

Music as Communication in Promoting War against Drug Abuse

Chiazor Anthonia Chiaghana, Odogwu Christian Emeka, Anthony Obi Okeke
Department of Mass Communication, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State,
Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Music is as old as humanity. It has been in existence from time immemorial in the entertainment industry. Music is a veritable source of communication as it is a formidable tool the media use to communicate fast to people on areas of discourse like the fight against drug abuse. Music is one of the most powerful ways to influence, enhance, educate or destroy people's minds especially with youths. It can make possible good things as well as enhance negative emotions. In Nigeria, a lot of crimes being committed today are done under the influence of drug and this call for taking more stringent measures to tackle drug abuse in Nigeria. The media through their entertainment role use music to disseminate information and entertain the audience. Regarding to drug abuse, people see music as a tool that promotes drug abuse. It is, therefore, the position of this paper to consider the notion that music is also an indispensable tool used by the media to curb out the war against drug abuse. The paper is hinged on Individual difference and Agenda setting theories and it deploys the discourse analysis method. The paper concludes and recommends that music is a powerful communication force to promote war against drug abuse and a measure for behavioral change on drug addicts. The paper suggested that government should use the media through music to mobilize the citizenry against the menace of drug abuse and the government in partnership with the Nigeria Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) should ban any music that promotes drug abuse in Nigeria so as to reduce the increased rate of drug addicts and abusers in the country.

Keywords: Music, Communication, Media, Drug Abuse

INTRODUCTION

Music as it may sound is for entertainment and passing on values to its listeners, music can be a powerful tool in which is used to promote war against drug abuse. It is important, however, to point out from the onset that music forms part of holistic approach to curb drug abuse. Drug abuse is an extreme desire to obtain and use increasing amounts of one or more substances (Tracy, 2021). In Nigeria today, the number of people taking to drugs and other enhancement substances including marijuana, cocaine, acid, methamphetamines keep soaring by the day. To this end, government and Nigerians have expressed worries and concern about drug abuse, which has become a prevalent problem in our contemporary society. Drug abuse can ruin the future of many people (Drug addicts) if an adequate measures is not taken in order to fight against it. The war on drug would have been impossible for the government without support from the media (Krayewski, 2014). The media no doubt disseminate information to large and heterogeneous audiences. It has tremendous power and influence in shaping public opinion and perception, create awareness on prevailing issues with great efficiency (Okunna, 2018). However, the media use so many ways to disseminate information to people in which music is inclusive. The media use music in programs as an interlude and in advertisements. Thus, in the case of promoting war against drug abuse, this paper is of the notion that music becomes imperative as a communication tool to curb the menace of drug abuse in Nigeria via the media.

METHOD OF THE STUDY

We used secondary data by way of literature reviews to establish the situation of drug abuse in Nigeria with regards to music in promoting war against drug abuse. Recent researches have shown that people see music as an adverse communication tool that promotes the use of drug. Therefore the worry of this paper is to provide an arguable and convincible description and interpretation that music can be an indispensable or veritable tool to fight against drug abuse in Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Drug Abuse: An Overview

Drug abuse is the excessive use of drugs for non-medical purpose despite social, psychological and physical problems that may arise from such use. Abused drugs include substances that affect the user's mental state and are used to produce changes in mood, feeling and perception (Bhardwaj, 2015). Drug abuse is a pattern of harmful use of any substance for mood altering purposes. Substances can include marijuana, cocaine, heroin, acids. Abuse can result from using a substance in a way that it is not intended or from using more than prescribed (Buddy, 2022). Generally, drug abuse is the use of illegal drugs. Drugs of abuse do more than alter reactions at times all of which can increase the risk of accident, injury or committing crimes in the country. Drug abuse is a significant problem in our society and it has increased throughout the world in recent years. These drugs are obviously illegal because they are potentially addictive or can cause severe negative health effects and increase in the rate of crimes in the country. Some believe that any use of illegal drug is dangerous, harmful and therefore abusive. People get addicted to drug with limited knowledge of the risk factor of the drug addiction to them. One of the key impacts of drug abuse on society is the negative health consequences experienced by drug addicts (WHO, 2021). According to Neele (2023), citing the United Nations of on Drugs and Crimes (UNDC) report (2005), over 200 million people or over 5 percent of the total world population aged 15-64 have used drugs at least once in the last 12 months.



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Classification of Drugs

Illegal drugs represent the largest volume of criminal cases in the country. Most of these drugs can occur naturally as with marijuana or cocaine; they can be prepared from naturally

occurring substances such as the case with heroin. Illicit drugs can also be classified by major effects: stimulants, depressants, opioids and hallucinogens.

Stimulants: Drugs that are stimulants are cocaine, methamphetamine, cathonine and the too much intake of such may cause heart attack, failure and seizures.

Depressants: Drugs or substances that are depressants are alcohol, benzodiazepines and the overdose intake can cause side effects such as speech, dizziness and loss of coordination.

Hallucinogens: These types of illicit drugs cause sensations of detachment from reality as well as hallucinations on the drug user.

Opioids: This category of drugs is used to moderate severe pain. The overdose intake of these drugs can pose serious risk on the addicted user. Drugs that are opioids are heroin, fentanyl, oxycodone.

Marijuana: This is also known as weed and it is the most frequently used drug in Nigeria. It is taken for its euphoric effects and altering of perception. Marijuana can be smoked or cooked into food. The effects can last up to six hours or more. It can be psychologically addictive.

Risk Factors of Drug Abuse

Drug abuse is a global problem faced by many countries. The usage of drugs among younger people has been shown to be higher than that among older people for most drugs (Nawi et al., 2021). In many countries, drug abuse is on the rise and the group that are majorly prone to addiction are the youths ranging from 18-25 years of age. Although that there are some adults that are still drug addicts but the maximum usage of drugs occurs among young people. Drug abuse is detrimental as it has risk factors attributed to the overdose intake of such drugs. When one is addicted to drugs, there is this tendency or possibility that one may continue using the drug despite its harm. According to prevention coalition organization (2023) drug abuse include a variety of risk factors:

- Academic failure or lack of academic motivation
- Alienation from peers or family
- Anti social behavior, including early aggressive behavior like all sorts of crimes.
- Early first use of drugs
- Drug availability in the community that is illicit or illegal drugs being used indiscriminately in a given community, state or country
- Improper parenting- having parents who are distant, uninvolved with their children, poor monitors of their children's activities or who have not established or enforced clear rules with their children
- Long work hours leads to taking drugs to relief pains
- Loss of control/external locus of control- feeling that their lives are beyond control
- Low socio economic status
- Parent or sibling drug use
- Parental divorce, remarriage or other home life transitions
- Mental illness

All these risk factors make individuals vulnerable to drug abuse. In order words, drug abuse has mental, psychological or social consequences to its users.

Music as a Communicative Medium

Music is one of the most popular and powerful forms of the media that people consume fast and easily. Music is a communicative medium with features that are optimally adapted for the management of situations of social uncertainty (Cross, 2009). Music obviously is used by the media to create awareness on certain issues that might be a threat to the country's integrity

or stability. It has huge arrays of functions as a communicative medium to manage certain social and natural order. According to Cross, 2009, music certainly appears to be experienced as having consistent, though very broad emotional significance for listeners, a fact that have been explored the behavioral change of individuals. The mass media have been a major agent of socialization and tool for social change especially now that people depends on message from mass media. Messages from mass media come in various forms: news, documentaries, phone in programs, talk shows and music. It could be possible to use mass media to get people to act on behalf of their own health and well being or to do right things (Neele, 2023). Responses to musical messages are motivated by individual differences and the way they are exposed to such musical message via the media. Social problems like drug abuse menace in the country can be communicated through music to the audience to send across vital messages that will help to limit the rise of drug abuse. Music is not used in all situations, it is used on special occasions and serious circumstances that involve issues of discourse (Vinod & Kochi, 2020). Music communicates more than any text or picture in a print media. Thus, the completeness of communication through the mass media can only be attained with the help of music. Ideas are coordinated in a coherent musical structure and communicated to the audience who through the lyrics of the music get the message being sent across.

Importance of Music in Promoting War against Drug Abuse

The importance of music as a tool in promoting war against drug abuse cannot be overemphasized. Music can play a significant role in promoting awareness and facilitating conversations about drug abuse and the way against it. Studies have uncovered a number of ways in which music can be a therapy for drug addicts' recovery. Juergens (2016) stated that listening to music can help people who are recovering from addictions by:

- *Releasing pent-up emotions:* playing music or simply listening to it will help a drug addict to channel the energy spent worrying about their next substance fix into a safe activity that makes them feel calm and relaxed.
- *Increasing motivation*
- *Enhancing self awareness*
- *Improving cognition and memory retention:* Here studies have uncovered that listening to classical music for a period of time can improve your ability to focus as well as recall facts or events promoting positive social interaction.
- *Supporting a healthy self image*
- *Decreasing anxiety and depression:* At times, when one is feeling down, listening to the lyrics of certain meditative or classical music can engage a drug abuser into thinking in a positive way. Music has some pain relieving properties when listened to. Thus, music is also a therapy for drug addicts' treatment and also reduces anxiety by creating a deeper sense of self understanding.

In a study carried out by Mwangi (2020) on music as a powerful tool in managing substance addiction, it was observed that most drug abusers are youths. The study observed that listening to pleasurable music is a remedy to drug abuse. Many countries all over the world have realized the healing power of using music to fight against drug use. In order words, here are few ways music can help in this regard:

- *Raising awareness:* Music has the power to reach and engage a wide audience. Artists can create songs that highlight the dangers and consequences of drug abuse, educate listeners about the issue and encourage them to take a stand against it. These songs can spread awareness and contribute to public consciousness.

- *Emotional connection:* Music has the ability to evoke emotions and create empathy. Songs generate empathy and understanding among listeners. By connecting emotionally, music can inspire compassion and motivate people to support the war against drug abuse.
- *Empowerment and inspiration:* Music can empower individuals struggling with addiction by providing messages of hope, recovery and personal transformation (behavioral change). Songs that share stories of overcoming drug abuse and finding a path to a healthier life can inspire those affected by addiction and encourage them to seek help.
- *Community engagement:* Musicians and artists can organize benefit concerts, music festivals or charity events dedicated to raising funds for drug rehabilitation programs, prevention initiatives and support services. Such events, bring communities together, raise awareness and provide opportunities for dialogue and collaboration in the fight against drug abuse.
- *Collaboration and advocacy:* Artists can collaborate with media organizations, non-profit or governmental agencies like NDLEA that focus on drug prevention and rehabilitation. By lending their voice and influence, musicians can advocate for policies and programs that address the issue effectively. This collaboration can amplify the message and reach a wider audience.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on Individual difference and Agenda setting theories.

Individual Difference Theory

This theory was propounded by Melvin De fleur and Ball Rocheach in 1970 and it stipulates that mass media message delivered to the same audience has different reactions and effect on the individual members of the same audience. In order words, this theory explains that mass media messages contain stimulus attributes that interact with specific personality characteristics of the audience that in turn create different responses to the communication message. Therefore, each audience member has a unique psychological trait which determines how each person reacts to or influenced by the media message or information. The differences in the audience are determined by some factors known as selective exposure selective retention and selective attention. Relating this theory to this study, the media through constant exposure using music that promote war against drug to the audience will enhance the audience to select, retain as well as pay attention on such music and react to it differently. Some individuals select music as a tool for relaxation of the brain and motivation while some select music to fight against drug use as a powerful tool for drug addiction recovery and a painstaking property.

Agenda Setting Theory

The agenda setting theory by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw 1972 described the agenda setting theory as the media responsibility to order and organize the world for the people. What this implies is that the amount of prominence given to a particular issue or event affects the level of importance the public attach to it. It is of the fact that this theory provides that issues and events in society that form media content automatically becomes major issues of public discourse (Ukaegbu, 2018) based on the importance and attention given to such events by the media. The menace of drug abuse by people in Nigeria is causing a lot of harm than good and it is a vital issue of discourse. The importance attached to the same issues by the audience is proportionate to the same amount of importance attached to those issues by the media. Therefore, the importance the mass media attach in using music to promote war against drug abuse in the country determines the level of value the public, government and other institutions will give to illicit drug use. However, this theory posits that the mass media have

the capacity to influence public opinion in favor or against a given issue based on the importance the mass media place on them. In order words, the media using music that promotes war against drug abuse will cub this menace.

THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN USING MUSIC FOR PROMOTING WAR AGAINST DRUG ABUSE

The media plays a crucial role in addressing drug abuse and promoting anti- drug campaigns. The media can utilize music as a tool in the fight against drug abuse.

- Public Service Announcements (PSA): Television and radio stations along with online platforms, can create and broadcast PSAs featuring music to raise awareness about the dangers of drug abuse. These short messages often include catchy jingles or impactful songs that deliver a memorable anti-drug message to the audience.
- The media plays a crucial role in utilizing music as a vehicle for promoting the war against drug abuse. Firstly, the media serves as a platform for the dissemination of anti-drug messages conveyed through music. By broadcasting or streaming music that addresses the dangers and consequences of substance abuse, the media amplifies these messages and reaches a wide audience, including youth who are particularly susceptible to peer pressure and societal influences.
- Thirdly, the media can actively engage in campaigns and initiatives that spotlight musicians and artists who use their platforms to advocate against drug abuse. Through interviews, features, and special segments, the media can highlight the efforts of these artists, thereby increasing their visibility and impact.
- Moreover, the media can facilitate collaborations between musicians and organizations dedicated to combating drug abuse. By providing coverage of joint ventures and partnerships, the media can encourage other artists and stakeholders to join the cause, fostering a collective effort in the fight against drug abuse.
- Additionally, the media can leverage its influence to shape public perceptions and attitudes towards drug abuse. Through editorials, opinion pieces, and investigative reporting, the media can raise awareness about the societal implications of drug abuse and advocate for policy changes and interventions.
- Overall, the media serves as a powerful ally in using music to promote the war against drug abuse, amplifying anti-drug messages, spotlighting advocacy efforts, facilitating collaborations, and shaping public discourse and attitudes.

THE CASE OF USING MUSIC BY THE MEDIA AS A PERSUASIVE COMMUNICATION IN PROMOTING WAR AGAINST DRUG ABUSE

Music has the potential to engage people on a multitude of levels and it is capable of targeting a variety of treatment goals. It is our aim to see music that is used via the media to fight against the intake overdose of illicit drugs. Music has a way of lifting people's spirits even when they are in their darkest hour (drug addiction). Because of music's remarkable healing powers, it is referred to as an important persuasive communication of drug addiction recovery (Juergens, 2016). The media having programs that utilize music on prevention of drug abuse is a great way to help drug addicts and also people that are not drug abusers or addicts to say no to such life threatening situation. Constant showcasing of music that promotes war against drug abuse by the media will invariably be a helpful resource in drug abuse recovery. Many people listen to music almost every time and it can make one feel hopeful and at peace (Locco, 2020). Listening to different forms of music forces one's brain to pick the kind that works for the person. The mass media have been a major agent of socialization and tool for social change especially now that people depends on message from the media. Messages from the media come in various forms; news, documentaries, phone in programs, talk shows and

music. It could be possible to use mass media to get people to act on behalf of their own health and well being or to do right things (Neele, 2023). Looking at music that fight against drug abuse is the music by a Nigerian singer Olamide titled “Science student” this particular music discusses the rising rate of drug use in the society relating it with the life styles of the ghetto people and youths. In the music “Science student” it portrayed where youths are mixing different hard drugs in various quantities which gave rise to criticisms but the lyrics of the music is sending the message across for people to say no to drug abuse and live responsibly.

Criticisms and ban on this music was on a high rate because of the fact that the artist used his dialect but the aim is to promote war against drug abuse in the country. The fight against drug abuse using music as a communicative medium was addressed by the leading ICT Company, MTN Nigeria in their Anti-substance Abuse Program (ASAP) launching in 2018 as one of its corporate social responsibility initiatives, recognizing the power of music. The company collaborated with popular anti-drug abuse campaigner David Jones David to spread the message with the effective use of music as a tool. In Nigeria, music is the language the people understand especially youths. MTN used various songs by David Jones David like “Ghana Na Bastard”, “Higher” and “Onye Ara” to affect a wide range of audiences on social media platforms and online.

According to Vanguard, 2023, David Jones David’s music message continues to draw young followers from one tertiary institution to the other. These songs on the dangers of drug abuse has pulled massive crowd in higher institutions namely; Imo state university. Alvan Ikoku College of education in Imo state, College of Health Science and Technology, Rivers state. Through this MTN initiative using online media has used music to reach 102 locations across Nigeria and has been able to touch millions of young lives as young Nigerians are letting the music take control of their lives. A song that promotes fight against drug abuse is that of Ras Kimono, a renowned Nigerian reggae artist, was known for his strong advocacy against drug abuse. Through his music and public statements, he consistently addressed the issue and encouraged his audience to stay away from drugs. This artist Ras Kimono songs contained powerful lyrics that warned against the dangers of drug abuse. He used his music as a platform to educate and raise awareness among listeners. His songs highlighted the negative consequences of drug use, such as deteriorating health and societal decay. One of his notable albums titled ‘Under Pressure’ released in 1989, this album featured tracks that tackled social issues including drug abuse. The title track under pressure addressed the harmful effects of substance abuse and emphasized the importance of making positive choices. Ras Kimono’s advocacy against drug abuse was a significant contribution to the fight against drug abuse in Nigeria. The media should invariably play music on fight against drug abuse as it will help raise awareness, inspire change and promote a drug free society.

In a study conducted by Amphina Academy (2023) on the role of mass media in generating awareness against drug abuse. The study using 100 respondents from the international school of the University of Lagos revealed that the mass media use music and other modes of creating awareness among the students. More specifically, it is found that the electronic media (radio and television) was the principal medium from which the students obtain anti-drug message. The findings from the study also revealed that most respondents received the anti-drug message in form of drama, music, news feature articles and documentaries in that order.

CONCLUSION

The utilization of music as a medium for communication in advocating against drug abuse in Nigeria presents a potent and innovative approach to address this pressing societal issue. Through its emotive power and wide-reaching influence, music has the ability to resonate deeply with individuals across diverse demographics, effectively conveying messages of

awareness, prevention, and rehabilitation. By harnessing the creativity and reach of musicians, coupled with strategic collaboration with government agencies, NGOs, and community leaders, we can foster a culture of empowerment, education, and support in the fight against drug abuse. As we continue to leverage music as a tool for social change, let us remain steadfast in our commitment to promoting dialogue, fostering resilience, and building a healthier, drug-free future for generations to come.

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