

Gengetone Music: Sexuality, Misogyny and Gender Representation in Popular Media

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of gengetone music in mainstream Kenyan media, particularly its effect on social perceptions of gender, sexuality, and cultural identity. It investigates the genre's endorsement of sexualisation, misogyny, and skewed gender representation, by employing feminist and cultural analysis frameworks to investigate how gengetone both mirrors and perpetuates gender stereotypes, frequently representing women as objects for male pleasure while depicting themes of nightlife, casual sex, and substance consumption. It focuses on understanding how gengetone sustains these stereotypes and the implications for female agency and gender dynamics in Kenya's music industry. It posits that gengetone's material, although aligned with urban youth culture, may unintentionally perpetuate detrimental gender biases. The study thus establishes its topical significance, as the swift rise of gengetone's popularity among Kenyan youth renders the analysis of its cultural meanings essential for comprehending its broader social implications. It evaluates the genre's capacity to influence the identities and viewpoints of young listeners on gender roles, investigating how exposure to these representations may affect self-esteem, body image, and societal norms. The scope encompasses an emphasis on Kenyan gengetone, particularly analysing lyrics and video content as the principal data sources. This research enhances discourse on gender representation in popular music, calling for a balanced and socially aware portrayal of women that honours diversity and empowers audiences. The research therefore deepens comprehension of gender dynamics in Kenyan popular culture, emphasizing the media's capacity to uphold or contest existing gender norms.

Key Words: Gengetone, Misogyny, Sexualisation

INTRODUCTION

Mass media frequently depicts men and women in different sexualised behaviours or as objects of sexual pleasure (Ward 2016). The practice of sexualising both men and women is commonly employed to capture the attention of customers by emphasizing physical attractiveness and stimulating sexual connections with the product (Gill 2008; Lazar 2006). Sexualisation is a concept that involves examining a person's appearance and

can take on several forms. The idea can encompass an emphasis on physical attractiveness, a focus on sexual allure, or a concentration on a person's sexual characteristics and anticipated wants, as demonstrated by their sexual enthusiasm (Morris and Goldenberg, 2015). Sexual objectification refers to the act of treating a person as a mere object of sexual desire (Fredrickson et al., 1998). By drawing a comparison between objectification and gengetone, I highlight the significant problem of the sexualisation and marginalization of women. Therefore, this study contends that the sexualisation, sexism, and imbalanced gender portrayal propagated by gengetone in popular media cultivates a culture that promotes the disrespectful treatment of women. Gengetone, a prevalent trend in Kenyan popular media, is known for its exaggerated depiction of masculinity in males and the objectification of women. This paper analyses the widespread impact of gengetone in Kenyan popular media and its contribution to perpetuating detrimental stereotypes and gender disparity.

Gengetone is a music genre that draws inspiration from Genge, a renowned Kenyan hip-hop genre that gained popularity during the 2000s. Gengetone is characterized as a swiftly expanding movement due to its widespread appeal among young people. It has also been identified as the emerging sound emanating from the streets of Kenya (Storm, 2020). This music genre gained popularity in 2018 with a specific focus on appealing to the younger generation. The gengetone genre has rapidly dominated the Kenyan music business, primarily due to the widespread influence of popular media platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and television programs. According to Odidi (2020), Gengetone artistes have recognized the impact of the internet, which has dramatically boosted their artistic output as they are highly active online. Additionally, he argues that any conversation about Kenyan music would be incomplete without addressing the profound influence of gengetone.

Gengetone draws inspiration from the American hip-hop music genre, which has faced criticism for its gender prejudices and detrimental effects on women, particularly when combined with African-American culture, both historically and currently. Gangsta rap, a sub-genre of hip-hop, has singers like Eazy-E, Dr. Dre, and Snoop Dogg, whose song lyrics depict women as objects of sexual gratification and as being subordinate to men (Giovacchini 1999). According to Weitzer & Kubrin (2009), there was a period from 1987 to 1993 when more than 400 hip-hop songs contained lyrics that promoted violence against women, such as rape, assault, and murder. Therefore, hip-hop perpetuated the dominance of masculinity by portraying women as persons dependent on men to be valuable or to obtain importance (Weitzer et al., 2009).

The music group 'Ethic' is credited with pioneering the genre of gengetone through their contentious and explicit song *Lamba Lolo*, which featured coded lyrics. This song is recognized as the original catalyst for the development of Gengetone (Mbuti, 2019; Kasuku, 2020; Wangeci, 2021). Genge refers to a collective group of individuals, loosely translated to English as 'gang.' When used in relation to music, genge identifies as the music representing ordinary people. Gengetone utilizes complex and layered single-track drones with thin or thick textures and intermittent melodic elements produced by synthesizers. The percussion consists of snappy, gritty, and rhythmic snares. It is distinguished by its menacing, explicit raw vocals and lyrical material expressed in *sheng* (Kasuku, 2020). Typical topics are the overall existence in impoverished urban areas and the cultural aspects of the streets. The topics covered range from nightlife to casual sexual activity, twerking, amusing news snippets, and even the use of recreational drugs (Mbuti, 2019). The explicit lyrics of gengetone are complemented by captivating rhythms that make up for the absence of philosophical depth in the majority, if not all, of gengetone's songs (Kasuku, 2020). The genre has gained popularity among young people and has been heavily inspired by urban street culture (Musyimi, 2020, Storm, 2020).

It is crucial to acknowledge that other research investigations have been conducted on the prevalent music genres in Kenya. Kasyoka (2021) argues that gengetone music and its performers have a pervasive, intricate, and far-reaching cultural influence on creating a general identity. In addition, Kasyoka observes that gengetone music can have both adverse and beneficial effects on the development and maturation of one's personality. The prudence exhibited in gengetone music can facilitate personal development characterized by integrity, transparency, and reverence. Conversely, the problematic content can have a detrimental impact on individuals, leading to the development of violent behaviour, drug misuse, and involvement in underage sexual activities. Kasyoka emphasizes that Gengetone music can have detrimental and beneficial effects on personality maturation and advancement. According to Wanjala & Kebaya (2016), popular music is crucial in understanding and shaping young people's identity. This elucidates why most Kenyan youth actively engage in music, as it provides them with more than just ordinary amusement. The significance of music in developing and moulding identity cannot be denied, as music serves as a crucial cultural domain where identities are validated, questioned, dismantled, and reconstructed. A significant number of adolescents utilize music and revered musicians as a means to differentiate themselves from their peers. Therefore, the selection of music among young people frequently acts as a significant indicator of the personality and essence of an evolving

identity. Music provides enjoyment and enhances one's life, but the cultivation and manifestation of musical preferences can also be a significant declaration of one's identity. The pop music genre has had the most considerable allure and influence on most young people in Kenya. The impact of the medium and its artists on the development of total identity is widespread, intricate, and has significant cultural importance (Wanjala & Kebaya, 2016).

Nyairo and Ogude (2003) argue that popular music can express societal issues by incorporating relevant topics, worries, events, sounds, and experiences into its songs. Evan Mwangi (2004) examines the phenomenon of modern popular music through a socio-cultural lens. His main area of emphasis is the correlation between emerging music art forms and worldwide cultural patterns. Wa Mungai (2014) explores the impact of United States hip-hop culture on the local music scene, reflecting and elaborating on a similar relationship. He exemplifies the symbolic potency and cultural connections that define the youth and their processes of identity building. Koster (2013) contends that hip-hop music has engendered a novel wave of transformative vitality among the urban young residing in the impoverished areas of Nairobi and Mombasa. Koster further demonstrates the efficacy of hip-hop in conveying messages of healing, empowerment, and solidarity, thereby sowing the seeds for transformative action. Mukasa (2022) argues that the rise in popularity of gengetone, an underground street music genre, can be examined as a resistance against social marginalization. Furthermore, the suppression of the genre is influenced by normative perceptions of what qualifies as legitimate music. This article discusses the political aspects of Kenyan urban street music and explores the gengetone genre in connection to the concept of an original Kenyan genre. Mukasa analyses specific lyrics by gengetone musicians like Ethic, Sailors, Boondocks Gang, Mbogi Genje, Ssasura, Ochungulo family, and Zzero Sufuri. The study takes a critical approach to aesthetic standards in popular music and contends that the lyrics of the stated artists can be seen as a unique sort of literature. Mukasa takes on a viewpoint that rigorously examines the conventional beauty standards in popular music. This technique is pertinent to this study as it promotes a more profound examination of the lyrical substance and artistic manifestation inside Gengetone music. Through an analysis of the lyrical content produced by gengetone artists, one can gain a deeper comprehension of how themes such as sexualisation, misogyny, and imbalanced gender portrayal are expressed and perpetuated within this genre.

MISOGYNY AND SEXUALITY IN GENGETONE MUSIC

An interdisciplinary method integrating feminist theory and cultural analysis is utilized to examine the impact of gengetone in Kenyan popular culture. The data-gathering methods encompass the utilization of content analysis on music videos and lyrics extracted from five genge songs. To effectively analyze the data, the study necessitated a substantial quantity of audio-visual data spanning the past five years. A substantial number of music videos from the gengetone genre were chosen from YouTube as raw data. Subsequently, these recordings would undergo analysis to identify and eliminate patterns in the perpetuated culture. This study thus examines five music videos purposively sampled and acquired from YouTube and subjected to analysis. The songs are *Tarimbo* by Ethic (2020), *Angie* by Boutross (2023), *Shika Tumbler* by Mandy (2023), *Kidole* by Boondocks Gang (2020), and *Nyama* (2021), a freestyle rap by Ssar.

The portrayal of women in gengetone music lyrics and videos tends to be degrading, and sexualised. Videos often portray idealized female bodies and depict women as being the object of male pleasure. This misogynist representation of women as over-sexualised objects and also as placeholders in gengetone music videos determine identity, mental and sexual growth, body image, and gender agency among women. The pervasiveness of misogynist, sexist, and graphic music videos and lyrics on television and the internet has led many adults and young people to assume that what they see and hear is rendered acceptable while socializing with women (Tobias 2014). Therefore, this interaction unconsciously develops ideas around the target audience's understanding of femininity and masculinity. Miles (2000) argues that young people's lifestyles – 'lived cultures in which individuals actively express their identities but do so in direct relation to their position as regards the dominant culture' – are the social manifestations of specific identity positions. Music can construct new identities while simultaneously reflecting on existing ones, implying that any form of music, popular music included, can be used as a means by which we formulate and express our identities (MacDonald et al. 2002). Due to the high frequency of songs with lyrics that are demeaning, depicting sexual violence or sexual assault towards women, it is essential to continue the discourse about the representation of women in gengetone music lyrics and videos and the consequences of such sexualised portrayal.

The videos selected for this study feature women dressed in revealing clothing engaging in provocative dance while men engage in inappropriate touching. The culture propagated by gengetone is thus not an exemplar of gender equality. The song *Tarimbo* by Ethic promotes rape culture with its lyrics, specifically the line *Mi huchapa chapa na nakanyaga, namwaga bila hata*

permission, which implies non-consensual intercourse when the man ejaculates without needing the lady's consent. Given the suggestive lyrics and graphics, numerous moral problems arise regarding the extent to which gengetone, an art style often employing derogatory means to depict women, can be justified. This study investigates whether these sights and phrases influence individuals, prompting them to behave in a particular manner conforming to their assigned gender role. Whether there is a logical justification for the observation that the Genge music industry primarily generates the highest profits by exploiting the commodification of the feminine physique, and why, despite the deprecatory lyrics that openly promote sexual harassment, highly educated women appear to appreciate the rhythm and flow of the music and enjoy it without questioning the bias.

The music video for *Angie* by Boutross features ladies dancing, showcasing their prominently huge buttocks. In the first scene, around ten scantily clad women encircle a male lying in a prone position, exposing their posterior, and highlighting sexual allure. Although these representations imply agency, they are constructed to meet the expectations of a male audience, so perpetuating the objectification of women's bodies as influenced by the male gaze. The lyrics are as follows:

*Angie Angie baddie
Shake your shake your body
Angie, know you want me
Try me, try me
Angela, I know you like teasin; I know
You like freakin'. I know you sound easy
Angela, am I the one schemin; am I the
One cheatin, or you just don't feel me?*

Furthermore, the majority of camera angles and shots predominantly centre on the female body, serving primarily as sexual objects rather than contributing any significant meaning to the narrative. The film depicts the artistes exerting dominance over the female vixens and dancers by touching them and treating them as possessions that are part of their money and property.

The lyrics of Boondocks Gang's *Kidole* aim to establish a comparison between women and drugs. The concept of upward mobility and opulent living is reduced to the pursuit of drugs and carnal desires. This concept perpetuates the notion that all women possess a specific desire for men and an inherent inclination to engage in sexual activity with them. The lyrics are as follows:

<i>Nina ikus kama saba</i>	I have Nine Vaginas
<i>Murang'a (Kidole)</i>	In Murang'a (finger)
<i>Na tuvajo ka sita</i>	And six virgins in
<i>Na manga (kidolee)</i>	Namanga (finger)
<i>MaKardashian ka tisa</i>	And nine Kardashians
<i>Wako jaba</i>	who are high
<i>Niko high na</i>	I'm high and
<i>Usizime hiyo ngwai</i>	Don't put out that weed
<i>Hapa kwa ndae</i>	Here in the car
<i>Kunanuka njoti why</i>	Smells of sex, why?
<i>Ikus yake inaeza</i>	Her vagina
<i>Washa tyre ngai</i>	Can ignite a car's tyre
<i>Na ni chafu ye ni mtaro</i>	And it's dirty; it's like a ditch
<i>Yani dumping site</i>	Like a dumping site

These lyrics overtly reduce women to objects and enslaved people whose sole purpose is to pleasure the performers in the music video. Furthermore, the utilization of objectionable language to depict women and the widespread appeal of these artists serve to normalize the act of demeaning women. The opening verse delineates the artiste's possession of multiple women, linking each to a particular physical attribute. This depiction seems to diminish women's uniqueness, portraying them through physical characteristics rather than as individuals. Such representations prompt an examination of how these lyrical selections influence the genre's artistic expression and cultural narratives around gender roles and identity. This objectification fulfils a twofold function within the genre: it attracts an audience acquainted with its provocative style while exploiting sensationalist themes that enhance viewing, popularity, and commercial success. In this setting, the depiction of women's bodies serves not merely as an aesthetic or narrative decision but also as a marketing instrument, indicative of broader media practices that frequently exploit gendered imagery for financial profit. These lyrics portray women with a narrow emphasis on physical characteristics, prioritizing appearance over individuality. These depictions conform to persistent stereotypes in the genre, wherein women are frequently shown as objects of desire or commodities, mirroring themes that resonate with the genre's intended audience. This method can function as both a stylistic preference and a mechanism for captivating audiences, using themes that enhance the music's allure and commercial viability. This aligns with Simone de Beauvoir's (1949) observation that the socialization process in a patriarchal

environment severely damages women, leading to self-objectification, narcissism, narrow-mindedness, and a reliance on the approval of others as common feminine objectives.

Drawing from feminist perspectives espoused by prominent theorists Simone de Beauvoir, Bell Hooks, and Judith Butler, these verses underscore the systemic oppression and devaluation of women within patriarchal structures. Simone de Beauvoir's seminal work, *The Second Sex*, illuminates how women are often reduced to their physical attributes and assigned subordinate roles in society, echoing the objectification evident in the portrayal of women as numerical comparisons and body parts. Bell Hooks' intersectional feminism emphasizes the interconnected nature of gender, race, and class oppression, highlighting how women of marginalized identities experience compounded forms of exploitation and dehumanization. Judith Butler's theories on gender performativity elucidate how societal norms dictate prescribed roles for individuals based on their assigned gender, perpetuating harmful stereotypes and limiting expressions of identity (Beauvoir, 1949; Hooks, 1984; Butler, 1990). Through this feminist lens, the verses in gengetone reflect patriarchal attitudes toward women and prompt critical interrogation of the systems of power that perpetuate their subjugation and marginalization.

Beauvoir (1984) asserts that women are frequently reduced to their physical characteristics and assigned inferior positions in society, reflecting the objectification seen in the depiction of women as mere numerical comparisons and body parts. According to Hooks (1984), women from marginalized backgrounds endure compounded instances of exploitation and dehumanization. Butler (1990) opines that societal conventions enforce specific roles for people depending on their assigned gender, which leads to the continuation of damaging stereotypes and restricts the ability to express one's identity. Therefore, the verses in gengetone not only serve as a reflection of patriarchal attitudes towards women but also prompt critical interrogation of the systems of power that perpetuate their subjugation and marginalization. However, the genre has not been immune to criticism. A prominent adversary in this genre has been Dr. Ezekiel Mutua, the former Chief Executive of the Kenya Film and Classification Board, who is commonly referred to as the "moral policeman" because of his strict position and banning of creative works that are considered to be offensive (Carpus, 2020). Dr. Mutua criticized the media and artists for pushing content that he deems unsuitable for Kenyan consumption, referring to it as "ratchet content" (Carpus, 2020). The Chief Executive of the Film Board prohibited some gengetone songs, including *Tarimbo* by Ethic and *Wamlambezi* by Sailors Gang (Storm, 2020). Dr Mutua further promised to actively pursue the removal of the contentious gengetone artists' songs from the central social media

platform, YouTube (Carpus, 2020). Kasuku (2020) characterized Sailors' song *Wamlambezi* as explicit erotica. Mbuthia (2019) also observes that the majority of songs in this genre have a significant amount of sexual imagery, both in their lyrics and visual presentation.

Mukasa (2022) argues that gengetone genre's tendency to diverge from conventional norms, allowing for greater freedom of expression, has contributed to its growing popularity among young people, mainly due to its adoption of *sheng* as its primary means of communication. *Sheng* is a language that diverges from the everyday language, subverting the norm. Although *Sheng* alone may not directly encourage the sexual objectification of women, its incorporation into gengetone music contributes to this phenomenon in multiple ways. The utilization of *sheng* in conveying these messages normalizes and validates the dehumanization and sexualisation of women within the genre. Due to its association with urban youth culture and defiance of conventional standards, the usage of *sheng* to communicate sexual themes strengthens society's notions of women as sexual objects. The term *sheng* functions as a linguistic cypher and subcultural marker inside the realm of gengetone music, fostering a feeling of selectiveness and camaraderie among its audience. Within this subculture, the utilization of sexually explicit language and imagery is perceived as a way to demonstrate masculinity and adhere to exaggerated masculine standards, which frequently involve treating women's bodies as objects to be bought and sold. Furthermore, *sheng* in gengetone music significantly impacts how its primarily young audience views and engages with women. Through the process of repeatedly listening to and internalizing songs that show women in an excessively sexualised way, individuals begin to perceive these depictions as typical and permissible, thereby promoting the acceptance and normality of excessive sexualisation in society.

According to Hebdige (1979), subcultures frequently oppose prevailing cultural norms, question established power hierarchies, and demand alternative forms of expression. Gengetone artists engage in cultural resistance by using *sheng* as a language marker of subversion and creating provocative lyrics and visuals. In addition, Hebdige (1979) highlights the importance of style in expressing subcultures' identity. Within the realm of gengetone, various aspects like clothes, language, and performance aesthetics are utilized as indicators of membership in the subculture, effectively conveying its ideals and ideologies. The Gengetone subculture's exploration of identity and power dynamics mirrors the broader socio-cultural context of Kenya, where the concerns of gender inequality and sexual objectification are actively debated and resolved. Hence, gengetone emerges as a subculture in which the frequent exposure to sexually explicit lyrics and imagery assists

the normalization of objectifying women. This, in turn, contributes to the reinforcement of gender stereotypes and the perpetuation of unequal power dynamics.

OBJECTIFICATION TO EMPOWERMENT: FEMALE RAPPERS IN THE CONTEXT OF GENGETONE

The exclusion of female vocalization and viewpoint is a problem that has become characteristic of popular hip-hop music. The recording industry is more reluctant to support female artists than its male counterparts. Moreover, when it does provide support, it frequently prioritizes their sexuality rather than their musical substance and artistic talents (Nielson 2014). While female dancers and vixens are commonly included in gengetone music videos, their roles typically focus on visually enhancing male-centric narratives. This mismatch indicates that, although women are prominently featured in gengetone media, they are predominantly assigned roles that prioritize physicality rather than artistic input. Conversely, female musicians and rappers striving for acknowledgment of their voice and lyrical talents encounter a more arduous journey to prominence. The limited success of female musicians in this genre may indicate persistent industry biases that affect production and promotion decisions, especially regarding assumptions about audience preferences. Thus, although female dancers are often popular, female rappers encounter greater institutional obstacles to being acknowledged as significant voices in the genre. According to Muhammad (2010), female performers in rap music face disadvantages and have fewer opportunities than their male counterparts.

This study contends that female gengetone artists employ explicit vocabulary commonly connected with the genre to assert their authority, autonomy and agency. Although female rappers have succeeded, their representation in the mainstream industry remains very low. Despite the explicit lyrics and veiled obscenities, female artists utilize these elements to traverse a predominantly male-dominated industry and assert the fact that the gengetone music genre is inherently linked to the exploitation of women. The genre relies on the commercialization of the female body to attain appeal. In Mandy's *Bubbly Bubbly*, the artist demonstrates her authority and autonomy through the lyrics she presents. She explicitly states that she is not interested in committing to a long-term relationship and expects the man to engage in sexual activity with her solely for pleasure.

<i>Na nikifika, unajua masaa</i>	And when I arrive, you know the time
<i>Nikirusha unapapasa</i>	When I throw it, you touch it
<i>Na nikiitisha we harakisha</i>	And when I demand it, you hurry
<i>Na niki-na-niki</i>	And when I when I

Boychild anadai nimpatie ka family

Kama Kabi na Milly, tutoi tuhappily

Mi s idem wa kusettle, ma dream si reality

*Kula kitu hungry hungry
hungrily*

The boychild demands
that I give him a family

Like Kabi and Milly with
happy kids

I'm not the type to settle,
dreams aren't reality

Eat something, hungry

Sylvia Ssaru conveys female sexuality in her ground-breaking freestyle rap, *Nyama*, by employing graphic sexual material. Below are some excerpts from her lyrics:

Yangu ni tight na haiku dry

Najua imesmile inangoja matime

Najua uko high venye una syke

Nataka uichape mpake ukinai

Na storo sema hii mchezo

Kable uicheze unakulanga moshi

Na mwili ni ya mtu wa mjengo

Kabla unibomoe peana notice

My vagina is tight

I know it's smiling, waiting for the
right time

I know you're high the way you're
psyched

I want you to hit it until you're
satisfied

And tell me the story about this
game

Before you play it, you inhale the
smoke

And your body is like that of a
construction worker

Before you break me down, give
me notice

This study argues that being explicit is a means of gaining power within the framework of regaining control over one's own body and sexuality. By referencing feminist scholars like Audre Lorde and Bell Hooks, who advocate for marginalized voices and challenge patriarchal norms, the explicit lyrics in question can be interpreted as a deliberate expression of female sexual agency (Lorde, 1984; Hooks, 1984). Female rappers question the prevailing male-centric narratives about female sexuality and establish their autonomy by freely discussing sex and desire, so asserting their freedom to define and express their wishes on their terms. This might be interpreted as a rebellion against the male gaze and a refusal to conform to the conventional norm that women should passively exist as objects of male desire. In addition, female rappers challenge traditional ideas of femininity that typically value purity and innocence by including their sexuality in their work. This defiance of

patriarchal limitations on women's autonomy and self-expression is a significant disruption (Mulvey, 1975). Therefore, the clarity and directness of the lyrics can be understood as a strong declaration of personal authority and independence, aiming to give women strength and confront male-dominated systems that aim to govern and manipulate female sexual expression.

Nevertheless, the influence of explicit lyrics by both female and male rappers on young people is intricate and diverse. Repeated exposure to sexualised language and behaviour can lead to the normalization of such behaviour, which may desensitize young people to the potential adverse outcomes of engaging in sexual activity. Furthermore, these lyrics can shape young listeners' perceptions of gender roles and relationships. The songs mostly depict women as sexual objects, hence fostering the internalization of detrimental gender norms and expectations among young audiences. Finally, the presence of explicit lyrics and videos that strongly emphasize physical attractiveness and sexual ability has a significant influence on the body image and self-esteem of young listeners. Young women, in particular, tend to internalize the notion that their worth is primarily determined by their sexual appeal or their capacity to please men. This can have a detrimental impact on their self-esteem and perception of their value. Women may also be influenced by the provocative attire shown in music videos, leading them to accept these extreme dress rules and sexualisation as the standard.

The impact of Gengetone music on youth is complex, as the genre's explicit lyrics and controversial subjects frequently influence perceptions of sexuality, gender roles, and societal dynamics. Research and anecdotal evidence indicate that extended exposure to such content may facilitate normalizing specific behaviours, including nonchalant attitudes about relationships and an emphasis on superficial physical characteristics. Conversely, Gengetone can function as a vehicle for self-expression and cultural critique, offering youth relatable content that mirrors their everyday experiences and socio-economic contexts. Thus, although the genre may perpetuate detrimental preconceptions, it simultaneously facilitates conversation and critique of societal standards, predominantly when guided by educators and parents.

CONCLUSION

Gengetone music perpetuates male supremacy and portrays women as reliant on males, a trend observable in the lyrics and imagery that depicts women as objects of male desire with idealized, objectified physiques. Since its inception, gengetone has represented women in a manner that underscores a profound inclination towards male dominance and objectification, emphasizing the necessity for systemic change to alter these

representations. Furthermore, the genre's exaltation of tobacco, alcohol, and illegal substances emphasizes the artists' endeavours to construct a defiant public persona, frequently contrasting with prevailing societal standards. By referencing the ghetto or hood, gengetone singers affirm their territorial presence and combat daily adversities, including interpersonal problems and societal challenges. This study concludes that modifying the portrayal of women in gengetone necessitates a thorough transformation of the conditions and values influencing the genre's production, facilitating a more equitable approach that could elevate the genre's cultural relevance while maintaining its rhythmic and linguistic creativity, dynamic beats, and lively dance styles, which resonate with and celebrate local identities. While the representation of women in gengetone lyrics and videos leans towards overt sexualisation, it is crucial to acknowledge the genre's creative characteristics. Gengetone artists have built a unique, inventive language that resonates with youth culture, employing rhythmic inventiveness that encapsulates and celebrates local identities and experiences. The artistic components enhance gengetone's appeal and cultural significance, articulating the sentiments of a generation and cultivating a distinct niche within Kenya's music scene. Nonetheless, the issue persists in reconciling these expressive attributes with more affirmative, respectful portrayals of gender, which could enhance gengetone's appeal and augment its cultural relevance. Notwithstanding its controversies, gengetone music has demonstrated resilience and evolved, currently referred to as *Arbantone*, signifying its adaptation and lasting allure within modern Kenyan culture.

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