

The Lifestyle of Hip Life Musicians and Its Influence on the Ghanaian Youth

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Abstract

This study sort to find out some of the negative effect the lifestyle of hip life musicians have on Ghanaian youth in two senior high schools in the Ashanti and Central regions of Ghana. Through quota sampling procedure twenty students were selected from the two schools. The research instrument used was open- ended questionnaire. Data collected was analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that most youth are into hip life because they believe it is modern fashioned. Also, the lyrics and rhythms are consistent with the jargons they use as well as the dances they do. A few mentioned that the lifestyle of the musicians have brought nothing but indiscipline and irresponsible behaviour among the youth and this can be seen in the way they dress, talk and even think. Similarly, the lifestyle of these musicians have greatly influenced Ghanaian culture in that most of the youth due to the lifestyle of these musicians have adopted foreign cultures which is making it difficult for the youth to adopt to Ghanaian culture. The researchers therefore recommend that the younger generation of musicians should be made aware of how their lifestyle is affecting the youth and Ghanaian culture negatively. Also there should be strict rules and regulations to govern the general lifestyle of all musicians as well as their lyrics and video clips. Hip life musicians should be educated to serve as positive role models for the youth since majority of them are in the age group of the youth.

INTRODUCTION

The world of music is growing at a faster pace and Ghana as a nation is not left out. Though the authorities in charge of Ghana music industry are doing their best to raise Ghana music and Musicians to a higher level and also to educate the youth who are the nation's future leaders through music, the lifestyle of some of the hip life musicians is nothing good to write home about. Music has a great impact on human life as well as some animals. As human beings dance to the tune of music, animals like snakes when they hear the rhythm of music try to find out where it is coming from so as to get closer and enjoy it better. Most people spend much time listening to music or watch musicians perform. This shows how music serves as a source of tool for entertainment. Some have argued that music is a creative art and so the fellow who creates it must be allowed to express their talent in any manner they deem fit; but since the work of the musician does not stay with him or her and ultimately finds its way to the public, it is proper that decorum is applied when that work is being created [1].

TYPES OF MUSIC IN GHANA

According to [7], there are four main types of music heard in Ghana today: Traditional music, Contemporary music, Gospel music and imported music.

Traditional music

Traditional music and dance are ritualized events occurring at funerals, ceremonies, festivals, weddings and other public and private gatherings. In the southern part of Ghana drums are mostly used in the performance of traditional music and dance, while string instruments and the calabash are more used in the north [7]. According to [7] during festivals and other ceremonies, the traditional music played and performed are those that are associated with rituals that tell a story or re-enacts an event of historical significance to the tribe.

Contemporary music

Contemporary music from Ghana is mostly comprised of 'Highlife' and 'Hip-life' musical styles. Highlife music was first recorded in the 1930's and got to its peak in 1950's through 1970's. They mostly use our traditional percussive beat and combines either the European, American or Carribean rhythms. [7] noted that Hip-life is a newer style of music that fuses the Highlife beat with that from American Hip-Hop and Rap. It is presently the most popular style of music among the younger people and can be heard anywhere in Ghana.

Gospel music

The creation, performance, significance, and even the definition of gospel music vary according to culture and social context. Gospel music is composed and performed for many purposes, including aesthetic pleasure, religious or ceremonial purposes, and as an entertainment product. Ghana being a religious country has a lot of Gospel music to her credit [7]. Gospel music is mostly played during church services and other Christian ceremonies like Christmas, Easter and others. The types include contemporary gospel, urban contemporary gospel, Southern gospel, and modern gospel music commonly known as praise and worship. These forms are sung by choristers, individual artists, etc.

Imported styles

American Hip-Hop, R&B, and Country music are some of the most encountered foreign music imports heard in Ghana in the larger towns and cities especially. Another very popular music is the Reggae music. It is non-American music and can be heard anywhere in the country [7].

Some importance of music as researched by [4]

1. It is the Key to Creativity. Music in general fuels the mind and thus fuels our creativity. A Creative mind has the ability to make discoveries and create innovations. The greatest minds and thinkers like Albert Einstein, Mozart, and Frank Lloyd Wright all had something in common in that they were constantly exploring their imagination and creativity. Listening to instrumental music challenges one to listen and tell a story about what one hears. In the same sense, playing a musical instrument gives one the ability to tell the story without words. Both require maximum right brain usage which not only exercises ones creativity but also ones intellect.
2. It makes Education more enjoyable. It can be used in the classroom for memorization, for self-discipline, keep children focused and responsible.
3. Music has Spiritual Powers. No one really knows where Music came from but there are many theories that suggest music predates the existence of Mankind. One of the most commonly known uses for music was religious and sacred tribal events. In Mayan civilization music was used in celebration of a victory at war and even at the burial of influential figures.
Even today, many people claim that music is the key to God and to a holy, more fulfilling life through the Church.
4. Music can create a Mood and make you feel Emotional.

There are moments where a song has made people particularly sad or very excited and happy. No one really knows why or where it comes from but there are many studies that have been done to show that there is an agreement of which emotions pertain to certain scales, chords, and harmonies. Music Can Connect People. It enables people become more united and stable. Finally, [3] mentioned that music can also be used as a therapy. Help clients with serious problems improve or maintain their health.

How the lifestyle of hip-life musicians have influenced Ghanaian culture and youth

Hip-life is a newer and now the most popular style of music that combines the Highlife beat with influences from American Hip-Hop and Rap. It is by far the most popular style of music among the younger people and can be heard almost everywhere in Ghana. The popular artists of Hip-life are young and this makes the youth become more glued to their style of play and music.

With regards to how the lifestyle of hip life musicians and their music have influenced Ghanaian culture, the researchers found out that it has imparted both negatively and positively. Negatively, [2] in an interview with Jesse Weaver Shipley, an Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Director of Africana Studies at Bard College revealed that hip-life is not something that everyone has taken to. The author noted that there has been a strong reaction against it. Some saw hip-life as foreign, as influencing society negatively in terms of morality, as fostering open sexuality, as being about smoking pot and as being a negative moral influence on the youth. These are bad influences which some Ghanaians will say are not local traditions.

Similarly, [4] also mentioned that music has the power to influence the way we dress, think, speak, and live our lives. Profane and violent lyrics can have a negative influence on children. According to [5] various studies have shown a correlation between undesirable behaviours and lyrics describing or espousing violent, sexiest or illegal activities. The American Academy of Pediatrics cites several studies as parts of its 2009 "Impact of Music, Music lyrics and Music videos on children and youth" a report that shows that there is a connection between violent lyrical, visual content and aggression, sexual content and sexual activity, sexiest content and sexiest attitudes. Some studies also show that an increase in risk taking behaviour and drug use can be associated with listening to certain music.

Some songs are seen as being very sexually promiscuous, as presenting female sexuality in a way that was not publicly appropriate in Ghanaian society [2]. In an exclusive interview with one musician in Ghana, He noted that the culture associated with hip-life comes with the 50cents culture, such as dress code; thus wearing of big chains, and wearing of trousers to the hips. He said there was also the language and attitudes which are contrary to the Ghanaian culture "I don't like hip-life because I don't like the way they dress". Adding that "we should be able to promote and protect our own culture and this is not about being patriotic but it is about economics". He said "we should be able to create our own music with our own clothing, and fabrics, that way we would be creating more jobs". He expressed concern that the youth of Ghana who are the future of the country and music are buying into hip-life instead of mainstream high life.

In view of these, the study therefore seek to ascertain the importance of music in the lives of humans, factors that influence the youth to develop so much interest in Hip-life music, the effect the music has on the youth and how it has affected the Ghanaian culture.

METHODS

A cross-sectional design involving qualitative approach was adopted whereby the descriptive survey design was used by the researcher to investigate the influence the lifestyle of Ghanaian hip life musicians have on the youth. The target population were all students of Winneba Senior High School and Agona Seventh Day Adventist Senior High School in the central and Ashanti Regions of Ghana. The researcher targeted all students of the selected schools out of which 10 second year students were selected from each school. In all, 20 second year students were selected for the study. Quota sampling was used as the sampling technique to select 10 second year students from each school which consisted of 6 boys and 4 girls. With this, traits like gender, class and age were considered. Second year male and female students between the ages of 16-19 were chosen. The class register which contain students name, date of birth and gender was used to select the first 6 males who fall within the ages of 16-19 and also the first 4 females who are within the ages of 16-19. Open-ended questionnaire was used as the research instrument to elicit response. This is because they provide the respondents the opportunity to give a more complete and detailed answer [6]. Permission was then sought from the Head teachers of both schools to administer the questionnaire. Also, consent forms were signed by the students to show their approval to help in the study. Two days was used in each school to administer the questionnaire. In analyzing the data, the researchers used frequency counts for the bio data whiles the responses for the questionnaires were analyzed thematically.

RESULTS

Eight students of the total respondents were females while twelve (12) of them were males. The researchers used more male students because though adolescent boys and girls show much interest in hip-life music, the boys can be said to be into it more than the girls and even in Ghana the male hip-life artists are more than the females. Nine of the students were between 16-17 years of age, while 11 were between the ages of 18-19. This confirms that student respondents were in their teens.

The Importance of Music in the Lives of People

On the issue of the importance people derive from music, most respondents gave out their response that music serves as a source of tool for entertainment and that humans cannot do without music in this world of ours. In Agona SDA Senior High School a male respondent wrote "Music serves as a source of entertainment to humans; humans can't do without music". Another boy from Winneba Senior High School also wrote: "Music prevents boredomness and consoles mankind when he/she is sad, thus it serves as a source of happiness and entertainment".

Others also gave response that music reduces stress and also helps to relax the mind thus when one is stressed up or too tired of doing something, the person after sitting back and enjoying some music realizes he or she is relieved from his or her stress. Also some people even in their state of anger or anxiety calm down after hearing the rhythms of some music and relax just to enjoy that music.

This is how a female student from Winneba Senior High School stated it "Music reduces stress". Another student from Agona Seventh Day Adventist Senior High School stated this, "Humans sometimes gain advice and lessons from music". Some also talked about the fact that music serves as a source of motivation and inspiration to humans.

In response to how the world will be without music, more than half of the respondents gave a response that the world would be very dull and boring, since music serves as one of the

powerful tool for entertaining people and also the world would be in a serious dilemma without music. A female student from Winneba Senior High School wrote this "Without music the world would be very boring". Another says, the world without music, what a dull world that would be". This was from a male student from Agona Seventh Day Adventist Senior High School.

Other students also noted that the world without music will be lifeless because music is life. Human beings without music are like living creatures without food and water, which means they will surely not survive. A female respondent from Winneba Senior High School wrote "The world without music will be like humans without food and water". This confirms the assertion that music is very important in the lives of humans and humans cannot live without music.

Factors that Influence the Youth to develop much Interest in Hip-life Music

Another theme that emerged was the factors that influence youth to develop much interest in Hip-life music. Most respondents gave the reasons to be that hip-life music is more interesting to listen to because they have good rhythms and excellent lyrics. "Hip-life music is music with good tunes, good rhythms and excellent lyrics" a male student of Agona Seventh Day Adventist Senior High School wrote. Another student from Winneba Senior High School who happens to be a female also stated that "The music is more alive and keeps you going".

Some also noted that hip-life music is the only modern music that goes with the current dances and that the current dances can only be danced with hip-life songs. A male student said: "Hip-life songs go with the current dances like Azonto and Alqaeda (present day modern dances)". Another student responded: "It is the type of music that is played more all over the country". Other respondents also raised the concern that hip-life music is listened to more because they are mostly played in every part of the country thus on the streets, night clubs, hotels and bars and also is heard more on occasions like parties, funerals, Christmas and others. Most of the youth believe that every generation has its pattern of the kind of food they enjoy most, the kind of dressing they do, the slogan that is present at that time, the kind of dance they do and above all the kind of music they listened to. So high-life is for the older generation and not the modern youth of today. A female student from Winneba Senior High School stated "High-life music is for the oldies", a male student from Agona Seventh Day Adventist Senior High School also wrote: "It is outmoded" and "It is old fashioned". This was stated by a male student of Winneba Senior High School.

Others also think that high-life does not come with hot rhythms and lyrics like that of hip-life and so makes it listening boring. Aside this, it is difficult to perform the current dances with high-life music. It can be concluded that a lot of factors influence the youth to develop much interest in hip-life music as one of them is that hip-life is played more than the other types of music and so has become part of the youth.

Effect the lifestyle of hip-life Musicians have on the Youth

More than half of the respondents wrote that the youth in Ghana have copied a habit of indecent dressing by both boys and girls. Others have also imitated the habit of smoking and drinking from these hip-life musicians. A female respondent from Winneba Senior High School noted: "The habits of smoking and drinking have been copied by the youth". Another male student from Agona Seventh Day Adventist Senior High School also stated that. "The use of abusive words by hip-life musicians is influencing the youth negatively". Other students also said the youth have copied the habit of insults and the use of abusive words from hip-life musicians. Some also think the increase in rape cases and teenage pregnancy in Ghana is as a

result of the youth watching the video clips of these musicians which are full of pornographic pictures as well as listening to their songs which are also full of profane words. These were excerpts:

“Most hip-life videos made by hip-life musicians are full of pornographic pictures”.

A male student from Winneba Senior High School also stated: “Some profane words used in their songs have become normal for the youth to use in their conversations with their friends”. Another female respondent from the same school also wrote that: “The youth nowadays have copied the habit of insults and the use of profane words that comes out of their songs and sometimes the bad things done in most of their videos”. These were from two females and a male respectively from Agona SDA High School and Winneba Senior High School.

On the other hand, few students also think the lifestyle of hip-life musicians have no negative effect on the youth in that it has not brought any bad influence on the lives of the youth. On the issue of how the life style of hip life musicians have affected the youth and Ghana in general, most of the respondents view was that the life-styles of these musicians have brought nothing but indiscipline and irresponsible acts among the youth. This has brought about non-law abiding individuals in the country in the sense that it is becoming difficult for people to obey and abide by rules and regulations without strict supervision especially among the youth. In the school setting for instance, it is very difficult nowadays getting students to perform their duties without supervision. A male respondent from Agona Seventh Day Adventist Senior High School stated that “It has brought about indiscipline among the youth”. A female student from the same school also wrote “It has made the youth irresponsible”.

Others also wrote that the youth due to this have become very disrespectful and show unnecessary pride. This act is making it difficult for them to humble themselves to learn things they do not know from older people and their disrespectful nature is also making the older ones feel reluctant to teach them things they ought to know. While few of them spend very little time with their books, most do not attend to their books at all. In view of that, poor academic performance has increased in our schools due to some of these problems. Others also talked about how the life style of these musicians have brought about social vices like fighting, the use of abusive words and other aggressive behaviour among others. A male student from Winneba Senior High School stated that it has brought about increase in social vices. On the contrary, a male respondent from Winneba Senior High School noted that he has not noticed any negative effect the life style of hip-life musicians have on the youth.

The report from most of the students clearly shows that the youth who are said to be the nation’s future leaders are not patronizing in things that will make them good and competent leaders and this puts the nation at risk if nothing is done about it.

With regard to Ghanaian culture, most respondents said there has been a lot of culturally unacceptable behaviour put up by the youth due to the life style of hip-life musicians. Some of these are smoking, drinking of alcohol, drug usage, indecent dressing like the wearing of very tight dresses by the girls and also wearing of earrings by the boys, as well as indecent haircuts which are culturally unaccepted in Ghana. This is how a female student from Agona Seventh Day Adventist Senior High School put it, “Exposing parts of their bodies and the way they dance in their videos”. A male student from Winneba Senior High School also put it this way; “Smoking of Indian herbs and cigarette and use of abusive words in their lyrics”.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Apart from music serving its major purpose of entertaining humans, it also serves as a way to relieve stress, tension and boredom. Some music also helps humans to gain advice and moral lessons which goes a long way to help the individuals and his or her nation at large. Also music plays the role of motivating and inspiring humans in that, most people after listening to some music get the zeal to continue any good thing they are doing. Some music lyrics also motivate and inspire people from giving up in life. Music aside all these also serve as a medium for communication throughout the world. This is because music is played and heard everywhere you go. In our recent world, there has been so many means like the radio, television, internet and others by which humans can play and listen to music. This can be said to be one of the factors contributing to the world becoming a global village.

All these points were raised by respondents and can be said to be in line with the points raised by [4] on the importance of music.

It was realized that the youth are into hip-life music more because they think it is a kind of music that has risen up with them. Thus a kind of music that has come in their time, in their generation. Some youth believe that because hip-life is for them, they carry some sort of lyrics and rhythms that are in line with the jargons they use, the dances they do and others. Most of them also think that hip-life musicians are very creative in the sense that they are able to dress, act and come out with music and video clips that are in connection with what most of the adolescents want. Most youth believe that hip-life has features that cannot be ignored because of the vehemence with which they attract attention to themselves that is, the extremity of the body language by the musicians and also the dress code cannot be derived from high-life music. This is consistent with [7] on the issue of how the hip-life is a fusion of the local high life and European or American rhythms; so more of the youth identify with it because of the foreign blend i.e. lyrics, dressing and dancing.

The lifestyles of hip-life musicians have numerous effects on the youth. How these musicians lead their lives have influenced the way most of the youth dress, talk, think and lead their lives as well. It was reported by respondents that the life style of hip-life musicians and their music have brought nothing but indiscipline and irresponsible behaviour in the lives of the youth. This is seen in the way the youth these days dress, talk and even think. It was also said that the youth aside this show disrespectful attitudes towards older people which is affecting their ability to learn new things from them. The listening and watching of the video clips of these musicians which are full of pornographic pictures has raised the case of sexual misconduct among the youth. This in turn has brought about increase in teenage pregnancy and most of the youth dropping out of school. The fact that the youth spend most of their time to watch and listen to these musicians can be said to be one of the reasons for their poor academic performance in school. Similar points were raised by [4, 2, 5] which shows that the views of the respondents are not different from what was reviewed in the literature.

The life style of hip-life musicians have greatly influenced Ghanaian culture in the extent that the wearing of earrings and big chains by adolescent boys cannot be said to be a cultural practice of any of the tribes in Ghana. The use of left hand by these musicians when they are performing is an act which is highly frowned upon in Ghana but has been copied by the youth. Women exposing themselves in video clips of these musicians as well as drug usage by them to be able to perform tirelessly are all in contradiction with Ghanaian culture. The profane and abusive words they use in their music which most of them have become a slogan for the youth to use at anytime and anywhere are not culturally accepted in Ghana [1].

In view of the findings and Discussions made it would be suggested that the young generation of musicians in the country must be guided by the older ones to follow the footsteps of their seniors who are doing well to preserve and propagate the progressive Ghanaian cultural values in their creative efforts.

Also, the younger generation of musicians must be made to know that their tendency to project the hip-life music which is a fraught with much negative cultural values is a danger and constitute an impediment to the healthy advancement of the nation.

Another is that, the Musicians Union of Ghana (MUSIGA) must come out with strict rules and regulations to govern the general life style of all musicians as well as their music lyrics and video clips including those who are not members of MUSIGA as far as their music compositions are concerned.

Also, there should be an imposition of sanctions such as fines, suspensions, expulsion and others on members who are found guilty in various ways in the course of their functions.

Another point is that parents and guardians are encouraged to take an active role in monitoring the type of music to which their children are exposed to and to be aware of the music they purchase.

Hip-life musicians should be educated to serve as positive role models for the youth since majority of them are in the age group of these youth.

Also, since the youth have developed much interest in hip-life music and musicians, they can use their platforms to produce music and videos with more positive things about relationships, racial harmony, drug avoidance, non-violent conflict resolution, sexual abstinence, pregnancy prevention and avoidance of promiscuity.

Additionally, teachers should be a check on students by being involved in the social life of students under their care. For example, during entertainment nights, teachers should be present to monitor and supervise the kind of activities that go on there.

Also, counsellors should organize guidance programmes to educate the youth on the negative influence the music and life-style of most hip-life musicians are having on them and the nation at large.

Last but not least, the authorities in charge of Ghana Music Awards should consider including the general attitude of musicians in their criteria for awarding them instead of basing it on the sell out and popularity of their music alone.

This study limits its area of coverage to the Form 2 students of Agona Seventh Day Adventist and Winneba Senior High Schools in the Ashanti and Central Regions of Ghana respectively. Similar investigations could therefore be carried out in other schools in different regions. Such an exercise will throw more light on the findings of this study.

Further research on the effect of popular music lyrics and music videos on children and adolescents could be carried out using different variables of test methods.

Investigations on how the Ghanaian High life music will be sustained to enable Ghana make a significant impact and also gain immensely from the international music industry could also be carried out.

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