

**Review Article**

# Illicit Content in the Nigerian Hip-Hop: A Probe into the Credibility of Music Censorship in Nigeria

**Endong, Floribert Patrick Calvin**

Department of Theatre and Media Studies, University of Calabar, CRS, Calabar, Nigeria

**Email address:**[floribertendong@yahoo.com](mailto:floribertendong@yahoo.com) (F. P. Calvin)**To cite this article:**

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**Abstract:** Most Nigerian popular musicians have made sex and sexuality dominant themes of their musical production and veritable “baits” used to attract an ever growing prurient public of fans. Despite the presence of various forms of censorship mechanisms in the country, obscenity - as a form of language and artistic/esthetic expression in both lyrical text and pop video - is now perceived as a functional trend and a “tradition” in music composition and performance. The prevalence of obscenity in music production irrefutably brings to the fore the question of the effectiveness of music censorship in Nigeria. Based on a desk research approach and a textual analysis of some hip-hop songs, this paper explores the pervasive use of pornography in Nigerian music production and goes further to interrogate the credibility of music censorship in Nigeria. This, it does through revisiting the various music regulatory organs/forces and assessing their effective functioning. It argues that the radical cultural changes in the Nigerian society - provoked by globalization and western cultural imperialism - warrant the rethinking and (re)definition of the obscene and thus, the rethinking of strategies to censor music. It advocates more radical and dissuasive measures (sanctions) - approaches other than banning songs from radio/TV broadcast - in order to effectively combat prurience in the musical production. These radical sanctions may include the severe repression of the distribution of sex explicit musical content in the whole country as well as the repression of the performance and promotion of such music in contexts where children are present.

**Keywords:** Obscenity, Nigerian Hip-Hop, Music Censorship, Sex

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## 1. Introduction

As a popular genre, the Nigerian Hip-Hop musicians capitalize on themes that are of burning interest to various audiences, particularly the youths. Such themes appeal to listeners' emotions of surprise, romance, sexuality and the like. Of all these themes, sex and sexuality seem to be the most dominant. In fact, most popular music makers in Nigeria have been capitalizing on humanity's sustained interest in sex, romance and sexuality to feed the public (especially their fans) with heavily prurient songs. Such songs, according to conservative Nigerian critics, may be equated to obscenity and immorality. And on such an appreciation, they (these songs) are “condemnable”. However, obscenity is a very elusive concept as it varies principally with respect to periods in time and cultural

contexts. Equally, obscenity is not exclusively connected to sex. Gasper stresses the elusiveness of the concept when he contends that there is a definitive and semantic confusion about the words and expressions often used to refer to obscenity [1]. He explains that:

In fact, the verbal quick sands that trap us today stretch back to the dim past. Words meanings do change; usage makes fools of us all. The obscene to the Romans was not sexual, but ill-omened, from divining the future, from the entrails of sacrificed animals [...] A prurient Roman merely suffered from the itch a skin itch, not one lust. Lust is German and means pleasure [...] The adjective “lewd” once simply conveyed the sense of humble origins, like Lewd-brothers in a monastery. In Sanskrit, to censor bore a meaning directly opposite from today - it meant to praise. A word means just what we say it means in any age in any

culture, words are slippery; their meaning, elusive. [1, p. 119]

The conceptualization of obscenity has thus varied from one culture to another and from a period in time to another. However, in each society, legislators (the law) have come up with parameters to define the obscene and worked out more or less objective mechanisms to combat the phenomenon. Gasper further explains that this move has principally been aimed at removing confusion in the description of the obscene. As he puts it, “to be certain of hitting their dirty bird therefore, legislators load shotgun laws against obscene literature with all sorts of *semantical* scrap iron, such as scurrilous, lustful, prurient and lewd” [1, p. 119]. These legal efforts have given birth to what has been termed “censorship” which may here, be defined as the process “involving the blocking, regulation and manipulation of all or parts of some original message” [2, p. 30].

In line with this, the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission came up with a Code (*the NBC Code*) which, together with other complementary regulatory instruments, provides a definition of the concepts of obscenity and pornography as well as sanctions to be meted against them. *The NBC Code* defines the term “obscenity” as “a graphic presentation of lewd sexual activity, verbal or physical violence or bloodletting, portrayed in a socially offensive manner, especially if it is not indispensable in the total communication of an idea” [3]. It equally defines pornography (a related concept to obscenity) as “any material capable of causing sexual excitement or offending cultural sensibilities” [3, p. 121].

The Nigerian Broadcasting Commission, together with other institutions including religious organizations have for years served as strong censorial forces to check the pervasive use of obscenity and pornography in media production in Nigeria. Despite the censorial influence they exert on the music industry, the sexualization of music messages and crude obscenities continue to pervade the music production of the country. While making a brief excursion into the history of music censorship in Nigeria, this paper attempts, in the first place, to illustrate the pervasive use of pornography and obscenity in the Nigerian Hip-Hop production) and in the second place, interrogate the effectiveness of these censorship mechanisms in the country.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded on two theories mainly related to audience reception (of media contents) and the decoding analysis. These theories are the sensation/perception theory and the encoding-decoding theory. As its name indicates the sensation and perception theory is principally linked to the way audiences perceive media messages, which may differ based on sex, culture, religion, level of education and the like. Perception is often viewed as the process whereby senses are actively used to get and make sense of information about the world. This viewpoint is however simplistic. According to O’Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders and Fiske, perception is the “initial consciousness of sensory activity; a process implying

awareness and interpretation of surrounding stimuli or event.” Contrarily to sensation which is a process entailing the triggering of sense receptors, perception is the active selection and making sense of material from the total immediate world [2].

According to the theory of perception, the meaning of a media text depends on previous knowledge, experience and memory as regards how any configuration may be understood by the audience. This theory stresses on objectiveness in the definition of reality as perception will vary from an individual to another and from one culture to another explain that:

One conclusion is that all knowledge is essentially uncertain or even illusory because all answers are based on differing evidence that stems from varied meanings imposed by differing language boundaries. Such a discussion inevitably leads to the appraisal of meaning, structure, image, sign and symbol and becomes central to the analysis of communication [...] varying interpretations are therefore attributable to differences in the contexts of the perceiver’s culture. [2, p. 169]

In line with this theory, what is for instance obscene or sensational for a certain culture or at a certain period in time might be viewed differently in another culture or period. The determination of the obscene is therefore hardly objective or universal as it will greatly be influenced by cultural values prevailing in a given society. No doubt Salawu notes that “pornography is imbued with theoretical and semiotic complexity and carries with it a multiplicity of meanings. Thus it can be read (decoded) and produced (encoded) from differing perspectives and positions. Consequently, pornography has different meanings and uses for varying sets of people: men, women, gay, and lesbians” [4, p. 152].

The second theory driving analyses in this study is the Encoding and Decoding Theory. It is postulated by Stuart Hall (cited in O’Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders & Fiske) and emphasizes the stages of transformation through which any media message passes on the way, from its origins to its reception and interpretation. Though originally formulated in relation to television, it can aptly be applied to any mass medium, notably music [5]. The theory is centered on two principal assumptions:

- a) Communicators choose to encode messages for ideological purposes and manipulate language and media for those end (media messages are given a preferred reading or what is now called ‘spin’)
- b) Receivers are not obliged to accept or decode messages as sent but can, do resist ideological influence by applying variant or oppositional readings according to their own experience and outlook.

According to this theory, media messages are “encoded” according to established content genre (for instance pop music, news, soap opera and the like) with a face-value meaning and inbuilt guidelines for interpretation by audience. These messages are read by audiences depending on individual idea, experience and conception of “meaning structure”. This theory therefore recognizes the polysemic

nature of media text, the existence of interpretative communities and the primacy of the receiver in determining meaning. A very peculiar aspect of the theory is that meaning, as encoded in the media message does not necessarily or often correspond with meaning as decoded by audience. The obvious implication is that the presence of lascivious content in popular music may just be the accident of interpretation by audience and not the desired encoding of the musician.

### 3. Censorship of Popular Nigerian Music

To protect national interests, moral codes and the social welfare of those commonly called vulnerable groups (notably minors), countries often resort to media censorship. Such censorship is equally a tool used to ensure ethical practices within the media industry. According to O'Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders and Fiske, censorship in general is the process by which part or the entirety of an original message is blocked, regulated or manipulated, normally by the state [2]. Censorship therefore implies a process of control and selection based on certain, often implicit criteria and values. The process always results in the deliberate exclusion or withholding of information from either the public in general, or certain specified groups within the general population.

Music censorship in Nigeria – as in other African countries – is not a new phenomenon. It has been existing and has been exercised in various ways since the colonial period. During this pre-independent period, censorship was mainly manifested through the banning of nationalist and revolutionary (ant-colonialist) songs. A good number of researchers have given a great attention to popular music censorship in Nigeria in the post-independent period [6-8]. In post-independent Nigeria, especially in the years of the military dictatorship, the censorship of popular music was mainly political. It was aimed to restraint anti-government music. Similarly to the opposition controlled press, any critical form of popular music was interpreted by government as an adversarial initiative. Such an initiative called for a mix of muscled actions by the military government. These actions ranged from bans to intimidation, if not to threat and brutalization of such daring musicians. Fela Kuti's Afrobeat is perhaps the most egregious example of popular music that has been victim of such radical political censorship in Nigeria. Adeyemi posits that Fela constantly questioned and received notions through his strident political commentaries, rude jokes, parodies, and acerbic sense of humor and satire [9]. It is not surprising that successive Nigerian governments expressed morbid fear of the Afrobeat musical genre. In fact, the Nigerian state – particularly during the military regimes – forbade the airing of this music.

The (attempted) gagging of the media in general and popular musical expressions that censured dictatorial government and unpopular policies was observable not exclusively in Nigeria. The trend was visible in the entire Black continent which since the 1960s, had been more or less the breeding ground of multi-forms of constitutional dictatorship, despotism and the like. In tandem with this,

Coolnan identifies four phenomena that can be used to examine patterns of music censorship in Black Africa [7]. These include (i) censorship in post-colonial times, (ii) the relative importance of overtly political censorship (including the role of praise songs), (iii) the role of broadcasting stations and (iv) the difference between local musical production and westerns "norms".

Music censorship in Nigeria has not only served governmental campaigns for the non-politicization of media content. A good attention has been given to other aspects of moralization. The "Bang, Bang, Bang" affair marked a turning point in popular music censorship in Nigeria and announced the beginning in Nigeria, of a period of systematic moralization, particularly driven by a wide range of doctrinaire and puritanical social arbiters (the Church, Islam and other conservative quarters). Servant corroborates this as he notes that the blanket banning of Femi's "Bang, Bang Bang" by government in the fall of 1998 was not driven by political motives. The NBC's imposition of a blanket ban on the song was essentially driven by moral and religious considerations. Sung by Fela's eldest son Femi Kuti, "Ban, Bang, Bang" actually happened to be "a festive metaphor of the sexual act" [6]. Its censorship thus marked the start of a period of moralization that is intensifying year by year.

The Nigerian government – through the NBC – is not the only stakeholder in the censorship of music in the country. A tremendous contribution from religious leaders and the conservative/religious market (audience) is to be mentioned here. The influence of the former is even monumental and seems more consequential. Unlike in western countries where a high degree of liberalism prevails, African countries – notably Nigeria – have, religion and conservatism as two prominent censorial forces. In effect, the kind of pornographic contents that will likely be tolerated in the western market will be seen as aberrant by local conservative and religious forces or institutions. The censorial power of Nigeria's religious institutions continues to be visible and to greatly affect the Nigerian market's perception and reception of popular music. Coolnan posits that:

There are various examples of the importance of religion as an early censorial force which perhaps the most famous (and perhaps, notorious) is the Catholic Church's Index Librorum Prohibitum. Importantly, [...] the Church remains a censorial force in Africa today. More generally organized religion has sought to warn its adherents away from certain cultural artifacts and has not been slow to call for the restriction or outright banning of materials which it disapproves. [7, p. 5]

In Nigeria, Pentecostal Churches and radical Islamic formations are the most notorious as far as popular music censorship is concerned. Particular music genres or rhythms such as gangsta rap, hard rock, and dance styles as *Azonto*, *makossa*, *mapuka*, *Shoki* and the like have been branded "the music of the devil" by some Pentecostal denominations and congregations have been formally warned against them [10-11]. In many occasions, local clergymen and other prominent spiritual figures in the country have labeled and censored the

Nigerian entertainment industries, warning the public opinion about the damaging and sexualizing potential of these industries (music and film in particular). Pastor Godsdan Orubebe (of the Glory Sanctuary Christian Centre), cited by Hirsch, laments for instance that, "It is [today] common to see kids as young as five years old dressed in tight-fitting dresses, their faces glistening with makeup, dancing sensuously to modern day songs with sexually explicit lyrics" [12].

The most contestable form of popular music censorship is perhaps that adopted by Islam in the North of the country. Indeed, Islam has manifested a real hostility to urban genres – especially western music and cultural artifacts which dominate in the production of most Nigerian popular artistes in the South. Such a hostility has been viewed by Servant and Coolnan as a pernicious wind of public cleansing as well as a radical move which seems to have no regard for freedom of expression [6-7]. Coolnan precisely notes that: "Islam's attitude towards music is contested [...] but the potency of Islam as a censorial force has been most vividly illustrated in the (non-African) case of Taliban regime in Afghanistan [...] It is also obviously an important influence in such places as Algeria (Morgan 2004) and Nigeria" [7, p. 7]. Some of the most revered Islamic literature and schools of thought totally proscribe music and dancing, associating the phenomena with Satanism, frivolity, license and enmity with God. An egregious example is the Hadith's *Shun Music: Who are the Sinful Women according to the Qur'an*, which notes that:

"There is no doubt that modern music has a strong tendency to excite sexual passion. Songs with the accompaniment of music are stepping stones to immorality: a man shall obey his wife and disobey his mother; [...] Singing girls and musical instruments shall appear, wives will be drunk. The frivolity of music casts a spell of hypocrisy over the heart of the listener and transports him of her from the realm of reality to the limbo of dreamland. The Holy prophet is reported to have further said, with every musical bell is the devil. And again the angels do not enter a home where there is a musical instrument. Some music and indulgence therein have been described as *fisq*: open and naked sin in Islamic terminology. In fact, music and dancing have been proven to be a great stimulant of carnal sex, a stepping stone to fornication and adultery. It is therefore essential that every Muslim man and woman takes the utmost care to reclaim and preserve himself or herself from this" [13].

The above quote clearly illustrates the presence of a form of fundamentalism and "excessive Puritanism" in Islam's censorship of music. These fundamentalism and Puritanism are however progressively questioned and rejected by modernist voices even within Muslim Nigerian singers. Some of these modernist voices strongly believe Islamic music should be modernized and a number of innovations should be tolerated in Islamic music to permit it be revolutionized and be adapted to the present changing world. Daramola explores this modernist thinking among a number of Muslim Nigerian musicians. He particularly focuses on artiste Sikiru Ayinde who, in some of his songs, challenges popular Islamic

precepts and injunctions against such traditions as modern music making, dance and merry making. In one of his songs, Sikiru posits that:

Lyrics in Yoruba	Translation into English
<i>Tira to ni ka ma lu lu o (2ce)</i>	Is there a Quranic text that prohibits drumming?
<i>'Tira' to ni ka ma lu lu,</i>	Reveal such text for people to 'see'
<i>Emu 'ti-ra' naa wa o</i>	We understand God's command on
<i>Ka ma mu ti,</i>	Abstinence from drunkenness, adultery
<i>Kaa ma mu ti, Kaa ma se sina,</i>	And all sorts of malpractices.
<i>Kaa ma huwa baje l'Olorun oba-wi o</i>	But music making, merry making and felicitation.
<i>A mo taa ba n se hun re (2ce)</i>	He has not refrained [14 p.
<i>Ko ni kaa ma lulu, ka fi-jo be 0 50]</i>	

The contribution of labels and radio and TV stations needs also be mentioned among the censorship mechanisms prevailing in the country. Such a contribution has supplemented or been in line with those of the government and religion. In 2001 for instance, Nigeria's state-run radio banned its stations nationwide from broadcasting rap music as the rhythm was considered immoral by Muslim and Christian conservatives. Private radio stations also started refraining from giving airing to music that could damage their reputation. They equally shy away from airing particular kinds of music simply on recommendation of the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC). Anikulapo cited by Servant concedes that:

The NBC is like a watchdog. There is still "Not To Be Broadcast (NNTB)" on various songs. If an artist releases a record, he has to send it to their library before it is broadcasted. And people listen to it before it is broadcast. And people listen to it before it is fit for broadcast. And if they find anything which is morally unjustifiable, they will brand it "NTBB". These days, with the proliferations, of the stations, they don't have time for all that but all the same, you find that the station managers still insist on that moral rectitude because it is one of the things that can work against the image of the station. [6, p. 67]

With this, it can be said that stations also play their role as censorial forces though it has only been to an extent. As argued by many observers, much is still expected from them in this direction. Obscenity does sell, (as earlier mentioned). However, to preserve their good image, keep their audiences and avoid NBC repression, a number of local radio and TV stations have seen themselves obliged to keep their programming clean from lascivious content. Anikulapo further posits that: If a station always comes up with immoral songs and all that, it will come to a point where the radio station itself will be banned, which is bad for business. So the stations are compelled to watch on the kind of music they air (particularly on prime time), in order to survive. To observers such as Anikulapo, some radio and TV station somehow "play the same game as the NBC in order not to be banned" [6, p. 67]. However, it must be argued that,

despite the presence of these various censorial forces, illicit content continues to represent a prominent feature in the production of most contemporary Nigerian hip-hop makers. Obscenities in the forms of sex and violence is sung and represented in both the lyrics and music videos of most Nigerian urban music makers. This will amply be illustrated in subsequent sections of this paper.

The high prevalence of illicit contents in the Nigerian entertainment industry has been facilitated by a wide mix of factors. Two of them are the ubiquity of internet in the urban centers of the country and the pay/satellite TV. The Internet has enabled artistes to go round censors and distribute highly sexualized musical contents online. The internet technology thus seems to literally neutralize the efforts of Nigerian censors. Another serious challenge has been the pay/satellite TV which, these last years, have virtually given a depth ear to censors. Some of them have just operated as if they were not bound by any censorship mechanism in their countries of location. One actually wonders why there seems to be a double speed in this censorship “business”, a double speed which is illustrated by the fact that, while Nigerian media censorship or regulatory organs will religiously censor illicit contents in local radio and television station, the pay/satellite TV will seem to enjoy the lip silence of censors within their areas of geographical location. Adeniji is therefore not wrong to be puzzled and to ask the following rhetorical question: why then does the censorship effort of the Nigerian censors “seem to be ‘non-reflective’ in pay/satellite TV operations, especially when they seem to be the primary source of viewing material today?” [14]. Surely, these operators are – or should be – subject to the broadcast regulations of the governing bodies within their respective geographical locations and it can be speculated that such regulations, require them (the pay TV/satellite TV operators) to abide strictly or risk incurring heavy sanctions nay worse repressions from regulatory organs.

#### 4. The Ideology of Sex/Obscenity in Music Making

Like in other media genres, the use of sex and pornography in music composition and performance has economic and psychological dimensions. The economic dimension is the most discernible as there is a clearly visible connection between mediated sex or pornography and capitalism. Most music producers use sex and pornography for purely capitalist motives. They capitalize on humanity’s sustained interest in the depiction of the sexually explicit and commercially exploit it. Miller notes that, in almost all societies, (especially in the liberal ones), there have always been a growing obsession with “knowing sex and pleasure and deriving pleasure from this knowledge” [15, p. 23]. Humanity’s long-standing interest in sex, sexuality and romance has favored and motivated the emergence of such profit institutions as pornography, psychology and sexology that mangle these appealing concepts, to capitalism. Sex and sexuality are believed to make music content more appealing

and more marketable. No doubt they are constantly deployed by business men, marketers or producers as bait to attract audiences or consumers. Miller corroborates this view when he further explains that:

Alternative pornography [mediated sex] is a commodity that reproduces capitalist logics while appealing to essentialist claims about sexuality to “authenticate” the product being marketed for consumption. The normative capitalist and sexual logics reveal through a critical analysis of [mediated sex] demonstrate the degree to which pleasure and profit are linked logics in late capitalism, which produces a desire for newness that is entangled with the pursuit of commodified pleasure. [15, p. 21]

In the same line of argument, Liadi and Omobowale view the proliferation of discourses about sexuality through Nigerian popular music as a logical outcome of the fact that the Nigerian music industry has been configured according to the capitalist philosophy [16, p. 475]. They argue that it is not strange to find that contemporary Nigerian Hip-Hop music is “couched in capitalistic tendencies with producers having a substantial influence on the themes”. Most Nigerian producers are bent on offering what will sell to the market “and since sexual fantasies align with youths’ orientations, it is only logical to offer what will sell” [16, p. 475]. Therefore, the pervasive use of sex in music making is economically motivated or justified. Sex sells, and music producers see the need to exploit it, to make their music more appealing and marketable. However, the thesis purporting that sex sells is subject to controversy. Anemone and Dean surprisingly negate it. They argue that sex and nudity do not sell –nor impress. Their position is based on critics’ reviews and awards in mainstream entertainment (music and film). Anemone and Dean actually note that:

Although it is commonly assumed that “sex sells” in mainstream [entertainment], recent research indicates a far more ambiguous relation between strong sexual content and financial performance. Moreover, such content may not be justified by either critical evaluations or movie [and music] awards [...] sex and nudity do not, on the average, boost box office performance, earn critical acclaim, or win major awards. Although female involvement does influence a film’s content, the only impact on the presence of sex and nudity is the proportion of women who make up the cast. Notwithstanding statistical complications, the best conclusion is that graphic sex neither sells nor impresses. [17, p. 200]

The psychological dimension of the explicit depiction of sex in music (especially in Africa – notably Nigeria) is viewed in some producers’ beliefs that media content (entertainment for instance) is not worth acclaims, unless they have some daring inceptions of sex and are thereby shaped according to western models. In a thought-provoking review published in the Nigerian tabloid *The Nation*, Akande associates this belief with cultural imperialism. He concedes that, injecting sex explicit material in lyrics or pop video constitutes “a factor of the African inferiority complex” [18, p. 35]. This inferiority complex consists in thinking that entertainment media content is “empty without adding some daring experiments’ like sex”.

According to such a school of thought, showing more skin and sex scenes [in a pop video for instance] would necessarily appeal to the international market [18].

## 5. Obscenity in Popular Nigerian Music

As earlier mentioned, obscenity is an observable phenomenon in the Nigerian hip-hop industry. It is a prominent feature in the musical production of a good number of popular urban music makers, particularly those who target the youths. As a multifaceted and multi-dimensional phenomenon, obscenity is showcased in both lyrics and performance (pop videos). Its representation by artistes in music lyrics is often very subtle. In effect, such representation is through artful linguistic coinages, often aimed at “masking” the illicit content. Pseudo-expressions and *double entendres* are therefore developed to attempt to “dissimulate” the presence of illicit content in lyrics. As Nkechi puts it, “not only are beats unique, but languages are combined to create effects, new coinages deliver restricted messages and existing words are twisted to sing obscenity” [19, p. 69]. This is for instance viewed in P-Square’s *do me*, leading track of their album titled “Game Over”. The song is literally dominated by twisted expressions connoting codes for sex roles and sexual acts. The song equally contains archetypal sounds and terms making allusion to sophisticated bedroom language and sex. An extract of the song’s lyrics read:

Lyrics in Pidgin & English (code-mix)	(Our) Translation of the lyrics into English
<i>I you do me, I do you. Man no go vex</i>	If you do it to me, it will hurt nobody.
<i>Step on the dance floor. Man no go vex.</i>	Step on the dance floor. It will hurt nobody
<i>Touch me I touch. Man no go vex</i>	Touch me, I touch you. It will hurt nobody
<i>You say, I say man no go vex.</i>	You say? I say it will hurt nobody.
<i>Step on the dance floor, man no go vex.</i>	Step on the dance floor. It will hurt nobody.
<i>So won't you give it to me? I will give it to you.</i>	So, won't you give it to me? I will give it you.
<i>So make you give it to me, some more some more.</i>	So, give it to me, give me some more

Given its construction with highly ambiguous expressions, this song may be variously interpreted. An international audience (which does not understand Nigerian English) or someone who is not one of the singers’ fans may not detect the least obscene item in the song. However, sex is suggested by such expressions as “do me. I do you”, “touch me, I touch you”, “make you give it to me some”. The meaning of these combined expressions is made clearer by the song’s video which presents half nude ladies dancing in a suggestive manner. The expressions can therefore, easily be read/interpreted (in association) by any fan of the group as implying flirtatious or sexual innuendoes. If musical groups like P-Square take the precaution of masking illicit content in their songs, other singers daringly sing obscenity in a more

explicit manner. This can be illustrated with Faze’s *Kolomental*, which explicitly advocates drunkenness, violence and other irrational behaviors. An extract of the song’s lyrics reads:

Lyrics in Pidgin	Translation into English
<i>As you dey fall in -o</i>	As you join the party
<i>Make you take note -o</i>	Take note
<i>Say dis party – o</i>	That this party
<i>Na for craz people-o</i>	Is for the man people
<i>Make you mental</i>	Get mad
<i>Make you display</i>	Behave as a mad man
<i>Show your madness</i>	Exhibit your madness
<i>Make you craz dey go</i>	Continue [to exhibit your madness]
<i>Dance nonsense</i>	Dance like a mad man
<i>Na the concept-o</i>	That’s the way
<i>Na the senseless</i>	That’s the senselessness
<i>See I don kolo</i>	See, I have already become mad
<i>Make una hold me-o</i>	Stop/control me if you can
<i>If una no fit-o</i>	If you are unable to do so
<i>Na to join me kolo</i>	It will be better to join me in the madness
<i>Make we mental</i>	Let us all be mad

It goes without saying that such songs (with illicit content) have the potential to corrupt vulnerable audiences (the youths). Commenting particularly on the effects of Faze’s *Kolomental*, an observer in Nkechi notes that “people go all out of their way to behave madly whenever the song is played, throwing chairs, jumping on each other, behaving like thugs, etc” [19, p. 72]. In most cases, these lyrics (with illicit contents) are accompanied with relatively pornographic music videos. These pornographic video re-enforce the overall message of the lyrics and make the songs more “unclean”. Liadi and Omobowale corroborate this view when they note that: “From lyrics to the visual representations [in Nigerian hip-hop] portrays little other than sex nuances. Watching most multilingual hip-hop music video may be close to watching pornographic movies” [16, p. 475]. This “lamentable” and too liberal sexual orientation of showing half nude ladies dancing with the opposite sex in a suggestive manner has also impacted the traditional value of sex, as youths are now involved in the conduct of questionable sexual acts such as rape, premature sex and other risky sexual acts because of their exposure to the contents of Nigerian hip-hop [10, 12, 20].

As earlier noted, music regulatory bodies have sometimes swiftly reacted to pornographic music composition and performance with relevant sanctions. In line with this, Biggiano’s *Konga* was banned some months after its release because it “wrecked havoc in its promotion of indiscriminate sex” [19, p. 72]. Similarly Ps Square’s *Alingo* was banned few months after its release because of its sexual contents. Many other musicians have witnessed such sanctions, not without questioning them. After the banning of his *Otkast*, Nigerian artist George Shan (quoted by Servant) accused music regulation mechanism in Nigeria to be bias, subjective, too conservative and even anti-progressive. “I think Nigerians should be more broad-minded – he said – they are too bias. They don’t want to see you succeed” [6, p. 65]. In effect, the subjective nature of music censorship in Nigeria

may be evidenced by the fact that some of the songs that were banned in Nigeria have turned out to be commercial success abroad. This is true to Femi's *Bang Bang Bang* which though banned in Nigeria for its "immoral" and over sexualized contents, won the artist a Kora Award. These conflicting views of music clearly illustrate the perception theory as what is often viewed by a category of critics and Nigerian regulatory bodies as illicit content, may not be seen in the same light by the international public.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper has argued that most Nigerian popular musicians have made sex and sexuality dominant themes of their musical production and veritable "baits" used to attract an ever growing prurient public of fans. Despite the presence of various forms of censorship mechanisms in the country, obscenity - as a form of language and artistic/esthetic expression in both lyrical texts and pop videos - is now perceived as a functional trend and a "tradition" in music composition and performance. The prevalence of obscenity in music production irrefutably brings to the fore the question of the effectiveness of music censorship in Nigeria.

The paper used critical observations and a qualitative textual analysis of some hip-hop songs, to explore the pervasive use of pornography in the Nigerian music production and it attempted to interrogate the credibility of music censorship in Nigeria. This, it did through an exploration of the various music regulatory organs/forces and an assessment of their effective functioning. It argued that the radical cultural changes in the Nigerian society - provoked by globalization and cultural imperialism - warrant the rethinking and (re)definition of the obscene and thus, the rethinking of strategies to censor hip-hop music and the other forms of media production in the country.

Based on the major observations made in the paper, it is recommended that more radical and dissuasive measures (sanctions) - other than banning songs from radio/TV broadcast - be adopted in order to effectively combat prurience in the musical production. These radical sanctions may include the severe repression of the distribution of sex explicit musical contents in the whole country as well as the repression of the performance and promotion of such music in contexts where children are present.

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