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Blending music and drugs: The depiction of substances and substance use in Kamba Benga music since 2000

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ABSTRACT

Studies have underscored the power of music to influence people's attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions. Certain genres of music convey cultural norms regarding substance use and drinking behavior. Nevertheless, some types of music appear to glorify substance use. This paper interrogated the depiction of substances and substance use in selected Benga music videos released by Kamba musicians. We argue that most Kamba Benga music videos contain explicit references to substances of one kind or another. We contend that enhancement motivations, usually related to heightened levels of substance use, appear more in the selected Benga music videos. We maintain that the majority of the videos analyzed associate substance use with positive qualities such as increased sexual pleasure and high social status. We further ascertain that a significant number of videos do not attempt to connect substance use to any form of consequences. Since, according to Gerbner's Cultivation Theory, messages from television or videos influence people who watch them frequently, we conclude that Benga music videos produced by leading Kamba musicians expose viewers considerably to substance use, and therefore shape their opinions about it.

KEYWORDS: substance use, visual substance appearance, verbal substance reference, motivations, associations, consequences

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1.0 Introduction

Benga is a homegrown Kenyan music that derives its form from the use of local languages and dances. The music style combines traditional rhythms and instruments with the strings of acoustic and electric guitars (Shepherd, Horn & Laing, 2005). Largely, lively fast-paced rhythms, throbbing bass, and a distinctive guitar style characterize Benga music. A sharp solo melody guitar and supporting rhythm guitar lines harmonize the vocal melodies. The vocal parts interchange melodic lines with the solo guitar, before releasing danceable tunes in musical peaks (Graham, 1992). At the height of the Benga frenzy in the 1970s and 1980s, recording artists standardized these Benga characteristics when they started using the same studio instruments for recording (Shepherd, et al.).

Luo musicians from western Kenya invented Benga music in the early 1960s, and the genre evolved throughout the 1970s to become the most popular music in Kenya. Benga reached its peak in the mid-1980s, although it remains a popular style. The Luo have maintained their standing as the originators of the genre. However, Luhya, Kikuyu and Kamba musicians have all fostered their distinct forms (Born, 2012). The most decorated Kenyan Benga performer from the Lake Victoria region was D. O. Misiani and his DO7 Shirati Jazz. Mboya (2019) describes Okatch Biggy as the most significant Benga artiste of the 1990s. The most illustrious Benga artiste among the Luhya has been Sukuma bin Ongaro. Other notable Kenyan Benga musicians include Collela Mazee, Joseph Kamaru, Osito Kalle, Aluoch Jamaranda, Dola Kabarry, and Prince July.

This paper, however, focused on Benga music videos produced by selected Kamba Benga artists since 2000. The Kamba people, who constitute about 10 per cent of Kenya's population, are a Bantu ethnic group who mainly live in the area commonly called Ukambani. The area extends from Nairobi to Tsavo, and it comprises the counties of Makueni, Kitui and Machakos. The Kamba people also form the second-largest ethnic group in several other counties including Nairobi and Mombasa. Kakai Kilonzo and Francis Danger dominated benga music in Ukambani in the 1970s and 1980s. The younger generation of Benga musicians includes Ken wa Maria, Alex Kasau, Vusya Ungu, Maima and Kativui. There is a broadly held opinion that the majority of Kamba Benga musicians promote substance use and generally Kenya's drug menace in their music.

The music video, which combines music and filming, is one of the inventions that fashioned major changes in the music industry in the 1980s. The launching of the 24-hour music television, MTV, in 1981 popularized modern music videos. Since then, the most viewed clips on YouTube have been music videos (Marcovitz, 2012). The year 2000 was important to this study because it marked the beginning of the proliferation of television stations in Kenya. These stations introduced hip-hop and other music genres into the Kenyan music scene.

1.1 Background to the Study

Researchers in various academic disciplines have interrogated diverse aspects of substance use and the effects substances have on individuals, families, health, crime, and employment. Many of these studies, irrespective of the researcher's discipline, highlight the importance of creating awareness about the social and health problems associated with substances and addiction. The studies majorly describe different methods of effectively preventing and mitigating challenges associated with substance abuse. Substance use constitutes a serious problem among Kenyans. The most abused substances in the country are alcohol, marijuana (cannabis), tobacco and miraa (khat). According to Ndeti 2001, there are also isolated cases of shisha (hookah), cocaine, heroin, and hallucinogens. Being a mirror of the prevailing culture, literature has made literary references to popular attitudes toward substance use and addiction from the earliest writings. Literary artists explore various standpoints on human experience, including thematic content related to substances and addiction. Studies have repeatedly shown that dance music and substances have traditionally gone hand in hand. Many genres of popular music refer to alcohol and other substances. Musicologists and other scholars, for instance, have documented the use of diverse genres of pop music, including reggae, hip-hop, punk, and hard rock to promote substances. The power of music and its appeal to consumers to respond to its message has often raised concerns about the potential of music to encourage substance use through favorable depictions of the substances in song lyrics and images. Music that tends to legitimize, trivialize, or glorify drugs might indicate that the consumption of these substances bears no

adverse effects.

On the other hand, music can be a determining factor in the formation of human character. Some studies highlight the role certain music plays in combating substance use and addiction. Such music depicts substance use and addiction as repulsive, injurious, and socially unacceptable. Britan (2004) states that all music extorts from the consumer an intelligent response to the imagery and ideals, and so the effect depends more on the mental input of the hearer than on the music. Some song lyrics and videos, therefore, can pass on cultural norms concerning substance use and drinking behavior.

Scholars, however, have devoted little effort to the interrogation of the involvement of Kenyan Benga musicians in the promotion of substance use by either alluding to substances or propagating messages and themes that appear to glorify substances. This is despite a widely held public perception that Benga music influences the perpetuation of Kenya's drug menace. In most towns in Kenya, almost every major pub has some makeshift Benga band that performs to revelers mainly on weekends. It is likely, therefore, that Benga music influences substance use. What this influence really is and how significantly it may induce substance use and addiction is, however, open to debate. In this regard, this paper examined the portrayal of substances and substance use in selected Kamba Benga music.

2.0 Literature Review

This section reviewed existing literature on the relationship between substance use and popular music. Specifically, the section examined studies that sought to determine the frequency of references to substances in songs, ascertain the kind of substances referred to most frequently, establish the context of substance use in music lyrics, and find out the motivations and consequences that we may link to substance use in music. Concerning frequency, a study undertaken by Roberts, Henriksen, & Christenson (1999) showed that although visual appearances of substances were mainly absent from music videos, verbal references to the substances occurred in 20 percent of the videos. Alcohol appeared visually in 37 percent of the videos and 19 percent made verbal references. Forty-five percent of the videos, however, portray characters consuming alcohol. Hard liquor or mixed drinks were more likely to appear in the videos that portrayed alcohol than wine or beer, with 59 percent of these videos portraying hard liquor or mixed drinks, 46 percent depicting wine or champagne, and 45 percent showing beer.

Tobacco appeared in 21 percent of the videos. Eighteen of these videos portray characters explicitly consuming tobacco, and five of them make verbal reference to the substance. In videos that portray tobacco, cigarettes appeared in 60 percent of them, cigars in 51 percent, and pipes in 6 percent. In the music videos examined in this study, it is obvious that whenever substances appear in the videos, the characters are more likely to use them. Additionally, liquor brands that contain high alcohol content seem to feature more in the music.

During scenes in which the lead singer was acting rather than singing or playing an instrument, he was largely more likely to be the person who was indulging in substance use than other characters. Lead singers used tobacco in 13 percent of the videos while other characters used it in 9 percent. According to Durant et al. (1997), the lead singer in music videos that portrayed tobacco and alcohol use was twice as likely to smoke and three times as likely to drink as a background singer. Likewise, the lead singer was more likely to be the person smoking tobacco or drinking alcohol than a background actor was during scenes in which the lead singer was acting rather than singing or playing an instrument. The study throws light on the significant role played by the lead singer in promoting substance use. The study denoted that while the videos were more likely to portray alcohol and tobacco visually, they were more likely to refer to other substances verbally. In videos in which no substances explicitly appeared, visual allusions to drugs occurred generally in the form of pantomiming the rolling and smoking of a joint.

Rap songs mentioned substances more commonly (63%) than other genres of music (10%). The most commonly mentioned substance was marijuana, which appeared in 63 percent of the songs that reference substances. The findings seem to support Hudak's (2020) description of marijuana as the drug of choice among

celebrated musicians. According to him, the lyrics of pop songs including reggae, hip-hop, punk, and hard rock mention marijuana by name or allusion. Famous musicians such as Bob Marley and Bob Dylan attributed their creative genius to marijuana. It is important to note that the legal status varies from one country to another, so the findings may not apply in countries like Kenya where the law prohibits possession and use of marijuana.

In a study carried out by Roberts et al, alcohol appeared in 17 percent of the songs analyzed, and tobacco in 3 percent. Both substances appeared most frequently in Rap music. A study by Primack, Dalton & Carroll (2008) which analyzed 279 popular hits appearing on the Billboard rated alcohol as the most referenced substance, followed by marijuana use. The study revealed that tobacco use accounted for the least number of references to substance use. References to explicit use of alcohol, marijuana, and other substances varied significantly by song genre, with Rap music containing the most references at 77 percent, country music at 36 percent, R&B and hip-hop at 20 percent, and rock at 14 percent. A study by Blocker, Fahey & Tyrrell (2003) pointed out that alcohol played a role in the development of rock and roll music in America. Musicians performed this music in nightclubs that served unadulterated spirits, cocktails and beer and the musicians themselves often got inebriated during performances. These studies, though focusing on song genres that are popular in other parts of the world, inspired a similar study aimed at establishing the relationship between substance use and popular music in Kenya.

According to Primack et al., the motivations for substance use implied most frequently in most of the songs analyzed were peer pressure, addiction, mood management, and sexual and financial motivations. The motivations differed significantly according to song genre. Sexual motivations were most common in R&B, hip-hop and rap music. Mood management was most frequent in rock, pop, and country songs. Financial motivations were highest in rap, R & B and hip-hop. Rock songs commonly depicted addiction. Although Primack et al. based their study on pop music, the results provoked a similar study based on Kenyan Benga music.

Researchers have commonly associated substance use with sex/eroticism, partying, affluence, violence, drug trafficking, and humor. According to Roberts et al, alcohol use was associated with sexual activity in 34 percent of the videos that referenced it. The study established that sex/eroticism featured more in videos in which alcohol appeared (39%) than in videos in which alcohol did not appear (12%). Sex was more likely to be a major theme in videos that included alcohol (25%) than in videos that did not incorporate alcohol (9%). Substance use was associated with wealth or luxury in 20 percent of the videos in which substances appeared, and 13 percent of the videos linked it to crime or violence. Most associations differed significantly by genre. Humor, for example, was much more commonly associated with substance use in country and pop songs than in rap and rock songs. Drug trafficking was common among rap songs but was not found in other genres. These studies show that substances and substance use in pop music are more likely to be associated with positive attributes than with negative ones. The studies triggered the necessity for similar studies based on different song genres.

Psychologists categorize the consequences of substance use as mental, emotional, physical, social, legal, financial, and sexual. In Robert et al study, out of the song videos analyzed, 19 percent depicted the consequences of substance use. The study did not mention whether these consequences were negative or positive. In the study by Primack et al, 16 percent of the videos examined portrayed more negative than positive consequences, whereas 68 percent showed more positive than negative consequences. According to the study, 48 percent of the songs portrayed positive social consequences as compared to only eight, which depicted negative consequences. Sexual, emotional, and financial consequences were also more likely to be positive than negative. However, legal consequences were more likely to be negative than positive. Mental and physical consequences were more likely to be negative than positive. Hudak states that in the instances when substances appear in music videos, relatively few consequences of their use materialize, and quite often, substance use appears as a part of everyday life. Whereas these studies reveal attempts by pop musicians to link substance use with some negative consequences, the musicians' propensity towards glamorizing substances tends to water down these efforts.

Overall, most of the literature reviewed, though majorly focusing on pop music, explicates the symbiotic

relationship between substance use and music. All the studies reveal that the most commonly referenced substances are alcohol and marijuana, even though tobacco also features quite prominently. The studies show that in most cases when substances appear in a video, characters, mainly the lead singer, consume them. Although motivations for substance use differed according to song genre, studies reviewed cited the major ones as peer pressure, mood management, and financial motivations. The studies associated substance use mainly with sexual activity and affluence, although this also depends on the song genre. According to the literature reviewed, the song videos reveal both positive and negative consequences of substance use. The current study built on these findings as it examined the relationship between substance use and Benga music.

3.0 Theoretical Framework

We grounded the study on a combination of Gerbner's (1976) Cultivation Theory and Sutherland's (2021) Differential Association Theory. Cultivation is a sociocultural theory regarding television's role in shaping viewers' perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and values. According to Gerbner, watching a great deal of television is associated with a tendency to form specific conceptions of reality that correspond with the medium's most pervasive images and values (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999). Theorists expanded the theory to rope in all media, including music videos. The choice of Cultivation Theory as a theoretical framework hinged on the assumption that the videos reviewed presented images and conceptions that tend to endear viewers towards the consumption of the substances. Media influences people's perception of social reality. Therefore, many policymakers and community leaders have often faulted musicians and their music videos for disseminating undesirable values to viewers.

Differential Association Theory proposes that people acquire pro-deviant values and are more likely to engage in deviance when they 'differentially associate' with people who value deviant behaviors. The theory states that the processes that result in systematic criminal behavior are essentially similar to the procedures that give rise to systematic lawful behavior. The theory further contends that systematic criminal behavior is determined in a process of association with criminal elements, just as a process of association with law-abiding individuals decides systematic lawful behavior. Thus, people adopt any pattern of behavior from the surrounding culture (Cressey, 2012). Differential Association Theory, though majorly applied in criminology studies, was appropriate to this study since viewers are likely to incorporate patterns of behavior and perceptions concerning substances and substance use portrayed by the characters in the Benga music videos they watch.

4.0 Methodology

The study used a descriptive research design. This is a design that aims at accurately and systematically describing a phenomenon. The design involved the use of a range of qualitative and quantitative research methods to collect data that accurately describes the depiction of substances and substance use in music videos produced by selected Benga musicians. We used random sampling to select for analysis 100 Benga music videos produced by five popular musicians from Ukambani since the year 2000. The musicians sampled are Ken wa Maria, Alex Kasau, Maima, Vusya Ungu and Kativui Mwene. The sampling approach is appropriate for the study due to its relative simplicity. Secondly, the method was likely to produce a sample of the videos that had the most influence on the audiences. Finally, the approach would avail a sample large enough to represent the diversity of Benga music videos from the Ukambani region, thereby increasing the validity of the sample.

Data collection involved downloading music videos from websites devoted to popular music. We applied content analysis to analyze both the visual and verbal content of the music videos. This involved systematically examining the presence and frequency of specific words, phrases and scenes that reference substances in the selected music videos.

We identified and coded all references to substances appearing in the music videos. The analysis began with the identification of the three kinds of substance references: verbal references, visual appearances and substance use. The final step was to establish the contextual information about the substance references appearing in the music videos. To achieve this, we coded each song with a reference to substance use based on

three domains informed by the social learning model: motivations for use, associations with use, and consequences of use. Through an iterative process of transcribing and coding, we interpreted the data collected qualitatively under the appropriate thematic subtleties.

5.0 Results and Discussion

The study set out to examine the portrayal of substances and substance use in popular Kamba Benga music videos since 2000. This section presents the results and discussion of the analysis of the frequency of references to substances and substance use in the selected videos, the contexts for substance use, motivations for use, qualities associated with substance use and the consequences for substance use as represented by the Benga musicians under review in their videos. The analysis involved three kinds of substance references: verbal substance reference, visual substance appearance and substance use. Verbal reference refers to verbal mention of substances in a song video. Visual appearance is an on-screen image of any substance. Substance use denotes an on-screen depiction of a person using a substance or an inference to a person using a substance. In this study, substance use signifies behaviors such as snorting, injecting, vaping and selling substances, or the exhibition of substance equipment such as ashtrays, beer bottles, bongs or hookah bowls. It may also indicate altered states of feeling related to substances.

5.1 Prevalence of References to Substances and Substance Use

The findings of the study revealed that out of the 100 music videos examined, a whopping 85 percent of them contain an explicit reference to substances of any kind (verbal reference, substance use or visual reference). Largely, substance use occurred in 71 percent of the videos sampled. Verbal references occurred in 48 percent of the videos analyzed while visual references appeared in only 26 percent of the videos. The higher percentage of substance use implies that when drugs do appear in the music videos, they are likely to be used. The number of references to substances, however, differs from one musician to another. References appear in 100 percent of the music videos done by Kativui. Ninety-five percent of the videos done by Maima reference substances. Ungu and Kasau reference substances in 80 percent of their respective videos. Ken wa Maria makes the fewest references, with substances appearing in 70 percent of his videos.

Alcohol, in its various forms such as wine, beer, spirits and traditional brews, appears most frequently, with 73 percent of the videos showing it. This is way above the findings by Alen et al. (2024), who, in their study about the prevalence of alcohol references in music, found that alcohol was mentioned in almost one in four songs. Alcohol is also the most evenly distributed substance with all five musicians highlighting it in between 60 and 85 percent of their videos. Another study done by Roberts et al. (1999) revealed that alcohol appeared in the videos they examined more frequently than any other substance. Alcohol appeared verbally in 22 percent of the videos and visually in 24 percent of the videos reviewed. The videos, however, show the lead singer and other characters consuming alcohol in 60 percent of the videos examined. We attributed the high prevalence of alcohol use in music videos to positive social contexts associated with alcohol consumption and people's approving attitudes toward drinking behaviors.

Khat (miraa and muguka) features in 23 percent of the videos analyzed. Khat is lawful in Kenya, although the World Health Organization (WHO) classifies it as a "drug of abuse" that can produce psychological dependence (Nutt, et al., 2007). The drug appears verbally in 17 percent of the videos, and 12 percent of the videos portray characters consuming it. The substance appears visually in only 3 percent of the videos. The study ascribed the high prevalence of this stimulant in music videos to its favorable legal status and social acceptability for recreational use. Next in prevalence is marijuana (cannabis), which features in 22 percent of the videos analyzed. Verbal references to marijuana appear in 15 percent of the videos. Thirteen percent of the videos display characters using it, and the substance does not feature at all visually. Unlike khat, marijuana use, whether for medical or recreational purposes, is illegal in Kenya. This explains the lower prevalence of references to marijuana use.

Seven percent of the videos reference tobacco. The substance appears verbally in only one percent of the videos, and six percent of the videos present characters using it. The visual appearance of tobacco is largely absent from the music videos. This varies with the results of the study done by Roberts et al. (1999) which showed references to tobacco use appearing in 21 percent of videos, and verbally in five percent of the videos. The paltry appearances of tobacco in Benga music videos can be down to the restrictions imposed on tobacco use. The Tobacco Control Act (2012) proscribes the promotion of tobacco products through testimonials or endorsements. The Act prohibits the display of information “that is misleading or incapable of fully informing consumers of the hazards of tobacco, without evoking a conflicting message or impression.”

Shisha (hookah), referenced in only 5 percent of the videos, accounts for the least number of allusions to substances. Five percent of the videos depict people inhaling shisha, though the substance does not appear at all verbally or visually. Shisha smoking entails the consumption of tobacco products using a single or multi-stemmed smoking instrument that contains water or other liquid through which the smoke passes before reaching the smoker. In 2017, the Government of Kenya outlawed the importation, manufacture, sale, use, advertisement, promotion or distribution of shisha in the country. A court ruling in 2014 overturned the ban. However, the Tobacco Control Act (2012) also governs shisha use. According to Reihman, Holguin and Sharma (2012), some of the negative health effects associated with regular hookah smoking include adverse respiratory, cardiovascular, oncologic and infectious disease outcomes. Shisha smoking is a relatively more elitist practice than other substances because of the cost involved in the acquisition of shisha pots and accessories. Only Kasau features shisha in his videos. Unsurprisingly, out of the five musicians studied, Kasau appears to be the glitziest. He appears brazenly in some of his videos smoking marijuana and shisha. In one of his songs – Kilumi – he says marijuana gives him the essential attentiveness to perform all night long.

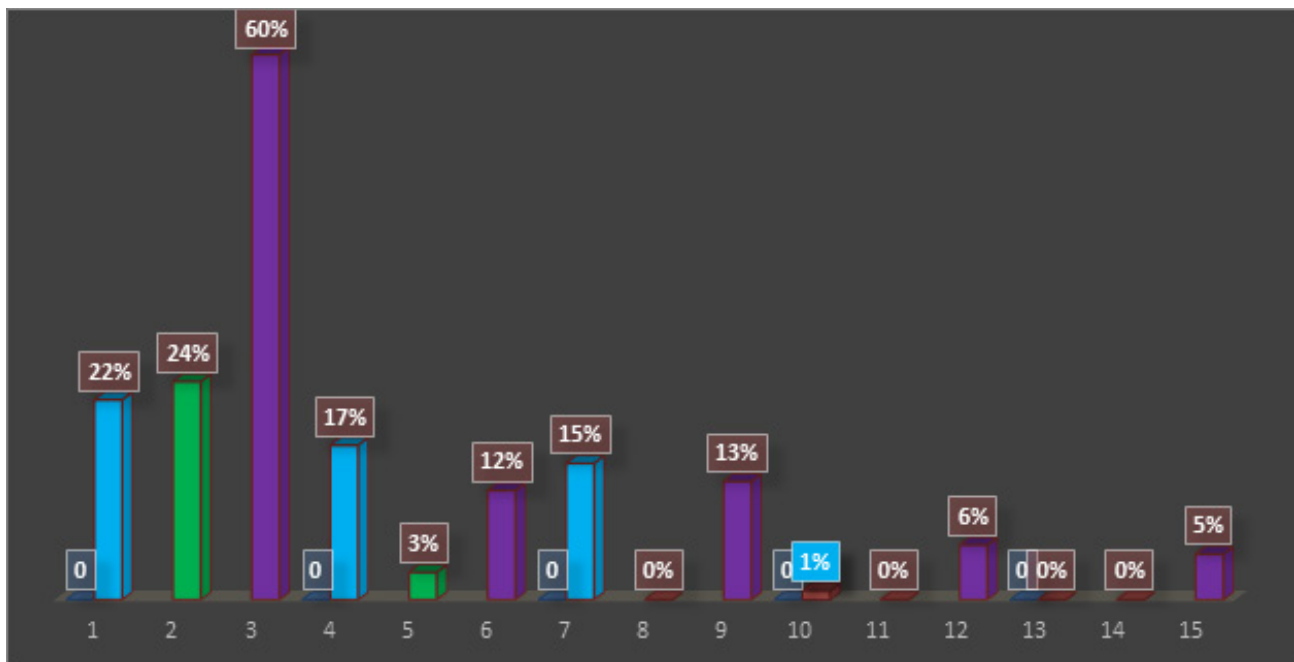


Figure 5.1 References to Substances and Substance Use

The videos analyzed differ in the manner in which they reference the different substances. However, the findings show that references to substance use are much more frequent than both verbal and visual portrayals. Seventy-seven per cent of the videos depict substance use, 55 per cent portray verbal reference to substances and only 27 per

cent display visual references to substances.

Out of the 71 videos that reference substance use, 57 of them involve consumption by the lead singer, who, in most cases, is the Benga musician. In 48 of the videos, the lead singer uses substances in the company of other characters in a communal setting. Ten videos feature the main character in the video episodes taking part, and 48 videos show supporting characters or revelers getting involved. Out of the 60 videos that depict the consumption of alcohol, 35 show the lead singer drinking in the company of others in a communal setting. The findings show the lead singer, either alone or in the company of the main character, using marijuana in 12 out of the 13 videos that depict marijuana use. Out of the six videos that reference the use of tobacco, five feature the lead singer smoking unaccompanied. As it happens with alcohol use, lovers of khat and shisha consume it in a communal setting. Cultivation Theory suggests that media characters may act as super peers who provide models of behavior that may not be available in the immediate social environment (Brown et al, 2005). This means that the behaviors of the Benga musicians, who in this case act as the super peers, are likely to entice Benga lovers into substance use.

5.2 Motivations for Substance Use

Numerous research initiatives have endeavored to ascertain the motivations for substance use. The studies hinge on the assumption that motivations for substance use have a bearing on the contexts, circumstances and consequences of such behavior. Similarly, this study intended to establish the motivations for substance use through the lenses of the Benga musicians sampled for the study. Motivations are categorized into enhancement, social, coping and conformity. According to Kuntsche & Kuntsche (2009), enhancement motivations incorporate drinking to gain pleasure or excitement, or to enhance mood. Social motivations give social rewards, such as enhanced socialization. Conformity motivations include drinking due to social pressure or drinking to avoid social rejection. According to Cooper (1994), coping motivations embrace drinking for the reduction or avoidance of negative emotions such as worries, anxiety or boredom. Even though Kuntsche & Kuntsche applied this categorization to alcohol use, other studies have employed it to describe motivations for other substances.

Out of the 85 song videos that reference substances, 61 of them indicate motivations for substance use by the lead singer and other characters. According to Kuntsche & Kuntsche, social motivations are the most common, followed by enhancement, coping, and conformity motivations. Social motivations, which include socialization, companionship and friendship, appear in 33 videos. Cooper (1994) relates social motivations to occasional light alcohol use, usually in social settings. The findings of this study, however, showed enhancement motivations, such as pleasure, excitement, relaxation, stimulation and enhancement of mood as the most common, as they appear in 44 of the videos analyzed. This is a worrying trend since studies by Cooper (1994) and Kuntsche et al. (2006) revealed that enhancement motivations result in heightened levels of alcohol use. Cooper associated enhancement with more habitual smoking behavior while a study by Simons et al., (1998) found enhancement motivations as causes for increased levels of marijuana use.

Coping motivations appear in five videos. According to Bradizza, Reifman, & Barnes (1999), coping motivations are related to heavier drinking problems. Studies also associate them with chronic smoking behavior (Cooper, 1994) and increased levels of marijuana use (Simons et al., 1998). Conformity motivations for substance use are the least common, appearing in only one video. As is the case with coping motivations, studies relate conformity motivations to heavy drinking problems and more distinct issues related to marijuana use (Bradizza et al., 1999). The findings of this study, therefore, show that the salient motivations for substance use portrayed by the selected Benga musicians are likely to trigger enhanced substance use by the viewers.

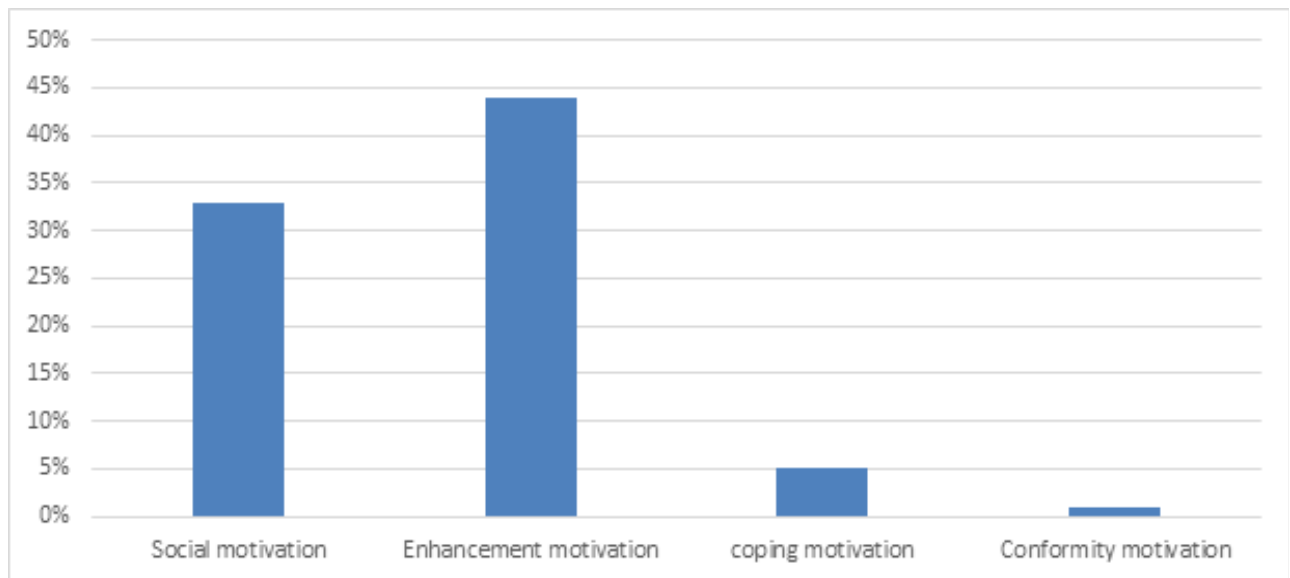


Figure 5.2 Motivations for Substance Use

5.3 Associations Linked to Substances and Substance Use

This study assigned positive associations to videos linking substance use to socially acceptable qualities. We coded videos without a definite association assigned to substance use as neutral. We coded videos that attributed harmful or socially objectionable effects to substance use as negative and videos with both negative and positive attributes as ambivalent. We considered sexual pleasure, high social status, affluence, improved creative expression, and hard work and success as positive attributes of substance use. Out of the 85 videos that reference substances, 54 of them positively paint substance use. Twenty-six videos analyzed associate substance use with sexual pleasure. Out of these 26 videos, 21 associate alcohol consumption with sexual pleasure. Only five videos show any connection between sexual pleasure and other substances such as marijuana and khat. The associations with sex involve creating a conducive environment for seduction, courtship, and increased sexual prowess. Twenty-five videos associate drugs with affluence or high social status. Alcohol appears in all the videos that depict affluence as evidenced by the display of high-priced brands of liquor such as Hennessy and Amarulla. Some videos that depict alcohol also create a spectacle of high-tech vehicles and motorcycles and hordes of bodyguards escorting the lead singer. Other videos flaunt good-time girls who use substances and revel apparently without remorse. Eight videos associate substance use with hard work and success. The involvement of substances with creativity and improved artistic performance appears in 17 of the videos that reference substances. Two other videos connect substances to a good life.

The study coded 24 videos as neutral since they did not depict any definite associations to substance use, and five videos as ambivalent because they contained both negative and positive aspects of substance use. Only seven videos associate substance use with socially objectionable outcomes and criminal activities. The findings indicate that the majority of the videos that reference substances associate them entirely with positive or socially acceptable qualities. According to the Cultivation Theory perceptions of behavior can be influenced by the themes and ideological messages presented in the media (Shanahan & Morgan 1999). Thus, the positive portrayals of substances in the music videos analyzed are likely to lead to increased substance use by Benga music devotees.

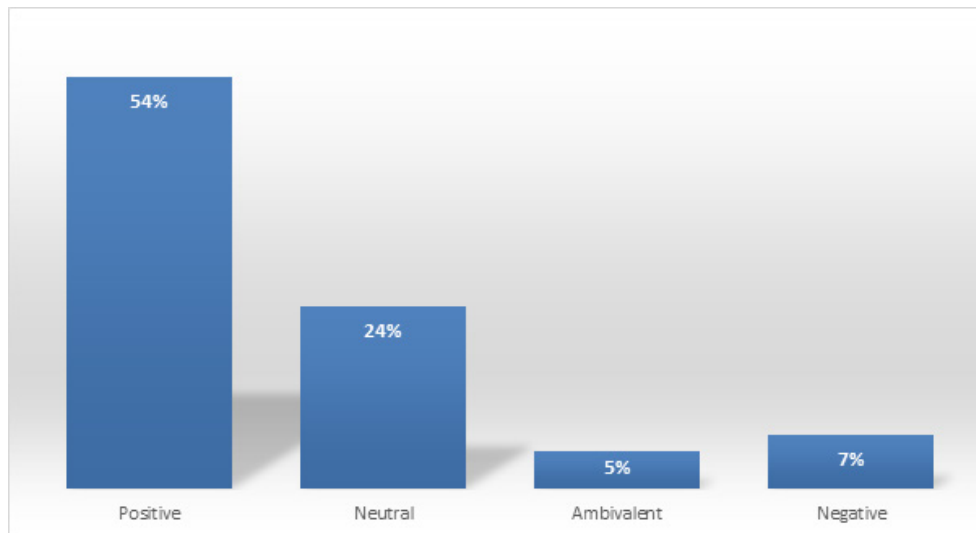


Figure 5.3: Types of Associations Linked to Substance Use

Similarly, the videos depict social contexts in which characters seem to approve of substance consumption behaviors. Images of people laughing, toasting or dancing illustrate these contexts. The findings agree with Federmeier (2023), who observed that the context of alcohol consumption is often positive. Other studies have shown that the perception that other people approve of substance consumption behavior may lead to more excessive consumption behaviors. The majority of the videos that positively depict substances reflect social settings that display groups of people using the substances at dinners or parties. The display of many people endorsing substance use further buttresses the effect of social accessibility. Additionally, the video producers shot 26 of the videos we reviewed in bars, nightclubs, or restaurants where advertisements for alcoholic drinks form part of the background. This kind of scenery relates alcohol to leisure and good times.

5.4 Consequences Associated with Substances and Substance Use

Many studies have consistently linked substance use and drinking with negative consequences. Health professionals categorize these consequences under mental, emotional, physical, social, legal, financial, and sexual domains. These domains can further be broken into ill health, socially undesirable behavior, financial difficulties, sexual harassment and mental disorder (Rehm, 2001). This study established that out of the 85 videos which reference substances, only 19 of them spell out any consequences that emanate from substance use. Nine videos explicate consequences related to alcohol consumption. All the musicians except wa Maria relate alcohol to one consequence or another. The most severe consequence associated with alcohol is liver cirrhosis, an irreversible liver disease characterized by scarring and cell death. Other consequences indicated in the videos include headaches, hangovers, sexual abuse, anti-social behavior, mental disorder, poverty, death, infirmity, sexual dysfunction, marital problems, and indolence. Only Kativui portrays khat as having consequences. According to him, khat chewing can lead to sexual harassment and physical aggressiveness. None of the musicians associates tobacco and shisha with any consequence.

Marijuana is associated with consequences in only nine out of the 23 videos that reference the substance. These consequences include mental disorders, anti-social behavior, violence and aggression, criminal activities, indecent sexual behavior, emotional breakdown, and hallucinations. The sampled musicians, however, appear to censure marijuana only when it is being consumed by other characters in their videos. However, in cases where they are the users of the substances, these musicians either remain silent or attribute the substances to positive outcomes, mainly sexual prowess and artistic accomplishment. Nevertheless, they also acknowledge marijuana for diligence, success, affluence, good fortune, vigor and physical prowess. This dalliance with marijuana is more noticeable in videos done especially by Maima and Kasau. Overall, the sampled Benga musicians do very little in their videos towards highlighting the consequences connected to substance use.

5.5 Conclusion

The study concludes that Benga music videos produced by leading Kamba musicians represent a significant source of exposure to substances, especially alcohol, tobacco, khat and marijuana. Benga's broad appeal to audiences and the influence yielded by the Benga artists combine to validate substances and substance use. The results are in line with other studies that have shown that even moderate levels of viewing may result in substantial exposure to positive depictions of substance use. The study further concludes that Benga music by Kamba musicians mainly associates substances and substance use with socially acceptable attributes such as sexual pleasure, high social status, affluence, improved creative expression, hard work and success.

The study also concludes that in the majority of these videos, scenes and episodes appear against the backdrop of social contexts that depict characters approving of substance consumption behaviors. Some of the videos display substances, especially alcohol, in the background, thus offering opportunities for brand advertising of substances. This flies in the face of both the Alcoholic Drinks Control Act, which prohibits individuals from promoting an alcoholic drink to create a false impression that a link exists between the consumption of that drink and social or sexual success.

This study concludes that a very inconsequential number of the videos analyzed connect substances and substance use to any consequences. The sampled musicians either remain taciturn or attribute the substances to positive outcomes. The musicians censure substances only when other characters are consuming them. However, whenever the musicians are involved, they commend the substances for their success, good fortune and creative genius. The study confirms a growing concern raised by the National Authority for the Campaign against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA) on the promotion of alcohol and other substances through the lyrics in the songs and videos that highlight substance use. Nevertheless, NACADA acknowledges the power of music to enhance strategic behavior change. The study, therefore, recommends collaboration between NACADA and the Kamba Benga musicians in the fight against substance use through the infusion of anti-substance messages in their music.

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