

THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF RAP MUSIC ON CHILDREN

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Rap music has evolved from an artistic expression of reality to a business of heinousness marketed toward the youth. Despite the Parental Advisory Label on many records, nothing seems to stop young people from consuming egregious content. Hence the rap genre's influence on children has become so potent that it can persuade them to abuse prescription drugs, consume alcohol, physically harm others, have sexual relations, and despise their bodily image. Therefore, rap music has an overwhelmingly negative influence and impact on children who listen constantly.

The first adverse effect of rap music on children is that it gives the impression that the misuse of prescription drugs is acceptable. According to a study conducted by the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (2006), there was a significant correlation between rap music and substance abuse in participants aged 15-25. Additionally, researchers from the University of California, Berkeley (2008) have discovered a sixfold increase in drug use in the last two decades, suggesting that drug use trends correspond with positive depictions of substance abuse in rap music. These positive depictions of substance abuse have poisoned the minds of young listeners, and rappers that endorse substance abuse have influenced adolescents to take part in reckless behavior, in some cases, even while under the influence. For example, "Molly" Lil' Pump (2017) talks about using drugs before crashing a vehicle: "I'm off the Xans, and I pour me some lean/ I crash the Porsche, and I just left the scene." Lyrics like Lil' Pump's are pervasive throughout rap music and continue to influence the impressionable minds of children by encouraging reckless behavior that can send them down a path of no return.

In addition to drugs, research has shown that exposure to rap music can lead to the consumption of alcohol by adolescents. According to Primack (2014), "Every year, the average adolescent is exposed to about 3,000 references to alcohol brands while listening to music. We must understand the impact of these references in an age group that can be negatively affected by alcohol consumption." (p.1). The possible ramifications for these references may include associating a drink with a famous rapper. In the song "Broadway Girls" featuring Lil' Durk and Morgan Wallen (2022), the duo mentions, "Two Bud Lights deep, and she's sayin' things she don't mean." Bud Light is an alcoholic beverage that teens may recognize and consume just because of its endorsement by rappers that they idolize, such as Lil' Durk. Primack's (2014) study mentions the correlation between adolescents' recollection of alcoholic brands in popular songs and their actual consumption of those brands and how this influence is just as strong as parental and peer drinking. If rap music can influence teens to drink just as much as their peers, then one can infer that violence is also within its purview.

For instance, the violent imagery portrayed in rap music tends to incite intemperate and vicious behavior amongst its young listeners. Teens who listen to harsher rap forms such as "drill" often attempt to replicate its content to gain notoriety or monetary gains using harmful methods such as robbery or murder. The rapper Tay-K, who is currently serving prison time for murder, credited his main influences growing up as SouljaBoy and Chief Keef, both artists whose music contains many violent references that encourage murder. The latter, whose song "Don't Like" (Chief Keef, 2012), includes references to gun violence: "Pistol totin' and I'm shootin' on sight." According to an article by Pitchfork (2019), these influences were so prominent that Tay-K, who was then sixteen, participated in a home invasion robbery that

resulted in the death of a 21-year-old man. In addition to the crime, Tay-K proceeded to rap about the incident and attempted to flee law enforcement. Upon observation, rap music's glamorization of violence and unlawful acts provides the youth with false interpretations of success and encourages violent solutions to problems that may become deadly.

Likewise, rap music's sexually explicit lyrics and images can influence young listeners to engage in unsafe sexual activity. In the song "Every Girl" (Young Money, 2009), multiple stanzas describe sleeping with a sorority of women and how doing so deems praise. One rapper on the song says: "I just want to fuck every girl in the world /My role model was Wilt." The name "Wilt" in this song references Wilt Chamberlain, a famous basketball player in the 1960s who reportedly slept with over twenty-thousand women (Cherry, 2006). The song implies that Chamberlain's promiscuity is an accomplishment that deserves reverence and even says that Chamberlain is a role model. Young listeners whose minds are quite malleable seem to hear and watch sexually explicit content such as "Every Girl" and try to emulate such risky behavior. According to Jackson (2018), "Researchers at Florida International University have found that the more time African American adolescents spent watching the sexualized images in Hip Hop videos, the more likely they were to engage in sexually risky behavior themselves and endorse it in their peers." (p.1). This research suggests that children's consumption of sexually explicit content in rap music can lead to participation in sexual activity that may result in unwarranted pregnancies and even sexually transmitted diseases.

Similarly, rap music can negatively influence young girls' self-esteem about their appearance. According to research from the Rollins School of Public Health, Emory Center for AIDS Research (2007), when girls aged 14 to 18 were exposed to hypersexual images in Hip Hop

videos, they were more likely to have a negative body image. The research suggests that young girls who view Hip Hop videos that oversexualize women may contribute to body dysmorphia because they feel their bodies are not adequate with the standard put before them in such videos. For example, in Cardi B's (2020) music video for "WAP," there are various women with slim bodies dressed in sexually provocative clothing, emphasizing certain body parts that some girls may not feel confident about since they are still developing. With the overwhelming amount of salacious content in Hip Hop videos, there is reasonable suspicion that the trend of negative body image will persist and continue to infect the young minds of adolescents.

In summary, rap music's influence on children is severely negative with the flooding of sexually explicit content, drug use, violence, alcohol, and hypersexual imagery. The research on rap music has demonstrated how sexual content and oversexualized themes in rap music can affect adolescents' image of themselves and convince them to engage in unsafe sexual behavior. Moreover, the research shows how promoting alcohol and drugs in rap influences children to partake in these substances for recreational purposes. Furthermore, rap music's encouragement of violent acts has given young listeners bad examples of conducting themselves in society. Rap music continues to latch onto negative societal concepts and does not seem to be changing anytime soon. Perhaps a renaissance of some sort will take place and revitalize the ideals that conceived the genre in the first place. Only time will tell.

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