judging by the song's popularity amongst the youths, one shudders to imagine whether or not it drives them into having protected sex. Soul Jah Love's song *Ndongo simudza musoro* (I will lift the head), implies manhood getting erect.

Zimdancehall female artist Lady Bee has managed to make a breakthrough in the male-dominated genre and challenged patriarchal supremacy. She is well known for her explicit lyrics and skimpy costumes on stage. Her 2012 song 6 above has sexual innuendo. '*Ane zihombe*' addresses the question of penis size, demonstrating the assertive participation of female artists in popular music. This has challenged women's subservient, quiet, homemaker role (MAKORE 2004, 50). Her song has sexually explicit lyrics where she makes a sensual description of the male body. In the song she describes how she wants to have intercourse, which is against Shona societal norms where women are expected to be submissive to husbands. Mangeya (2022) sees Lady Bee as perpetuating the dominant phallogocentric discourses constructing women as sexual objects who do not really need to be cared for and valued.

Sexual encounters

Songs have been penned which refer to sexual intercourse and these have made household names. *Zimdancehall* songs which contain sexual innuendo attract attention and become hits. *Zimdancehall* artistes always find a way of 'saying things without saying them', and that is one of the main reasons why their songs have resonated with many youths in Zimbabwe. Examples of songs that have implicit and explicit sex terms are numerous and they include (8)-(11) below:

8. *Ndongosimudza musoro* (I will lift its head) by Shinsoman
9. *Kanjiva* (The little dove) by Enzo Ishall

10. *Chiita kwacho* (Just do it) by Enzo Ishall
11. *Huya umbondi rider* (Come and ride me) by Lady Squanda

Shinsoman penned the song 7 above to portray imagery of the erect penis which lifts it head in readiness for the sexual encounter with a woman. The explicit lyrics say *Ndoti babe tanga nekubathroom tozopedzerana kana tapinda mubedroom* (I say babe bath first, then we can square off in the bedroom). This is also expressed in (9) above as Enzo Ishall talks about sex but never mentions the word throughout the song. The lyrics *Katanu kusara kari nude, ndikati very sorry handisiri mumood, kaswederera mudhuze zvikanzi chiita kani...*, (Undressed to nudity, and I said sorry I am not in the mood, she moved closer and said please do it) portray a woman who is high and in the mood for sex but unfortunately the man is unwilling.

Enzo Ishall was among artists who walked away with awards for music that rose high on the airwaves in 2018. His songs were some of the most played on local chats and in households. Song 8 was voted first in the *Coca-Cola Top 50 Videos*. The video created waves. The lyrics of the song *Aka, ikaka, Kanjiva, kakaiswa apa, kogoiswa apa...Kanjiva...* (This one, this very one, the little dove, it's put here, and put here, the little dove) contributed to it being voted the best. *Kuisa* is a Shona word which can be interpreted to mean inserting the penis! *Kanjiva* became a favourite of both the young and the old, catapulting Enzo Ishall in the music industry. The sex words that characterise his compositions have made him popular. On official platforms the musician said his song is merely about a dance.

Lady Squanda is another *Zimdancehall* female artist who sang the controversial song 10 above in 2016. In Shona language, the term '*kukwira*' (to ride) refers to their encounters with partners who men do not care about. The song expresses the nymphomaniac woman's desire for sex which is also against the norms and values of the Shona society. "Riding, from which the 'rider' is adopted, is not a respectful way of characterising sexual encounters" (MANGEYA 2022: 371). Erotic capital is a major asset in mating and marriage markets, but can also be important in the media, advertising, the musical arts, and in everyday social interaction (HAKIM 2010). By expressing her desire thus, Lady Squanda perpetuates sexual violence against her own gender although male artists are usually the major culprits in the negative representations of women through popular music (CHARI 2008; CRAWFORD 2010). Many conservative Zimbabwean adults have slammed these songs as vulgar and believe they affect children and young adults negatively due to their suggestive sexual lyrics.

The Censorship and Entertainment Control Act

People are being inundated with all these dirty lyrics in a country that has legislation to control what comes to the public domain. The Censorship Board's duty is to regulate and control the importation, production, dissemination, possession and public exhibition of prohibited music records, films, publications, pictures, statues of undesirable film material, and records. It governs the nature of acceptable public entertainment (Censorship and Entertainment Control Act Chapter 10:04). Zimbabwe appoints a board of censors in terms of the Censorship

and Entertainment Control Act Chapter 10: 4. The Act states that the Censorship Board's duties include regulating public entertainment in the digital age with the mandate to censor:

Any matter which is indecent or obscene or is offensive or harmful to public morals or any indecent or obscene medical, surgical or physiological details the disclosure of which is likely to be offensive or harmful to public morals; or for the dissolution or a declaration of nullity of a marriage or for judicial separation or for restitution of conjugal rights.

The outdated censorship process encounters the problem of interpreting works of art using factual evidence like the existence of clearly vulgar language. Stakeholders' must push for the modernisation of the laws governing content distribution. There is need for the Censorship Board to be reformed, and its modus operandi revised in light of new technological developments and international trends. Authorities should move towards establishing a process that allows the categorisation of content based on its rating. In Zimbabwe, so far, there is no attempt to categorise content on national television and radio compared to what other countries are doing. Categorisation of content allows users to choose what is best for them and their children in accordance with their values, traditions, customs and other factors that determine choice of content. Before the turn of the millennium and the advent of new technological advancements in the record industry there was a strict censorship authority, an equally stern process to make it to the airwaves, and creative control at recording labels. It was virtually impossible for musicians to release explicitly uncouth material. At an Arts and Culture workshop, theatre guru Daves Guzha (Personal communication, 15 August 2021) argued that the very existence of the Censorship Board and the archaic censorship laws in this country is not necessary. His argument was that art is about writing lyrics in a way that allows us listeners to interpret in our own way, and unless there are clearly vulgar words, censoring such work of art would be tantamount to stifling artistic creativity. Guzha's comments may be more applicable to politically sensitive words than slackness.

Releasing two versions of the same song has been done to escape censorship. *Zimdancehall* artistes tend to release an explicit version for the streets and nightclubs and a cleaner version for radio when they know their song is dirty. This is also done on the international music scene in Jamaica where most dancehall artistes release cleaner and raw versions of the same song. The same is done with music videos by international artistes who release explicit as well as censored videos of their songs. Views on YouTube and suggestions on Google show that some people love the explicit and raw versions of such songs. Music videos labelled 'explicit' on YouTube tend to have more views than the censored ones. In Zimbabwe there are a few *Zimdancehall* videos which show explicit content. In the past even lyrically liberal *Zimdancehall* chanters used to release a cleaner version for every dirty song just to get airplay but nowadays there might be no need to do so as mainstream platforms like radio stations are also playing this music. However, their effort to present parallel meanings of the songs is a far

cry from how the message has been decrypted in the streets, where it matters the most.

Sexually explicit content has been condemned by critics and academics. Before the advent of digital technology there was no sexually explicit content that was ever broadcast on radio or television as it was censored before it got to any mainstream platform. When one is with children or other respectable people, they have to avoid switching on the radio because of the morally unacceptable content that is sometimes broadcast. People need to rethink our moral values and allow only songs with educative lyrics for our children rather than playing morally bankrupt songs for the simple reason that they sell. Our society now has dirty minds because sometimes *Zimdancehall* musicians sing dirty lyrics with vulgar meanings, and children end up adopting these negative things.

Zimbabweans ought to advocate for the enactment of legislation that ensures the society's moral fabric is safeguarded and those who step over the prescribed moral values are brought to book. All music should go through the Censorship Board to ascertain its suitability for public consumption. The law should cover the new phenomenon of home studios which have rendered existing legislation obsolete, especially in the face of social media. Culturally, *Zimdancehall* is influencing young Zimbabweans in a bad way. There is a need for punitive action from the authorities when musical overtakes constructive lyricism as is the case with *Zimdancehall*.

Most trending *Zimdancehall* artistes have been propelled to stardom by songs which contain sexual innuendo or have negative moral substance when judged by Shona social expectations. It appears local artistes have latched onto the Western concept that sex sells in any art genre. It is uncertain whether musicians structure their lyrics to appease a perceived appetite for sexual content locally or they are setting the pace for what they want society to follow. People need to denounce music which explores a subtle agenda of sexually objectifying women. Music has a powerful influence hence any society that functions well should stand up against lyrics that pull women down. Post modernists might argue that there is nothing wrong with the productions, but young children consume these sex-laden productions and parents constantly find themselves challenged when asked to interpret these lyrics by their innocent children eager to understand and learn their language.

Policies

Policies set by the government of Zimbabwe have impacted positively on the growth of the Zimbabwean music industry as Jonathan Moyo, the then Minister of Information and Publicity, brought the 75 percent local content requirement for broadcast content. This helped the local artists be heard and recognized by the audience. Some previously unheard singers and producers immediately became household names as their music was played on the state media. Most *Zimdancehall* artists emerged and gained ascendancy since *Zimdancehall* was a genre dominated by youth who are mostly involved in crime and pervasive sexuality.

The 50/50 gender representation introduced by the government in all occupational spheres also helped women participate in the music industry. Kufakurinani and Mwatwara (2017) assert that female artists like Lady Squanda,

Xpriot, Bounty Lisa, Lipsy, Lady Banks among others have emerged in the Zimbabwean artistic youth culture most notably through *Zimdancehall*. *Zimdancehall* music is enjoying a lot of airplays on radio and television despite some artists using obscene words in their songs. The Broadcasting Services Act Chapter 12:6 and other relevant legislation need to be reviewed to ensure programming reflects Zimbabwe's national identity and respects community standards and values (CHIHORA 2016). *Zimdancehall* as part of the music genres in Zimbabwe should aim at achieving such objectives and portraying the Zimbabwean identity.

Zimdancehall artists have brought about slackness, vulgarity and obscene behaviour among Zimbabwean youth because of the dirty lyrics in most of their songs. Some of the artists have had some of their songs banned on radio and television because of their explicit content.

Zimbabwean music is perceived as a way of expressing opinion and it is a powerful force that can impact a society. Lyrical analysis of *Zimdancehall* songs reveals the artists use controversial lyrics and sex lingo in their songs. Mbembe (2001) says that using vulgar lyrics in a song can become fashionable in a post-colonial state, which can be attributed to lack of seriousness by some *Zimdancehall* artists. He identifies these artists, who utter anything, including vulgar lyrics as long as the words uttered do rhyme, as reckless.

Tivenga (2018) posits that most urban grooves artists have first-hand experiences of the ghetto life that they sing about as they have their roots in these ghettos commonly known as high-density residential townships in Zimbabwe. The songs are composed, produced and consumed in the backyard studios from the townships and they are an expression of what the youth see and experience due to unemployment and consumption of alcohol. The quality of work from *Zimdancehall* artists is compromised because of mushrooming backyard producers who produce substandard music. However, the music genre offers a chance for the urban youth as well as backyard studios around the ghetto to generate income.

Technology

Before 2000, music was not easy to get because few families in Zimbabwe had a radio or television set. Those people who had a radio or television bought records and cassettes. That time explicit music could not be bought anywhere because people wanted value for their money and they respected the people in whose presence they would play the music. Nowadays one feels some kind of liberation because they can listen to music privately through their headphones. Explicit content was easy to store away from children in the early 2000s but two decades later, the old ways of censorship are no longer effective. In this age of smartphones (that can carry hundreds of videos), internet connectivity and limitless access to any content is difficult. With the advent of technology or the internet, music is now a click away from being purchased and downloaded, and since one can play music from their phones, no one may bar them from listening to sexually explicit content. A controversial song can go viral and be a hit within two days of being released. The presence of social media and various technological gadgets have made traditional censorship regimes ineffective.

Copies of recordings have transitioned from hard to soft in the digital age. Censorship will not work using archaic methods because music is circulating

freely on social media platforms. Music recording has evolved from the days of analogue recording with live musical instrument bands because now one person can mix everything digitally in the home studio. In *Zimdancehall* music, different artists chant on a similar beat because the lyrical content keeps many ears listening to a song. During the analogue era, musicians had no creative freedom as the record labels then had power to control the content before it was released. Now that process is gone and musical artists are churning out raw lyrics and availing such products to the listeners. In Zimbabwe, singing vulgar lyrics used to happen at live shows in night clubs but was not allowed on mainstream media. Recent trends owe more to technology than the fact that Zimbabweans' values and norms are fading. Westernisation has meant that artists' creative control is now unrestrained in many sectors. In the past, they had to play around with words to relay sexually connotative lyrics in a witty manner to avoid popularising vulgarity because that would never get to the audience.

Conclusion

The main argument in this paper is that sex terms objectify women, and popularise *Zimdancehall* songs in unpredictable ways that foster identities laced with cultural ambivalences that may portray the artists as both celebrated and immoral. The article began by tracing the Jamaican roots of the genre and how it was adapted locally and then chronicled the factors that have contributed to the growth of *Zimdancehall* music. The paper's argument is that these ghetto youths who spend their day at the street corners and bridges smoking marijuana are populous in urban centres and identify with this genre and popularise it. The paper also argues that their frustrations, spurned by the country's dire economic situation in which they find themselves jobless and cashless, ventilate their indulgence, rebelliousness and lack of respect for acceptable moral values. The young generation is playing a dominant role in popularizing *Zimdancehall* music. Most *Zimdancehall* artists are still in their 20s and 30s and their hit songs containing immoral sex terms are influencing youths in a negative way. The music is often listened to by ghetto youths who dominate the genre in terms of singing and appreciation.

Technological advancements in the music industry have contributed to the growth of *Zimdancehall* music through the emergence of Home Studios. The internet and digital technology have made transferring music from one device to another easy. This helps one's music to reach audiences by circumventing the Censorship Board. The music can be accessed through the internet. Also, radio stations like Power FM and Star FM have promoted *Zimdancehall* music in the sense that these stations have made slots where this genre has been given airplay. Live streaming used by radio and television stations has helped local artists for their music to be disseminated. This has helped artists to be recognised internationally and land collaborative shows with international dancehall giants like Turbulence, Capleton and Sizzla Kalonji.

Declarations

The author declares no conflict of interest and no ethical issues for this research.

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