



HIP-HOP SONGS, ALCOHOL AND DRUGS USE AMONG NIGERIAN YOUTHS: IMPLICATION FOR POLICY

Samson F. AGBEROTIMI^{1*} and Francis AMENAGHAWON²

* Corresponding author

¹Department of Psychology
Chrisland University, Abeokuta, Nigeria
Email: femiagberotimi@gmail.com

² Indigenous Language Media in Africa research entity
North-West University | NWU
Email: olaiyagba@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The need for empirical studies to establish the extent and pattern of the media-substance relationship is important to drive policy for effective prevention intervention. This study investigated exposure to alcohol advertisement, and the perceived influence of the hip-hop song "science student" on alcohol and drug use among Nigerian youths. The study was cross-sectional and recruited 223 Nigerian university students (57.4% male) online using snowball sampling technique. Participants responded to a survey including questions on socio-demographic characteristics, exposure to alcohol advertisement, substance use, and a semi-structured interview exploring perceived influence of hip-hop song on substance use. The results showed that almost all (92.4%) of the participants responded to having been exposed to alcohol advertisement in their lifetime mostly by TV and movies (82.1%), posters and billboards (62.8%), and social media (62.3%). The majority of the participants (65%) feel that the song (science student) encourages people to use alcohol and drugs. Content analysis of the interviews on how participants feel the science students' song promote substance use revealed the following themes: description/display of substances, associating substances with intelligence and increased performance, celebrities' substance use, and normalizing substance use. This study established the need for innovative strategies and policies to promote the prevention of alcohol and drug use among Nigerian youths.

Keywords: substance use, Hip-hop songs, advertisement, prevention, Nigerian youths

INTRODUCTION

Globally, musical compositions are viewed as a platform of communication through which various ethnic, religious, and political groups among others send messages to their members and the general. Music enables people to share emotions, intentions, and meanings as well as entertainment, mobilization and persuasive messages (Hargreaves et al, 2005, pg.1). It is a pivotal attribute of human beings as all cultures and ethnic groups have a form of music or another.

Music is a form of communication, that is universal, irrespective of the language, genre or ideological leaning of the content. Most time the sound or beats resonate beyond the limits of language, lyrics or genre. Therefore, whether rhythm and blues, rap, highlife, reggae, hip-hop, fuji or juju, music is a powerful tool to promote various messages such as hygiene, race relations, political activism, and commercial interest among others (Stewart, 2005)

Against this backdrop, various interest groups including politicians, policymakers, media and other sub-groups in the society engage in music to reach different segments of the society (Morant, 2011). However, different genres of music resonate with different segments of society. It is observable that hip-hop music or Afro-hip-hop music as it is referred to in Nigeria resonates with adolescents and youths more than any other age group or social strata in the society (Gbogi, 2016). Hip-hop has therefore become a global phenomenon that is a subject of interest and research among various interest groups (Polak, et al., 2012).

Hip-Hip Music



Hip-Hop is a musical performance consisting of stylized rhythmic music originally created by disc jockey (DJ) isolating the percussion breaks of popular songs, sometimes with two turntables to extend the breaks. It began as a cultural movement in the Bronx area of New York during the 1970s (Rose, 1994). Though various schools of thought have divergent views on the history of hip-hop music, the Jamaican-born American DJ Kool Herc originally called Clive Campbell is regarded as the root of contemporary hip-hop (Hebdige, 2004; Polak, et al., 2012). Herc at a Halloween dance party for his sister in 1973, had “used an innovative turntable technique to stretch a song’s drum break by playing the break portion of two identical records consecutively”. Modern rap could be traced to 1979, with the rap song ‘Rapper’s Delight’ by the Sugar Hill gang. Rap focused at its beginning on black historical ideas, movements and figures in combating racial discrimination. Hebdige (2004) adds that the history of rap could also be linked to roots in Jamaica, where in the 1960s DJs playing at parties and allied events started picking up microphones and yelling at the crowd to dance. This act which was called toasting is seen as the precursor of rap. Hip hop and its sub-genre of gangster rap are sometimes associated with violence, drugs, anti-social lifestyle as well anti-establishment culture. Specifically, Forman and Neal (2004) note that “hip-hop is full of problematic expressions. It reeks of materialism; it gorges with stereotypes and offensive language: and it spoils with retrogressive views. It is rife with hedonism, and it surely cannot always be said to side with humanistic values”. Such criticism emanates from government, political and religious groups and other institutions in the society. Epps and Dixon (2017), note that many studies had investigated the content of rap music within the context of traditional media. Results show that rap is often laden with antisocial themes such as gang violence, drug abuse, sexual exploitation, online fraud and other vices.

As hip-hop became a worldwide musical phenomenon, it mingled with the local genre such that it resulted in the indigenous blend. These include Ampiano in South Africa and Afro-hip-hop in Nigeria. There is however a common thread across these typologies, which is the appeal to sexual liberation, misogyny, drug abuse, internet fraud and some social vices.

Hip hop Music and Substance Abuse in Nigeria

The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) World Drug report (WDR) for 2021 revealed that around 275 million people used drugs worldwide in 2020, while 36 million suffered from drug use disorders. In Nigeria in 2021, a National Drug Use Survey showed that in Nigeria there were around 14.3 million drug users of which close to three million suffered from drug use disorders (WDR, 2021). Interestingly, while cannabis potency has increased by over four times, the percentage of adolescents who perceived the drug as harmful had reduced by as much as 40 per cent. The 2021 World Drug Report showed that eleven million Nigerians use cannabis. Specifically, cannabis was the most abused substance globally in 2018. In addition, opioids remain the most harmful drug amounting to deaths of about a seven per cent increase over the past decade. There was also a ninety-two per cent increase in women abusing drugs compared to sixty-three per cent among men. For instance, in South Africa 3.7% of the population use cannabis, followed by cocaine (1%), amphetamines (1%), opioids (0.5%), opiates (0.4%), ecstasy-type drugs (0.3%) and prescribed opiates (0.1%).

Drug abuse or substance abuse is viewed as the use of certain chemicals for the purpose of creating pleasurable effects on the brain. In recent years, news of substance abuse among youths has continued to filter out virtually every part of the country. Hip-Hop music and its artists have seemed to begin to make a shift to endorsing the hard drug culture and many hip-hop artists have started to dab into hard drugs. Drugs have unfortunately always been a part of music history despite the growing awareness of the side effects and health concerns related to the abuse of



drugs, many popular musicians continue to use it, but also love to showcase the practice on their social media. Drug addiction is a tragedy in the Nigerian music industry. Drugs were meant for the treatment, prevention or diagnosing of disease and it is a chemical or biological substance, but hip-hop artists are using drugs habitually for a purpose it was not meant for and publicly display and encourage drug abuse in their lyrics and music videos thereby polluting the minds of their viewers who are mostly youths.

Afro-hip-hop is sometimes viewed as promoting drug abuse through lyrics depicting their favourite artists as drug users and videos displaying them sniffing cocaine, heroine and some chemical concoctions' including illicit consumption of tramadol, codeine, Percocet and Rohypnol among others. Yakubu (2018) admits that secular music in Nigeria in the 1990s was laden with content that advanced marijuana abuse and the music from the 2000s promoted drug and alcohol abuse, sexual risk behaviour, misogyny, and sexualized stereotypes among others.

Every song carries a crafted message. Some may be just on frivolities while others may have a more serious tone. For the most part, in Nigerian hip-hop music, the messages are centred on sexuality, drug use, quick money (popularly referred to as hustle) and promotion of foreign, particularly orientation (Onanuga & Onanuga, 2020). A closer assessment of the lyrical content of some songs might reveal this better.

'Wire wire, kin shati lowo (I must have money)'

'Money order, kinshati lowo'

'Bode je ko man marry kin shati lowo (even if it is to marry a white woman, I must have money)'.

These are some of the lyrics from a popular Nigerian song 'Living Things' released in 2017. What this song promotes is 'quick money'. The lyrics suggest that money must be made, by hook or by crook. In a similar song titled 'Foti Foyin (brush your teeth with liquor) implies that "if the victim of your fraudulent transaction pays money, will you brush your teeth with liquor".

Furthermore, alcohol and drugs use are promoted to a large extent, especially in music videos. One of the popular tracks that promote this is "Codeine Diet" by a combination of popular Nigerian artists. Cigarettes, cigars, alcohol, cocaine, codeine, shisha, and other illicit drugs seem to be another selling point. Ikoh et al (2019) in a study of substance abuse among youths found that some of the reasons for drug abuse include lack of parental control, easy access to drugs and the emerging street culture of gangsterism. It also includes peer pressure, the portrayal of drugs as acceptable by celebrities such as musicians and the emerging influence of social media.

Consequently, substance use aside from affecting the individual mental and physical well-being also affects the user's immediate family and society at large. This is because, individuals with substance use problems often become unable to contribute to the economy of their country and depend on their families for sustenance (Chinedu, 2009; Hernandez, et al., 2022). An indirect consequence of the abuse of prescription drugs such as codeine or tramadol in Nigeria is that patients who have genuine health conditions that require treatment with such prescriptions might face a situation of non-availability or difficulty to access the drug.

Music and Youth behaviour

Music is a powerful medium. While that power can be beneficial, it can also have a harmful influence. Music can have many social and psychological impacts and meanings for people at different periods of their development (North & Hargreaves 2008). Abiodun (2017) is of the view



that listening to music usually “establishes a mood, creates emotions and brings about negative or positive responses and establishes a behavioural pattern in individuals which becomes part and parcel of such individual” Music, most likely, has an incredible effect on its audience. Throughout the years, music has been utilized for some of the reasons – training, excitement, agitation, opportunity/freedom of expression and so on. The most well-known and quickest developing music kind in Nigeria (if not on the planet) is hip-hop music. Some, artists use hip-hop music to promote morality and agitate for good governance, an example of which can be seen in the lyrics of his songs Moral Lesson, and This is Nigeria. A large crop of hip-hop artists in the country appear to take thoroughly enjoy lauding sexuality, impropriety, speedy cash and different types of socially and ethically unpalatable topics. These are some of the significant commercial drives of Nigerian hip-hop music. As music becomes increasingly accessible through cell phones, online streaming services and other new technologies, it is important to understand its influence on today’s youth. There appear to be a recreation/remodification of certain values among youths as a result of the consumption of the music. These supposedly renewed values are designated tendencies of youths in contemporary Nigerian society. And these tendencies are located within the framework of what the youths now love to be identified with or without recourse to the mainstream roles and values expected of them. In any case, there appear to be uniform responses from empirical data as regards the specifics of the values emerging from the consumption of multilingual hip-hop. These include the emerging form of dress codes (fashion), liberal sexual orientations, rascality and changing relations with elders through the adoption and use of street codes in communications.

The choice of music, reactions to it and interpretation of it depends on their age, culture and ethnicity. For example, one study found that female youth are more likely than male youth to use music to reflect their emotional state (e.g., listen to sad music when they are feeling down). Male youth are more likely to use music in a stimulating way (e.g., to create a positive image of themselves, or raise their energy level). While some argue that youth listen to music mostly for its entertainment value and pay little attention to the words, one study found that almost 1 in 5 male youth, and 1 in 4 female youth like their favourite songs because of the lyrics. Other studies have found that the more importance youth place on a type of music, the more they pay attention to the lyrics. One group of researchers indicated that although younger listeners may not understand all the lyrics, they can grasp the general message it offers.

Music videos that tell a story (that may or may not be about the song) provide a specific interpretation of the song that is reinforced every time it is seen and heard. Research(when) has indicated that exposure to violence, sexual messages, stereotypes, and substance abuse might produce significant changes in attitudes and behaviors in youth (Hotton, et al., 2019). While studies continue to emerge regarding specific effects on specific types of youth, it has been recognized that the effect of music video messages on youth is dependent on their age, developmental and emotional stage, and the level of exposure.

These studies tell us that youth use music in various ways and learning how your youth uses music, it may help you understand how your youth is feeling or what he/she needs. Because even young children can have some awareness of lyrics or at least the general messages of songs, it is important to know what they are listening to so you can talk to them and find out what they are learning from it. It is important to know that music videos can use both lyrics and visual content to reinforce messages. Exploring with your youth what types of music they listen to and videos they watch can allow you to be more aware of the messages they are regularly encountering. How a youth engages with music and its visual and auditory content can differ according to their developmental stage, exposure, etc. As these things change, it is important to be attentive to how your youth’s engagement with music and its influence on them may also be changing.

In view of the aforementioned, the following objectives were raised in this study:

1. To investigate the rate of exposure to alcohol advertisement among the participants
2. To investigate the major media of exposure to alcohol brands' advertisement
3. To examine students' awareness and perception of "science students" hip-hop song.
4. To explore participants' conceptualization of how the "science students" hip-hop song is perceived to promote substance abuse

METHOD

Participants

The study was a cross-sectional survey and enrolled 223 Nigerian university students recruited online using the snowball sampling technique. The participants whose ages ranged between 19 and 50 years old ($M = 27.03$, $S.D. = 7.68$) comprised 57.4% males, 37.2% females and 5.4% who refused to disclose their sex. Furthermore, the majority of the participants (78.9%) were not married at the time of data collection, while the reported socioeconomic status data indicated that about half (48.9%) were quite well off in terms of wealth which implies they are within the 51-75% range of the country's wealth status.

Instrument

Participants responded to a survey including questions on socio-demographic characteristics, exposure to alcohol advertisement, substance use, and a semi-structured interview exploring the perceived influence of hip-hop songs on substance use.

Procedure

Data collection was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the authors resorted to an online survey because of social distancing measures during the pandemic. A Survey link containing an informed consent document was sent to potential participants to seek their consent for participation in the study. Upon consenting to participate in the study, participants were automatically directed to the survey administered using the Google form. Participants who responded to the survey were encouraged to forward the survey link to their colleagues. To be included in the study, participants must be at least 18 years old and registered undergraduate students in any of the Nigerian universities. Only data of respondents that met the inclusion criteria were subjected to the SPSS v 26 for statistical analysis.

RESULTS

Objective One: To investigate the rate of exposure to alcohol advertisement among the participants

Table 1. Exposure to Alcohol advertisement

	N	%
Lifetime		
Yes	206	92.4
No	9	4.0
Maybe	8	3.6
Past year exposure		
Yes	190	85.2
No	20	9.0
Maybe	13	5.8
Past month exposure		
Yes	179	80.3
No	32	14.3
Maybe	12	5.4

Almost all (92.4%) of the participants responded to having been exposed to alcohol advertisements in their lifetime. Although there is a decrease in the number of participants that reported exposure to alcohol advertisement in the past year and a further decrease in the past month, the majority of the participants have current experience of alcohol advertisement exposure. This suggests the tenacity of the alcohol industry in advertising their products, thus promoting use.

Objective Two: To investigate the major media of exposure to alcohol brands' advertisement

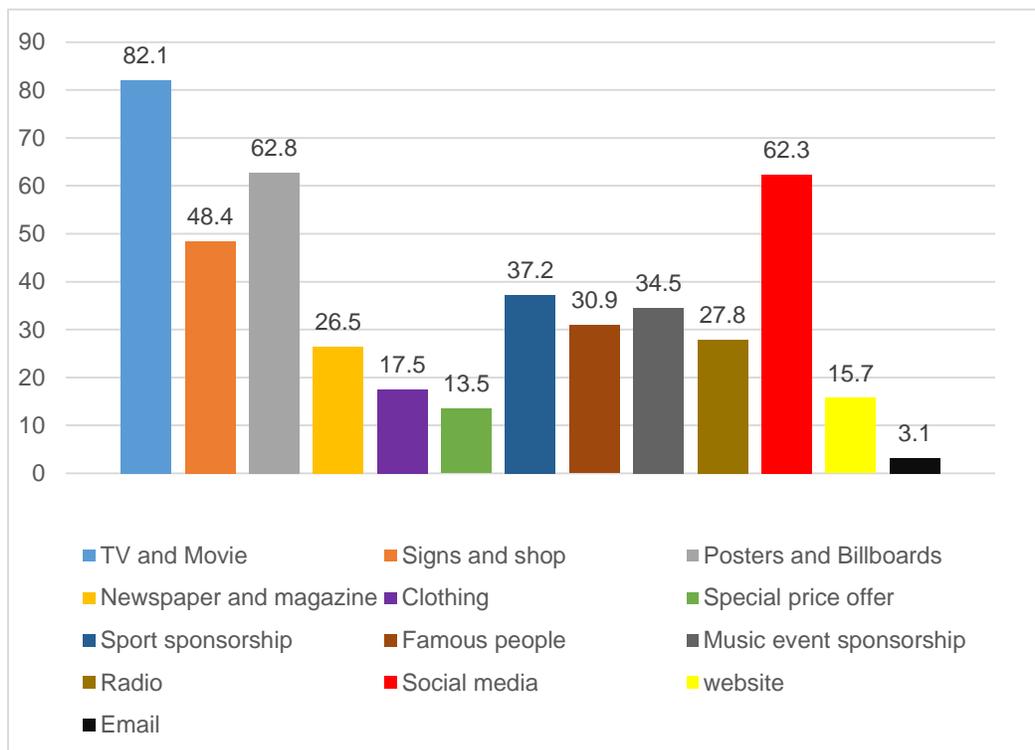


Fig 1. Medium of exposure to alcohol brands' advertisement

The different media used to advertise alcohol products are investigated in this study. The results revealed that people are exposed to alcohol advertisements mostly on TV and in movies, closely followed by posters and billboards, and social media. While none of the respondents reported ever being exposed to alcohol advertisement via SMS, a handful had received unsolicited email notifications (messages) about alcohol products.

Objective Three: To examine students' awareness and perception of "science students" hip-hop song.



Table 2: Awareness and perception of “science students” hip-hop song

	N	%
Are you aware of the song science students?		
Yes	217	97.3
No	6	2.7
Have you ever listened to the song “science students”?		
Yes	210	94.2
No	13	5.8
The song science students promotesw3e3weeeeè substance abuse		
Disagree	22	9.9
Neutral	57	25.6
Agree	62	27.8
Strongly agree	82	36.8

The results obtained in Table two showed the extent to which the participants are aware of the hip-hop song titled “science students” and their perception of the song as a promoter of substance abuse. Interestingly, almost all the students sampled reported they are aware and have listened to the song. The results also revealed that the majority of the participants constituting about 65% of the sample feel that the song encourages people to use alcohol and drugs.

Objective Four: To explore participants’ conceptualization of how the “science students” hip-hop song is perceived to promote substance abuse

**Table 3.** Categories used to conceptualize how the “science students” hip-hop song is perceived to promote substance abuse

Category	Examples of responses
Description/display of substances	<p>The song appears to describe drug use as a cool thing to do.</p> <p>It promotes the use of drugs in the sense that the lyrics of the song itself speaks a lot about the use of drugs and alcohol. More so the video of the song is nothing to write home about, because different types of drugs were displayed</p>
Associating alcohol and drug use with intelligence/academic brilliance (science experiment) and increased performance	<p>The song support drug use because the imagery of the description, the choice of words used, technically glorifies drug use. For example, the title of the song alone is a coded glorification of what being a "Science Student" entails which according to the song is mixing chemicals together in order to get high, with the subconscious societal belief that Science Students are seen as more intelligent and bookish than other students. Who doesn't want to be seen as an intelligent person?</p>
Naming of substances – lyrics	<p>The lyric of the song says a whole lot and encourages alcohol and drug use</p> <p>The part where he says "won ti po chemical po" I just feel it implies him encouraging the said behaviour.</p>
Pairing alcohol and drug use with celebrities/famous people	<p>The song promoted alcohol among student in the sense that while the song was been played the youth has interest in what they see.</p> <p>It promotes alcohol and drug use because the song connoted being high and doing the extra ordinary after intake of alcohol or after smoking marijuana</p>
Normalises and glorifies drug use	<p>Mentioning drugs and making it sound fun</p> <p>The song makes it look like almost all Nigerian youths are engaging in it and therefore it is normal</p>

Conceptualization of the perceived influence of the “science students” hip-hop song on substance abuse was assessed among the study participants with an item requesting them to describe they think the song promotes alcohol and/or drug abuse among Nigerian youth. Table 3 presents the different responses as were provided by the participants and to be meaningful were placed under different categories including description/display of how substances are used, associating alcohol and drug use with intelligence/academic brilliance (science experiment) and performance enhancer, naming of substances – lyrics, pairing alcohol and drug use with celebrities/famous people, and normalizes and glorifies drug use. The responses as expressed by the participants indicated different meanings that were made of the song and how the participants perceive the song in relation to initiation and maintenance of substance use behavior among Nigerian youth.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated exposure to alcohol advertisement, and the perceived influence of the hip-hop song “science student” on alcohol and drug use among Nigerian youths. Exposure to alcohol advertisement and the influence of hip-hop music on alcohol and drug abuse were examined within the context of the established influence of music on youth behaviour and relationship with drugs and other related behaviours. In this study, a high rate of exposure to alcohol advertisements was reported. With 9 in 10 of the participants reporting having been exposed to alcohol advertisements in their lifetime, a significantly high rate of alcohol advertisements targeting young people in Nigeria could be inferred. This finding also has policy implications for the regulation of alcohol advertisement in Nigeria. Previous studies have also established a strong relationship between alcohol advertisement and desire to and actual use of alcohol among the youth (Noel & Babor, 2018; Pettigrew, et al., 2020) and underage population (Sargent & Babor, 2020).

Our findings on the different alcohol advertising media showed that young Nigerians are being exposed to alcohol advertisement via many different sources including traditional posters and billboards, TV and movie, social media, famous people and event sponsorship. It was further established participants are exposed to alcohol advertisement mostly through TV and movie, posters and billboards and social media respectively. While email notification, special price offer and websites are the least channels through which young people receive advertisements for alcohol brands. Our findings align with previous studies documenting different media of exposure to alcohol advertisements (e.g., Carrotte, et al., 2016; Noel & Babor, 2018). More specifically, Aiken and colleagues (2018) in their study reported that young were exposed to alcohol advertisements from an average of seven specific contexts in the past 12 months, with younger adolescents more likely to recall TV and outdoor billboards. In addition, recent findings have shown a dramatic rise in the use of social media in advertising and promoting alcohol use among young people (Barry et al., 2018; Pettigrew et al., 2020). In their study, Barry et al (2018) affirmed that exposure to alcohol-related advertising is consistently linked to adolescent drinking initiation and alcohol-related consequences. The authors further observed that utilizing social media platforms such as Twitter did not only influence use but also the frequency of alcohol use among young people. This result is not surprising as the world has generally witnessed a boom in the usage of social media and social networking tools such as Facebook and Twitter, especially among young people.

Previous evidence about the influence of music on substance abuse especially is resounding (e.g., Yakubu 2018). In this study, it is not surprising that most of the participants, being young people are aware of and had listened to the hip-hop song “science students” which many of them perceive as a song that largely promotes substance abuse. Further exploration of how the participants perceived the song to promote substance abuse revealed common themes such as the display of substances in the music video, pairing substances with famous people, and associating substances with high performance. For instance, the lyrics of songs such as ‘Foti Foyin (brush your teeth with liquor) by a popular Nigerian artist practically glorify and encourages drug use. The artiste was saying “if the victim of your fraudulent transaction pays money, will you brush your teeth with liquor”. In line with our findings, Ikoh (2019) observed that the portrayal of drugs and normalizing drug using behaviours by celebrities especially musicians are one of the major contributing factors to the increasing problem of drug abuse among the youths. Arguing for the influence of music on youth risk-taking and antisocial behaviour.



Limitation of the study

One limitation of this study is that the researchers only focused on Afro-hip hop genre of music leaving out other forms of musical performance. It is therefore apparent that other studies can explore the nexus between drug abuse and musical preferences among youths.

In addition, the sample used for this study was drawn from mainly students in tertiary institutions. The implication of this is that education could also have played a part in their exposure to alcohol advertising and hip-hop music. Therefore, studies can be carried out among sub-groups in the society such as commercial motor drivers, sex workers, entertainers and students in post-primary schools.

Also, only a sample of above two hundred respondents was used for this study. A larger sample could have allowed for better generalizability of findings. This will be addressed if further studies are carried out with a larger sample size.

Conclusion

This study investigated enquired into alcohol advertisement, and respondents perception of the influence of the hip-hop song “science student” on alcohol and drug use among Nigerian youths. Findings of the study showed that youths have a high rate of exposure to alcohol advertisements. The implications are that since youths are susceptible to influence by the mass media including music and advertising policies need to be implemented or put in place to monitor alcohol advertisements and songs that centre of alcohol use.

In addition, findings revealed that respondents were exposed to alcohol advertising for myriad reasons, it is therefore germane that warnings on the health implications of abuse of alcohol should be included in such advertisements. Furthermore, this study found that social media platforms were major sources of advertising information by respondents. The implication for policy is that alcoholic advertising on the social media should be regulated internationally by governments and internet service providers. This will help to curtail the negative effect of alcohol advertising on the social media

It is also important that policies be put in place by governments in different countries to control the content of alcohol advertisements, especially, the trivialization of the effect of alcohol advertisements. Also, the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON), National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and other similar regulatory agencies across the world need to strictly evaluate the content of alcohol advertisements and Afro-hip hop genre.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets presented in this study are available upon reasonable request.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed to the conception and design of the study. All authors contributed to the acquisition of data. SA contributed to the analysis and interpretation of data. All authors contributed to the drafting of the manuscript. All authors contributed to the critical revision of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript for publication.



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