

Addressing Violence against Women through Zimbabwean Hip-Hop Music: A Case Study of Holy Ten's Selected Songs

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Abstract

Violence against women (VAW) remains a pervasive social issue in Zimbabwe, often perpetuated by entrenched cultural norms and limited public discourse. In recent years, popular music — particularly hip-hop — has emerged as a powerful medium for addressing social injustices and advocating for change. The purpose of this study is to examine how VAW is represented and addressed in Zimbabwean hip-hop music, focusing on selected songs by Holy Ten, one of the country's most influential contemporary artists. Specifically, the study investigates how his music influences public awareness and attitudes toward VAW. A qualitative, exploratory research design was employed, using purposive sampling to select four of Holy Ten's songs: *Pfumo* (Spear) (2022), *Kumba Kune Vanhu* (There are People at Home) (2020), *Pandichamuka* (When I Wake Up) (2021), and *MaChills* (Chills) (2021). Data was collected through lyrical analysis and supported by secondary sources such as interviews, online articles, and audience commentary on digital platforms. The findings reveal that Holy Ten's music vividly portrays various forms of VAW, including economic exploitation, emotional manipulation, and domestic abuse. His narrative style not only critiques societal norms but also raises awareness and promotes dialogue on these issues. Additionally, the study found that his music fosters a deeper public understanding of the complexities surrounding VAW and influences attitudes towards rejecting violence in personal and communal spaces. The study concludes that Holy Ten's work contributes significantly to shifting public perceptions and encouraging positive behavioural change. It recommends that more artists leverage their platforms to address VAW and partner with advocacy initiatives to amplify their social impact. This study ultimately underscores the transformative potential of music as a tool for confronting deeply rooted social issues.

Keywords: Violence against women, Holy Ten, Zim hip-hop music, Music journalism

1 Introduction and Background

Violence against women (VAW) especially in connection with sexual and intimate relationship abuse is a serious public health issue and a violation of women's human rights (WHO, 2024). It compromises the health, dignity, and human rights of women and girls as it appears in various forms such as emotional manipulation, physical abuse, and sexual violence. VAW has multiple causes that vary by context. In many African contexts, for instance, it is linked to traditional gender roles, patriarchy, and socio-economic factors such as poverty and unemployment (Baldasare, 2012). In Zimbabwe, VAW is linked to socio-economic factors like poverty and unemployment, alcohol and drug abuse, and a patriarchal societal structure (Musarandega et al., 2021). To address the challenge of violence against women, it is necessary to implement multidimensional interventions that challenge the ingrained gender inequality that supports these abuses, and to provide assistance to victims while also promoting social change.

At the international level, there have been several conventions and protocols aimed at reducing violence against women. These include, but are not limited to the Convention on the Elimination of

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All Forms of Violence against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Platform for Action, and Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. In addition to these, in October 2000 the United Nations Security Council unanimously passed the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) to address violence against women in wars and other dysfunctional conflicts. At the regional level, the Maputo Protocol provides a progressive framework to reduce VAW in Africa. Zimbabwe is a signatory to a legion of international and regional protocols on gender and women empowerment (Changa & Ndawana, 2024). It ratified CEDAW in 1991 and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (also known as the Maputo Protocol) in 2007. Zimbabwe also endorsed the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development in 2009 (Zhou et al., 2022).

At the national level, the country has also shown its commitment to reduce VAW through legal, institutional and policy frameworks. The Domestic Violence Act of 2007 signifies a crucial step in protecting women from violence within families. This is also supported by the Gender Based Violence Strategy (2012-2025), which provides some guidelines on how to tackle VAW. Despite all these efforts, VAW remains a pervasive problem globally, with statistics indicating that 1 in every 3 women has experienced violence (WHO, 2021). In complementing the legal, policy, and institutional efforts to curb VAW, music has come in handy to challenge the dominant attitudes and beliefs that lubricate VAW. The centrality of music in fighting VAW lies in the fact that it plays a large role in African culture (Chitando & Chitando, 2008) and can therefore provide a powerful outlet for challenging negative attitudes against women.

African popular music has been deployed to address societal ills in Zimbabwe such as drug abuse, economic collapse, political violence and bad governance (Gwekwerere et al., 2018); Ureke & Washaya, 2016). As such, its power in voicing against VAW cannot be dismissed. As argued by Chitando and Chitando (2008, p. 62), 'music accompanies the African from the cradle to the grave', it imparts values, entertains, consoles the bereaved and cements relationships. Because of this inherent quality, music can thus be a formidable force in shaping or reconfiguring society's attitudes (Mutanda, 2024), including those related to VAW. Bastein (2009, p. 1358) confirms this observation by arguing that songs in Africa have been used as forms of narrative intervention, often incorporated into entertainment education strategies. Zimbabwean popular musicians such as Oliver Mtukudzi have used their music to address various social ills, including VAW. Mtukudzi, for instance, utilised language in his music to fight for women's and children's rights and agitate for the reconstruction of an African identity. His music is both functional and valid art as it advances Africanity in a multicultural context (Mapuranga, 2012). However, in light of the matter at hand, it should be noted that the power of music is not one way, as different genres of music have different impacts on the issue of VAW with some genres reinforcing negative stereotypes and attitudes towards gender and sexuality, while others may challenge and transform them (Ayinla & Amenaghawon, 2021; Mlamla et al., 2021). As such the impact of music on VAW is complex and multifaceted, involving factors such as the content of the music, the context in which it is produced and consumed, and the cultural and social norms that it expresses and shapes (Simmonds, 2022; Kung'u & Kamau, 2023).

The significance of popular music in addressing VAW is two-fold. First, VAW is not a problem that is easily controlled with legislation because laws are difficult to enforce in the domestic sphere, and the cause of the problem lies in people's attitudes: toward women, violence, the nature and purpose of marriage. To exemplify, South Africa still faces high levels of violence against women despite registering more than 26 years of democracy and having some progressive laws against it (Morchain et al., 2015). This is partly because of the country's inability to observe and honour its own constitution on matters of equity and equality. Even in Zimbabwe, violence against women continues to increase despite the passing of legislation on gender-based violence such as the Domestic Violence Act of 2006 (Chuma & Chazovachii, 2012). Therefore, people's ways of thinking are the place to look for both causes and remedies of violence against women. Behavioural change, and this means cultural change, is needed. Second, music, as a central aspect of reality in Africa (Nketia, 1974), can be an important vehicle to both express and influence people's attitudes on matters of violence against women.

This study focuses on Zim hip-hop, a genre that emerged from the marginalized and oppressed communities of the African diaspora and which has been used as a tool for social critique, resistance, and

empowerment. In Zimbabwe, hip-hop has been growing in popularity and influence especially among the youth, who use it to voice their opinions and aspirations on various issues including VAW. This study believes that Zim hip-hop is well-suited to communicate and manage VAW because of its roots in social critique and resistance, its popularity and influence among the youth, and its potential for creative and innovative expression given that Zimbabwe is a youthful nation. This is confirmed by the 2022 Population and Housing Census which reveals that the youth constitute 46% of the population in Zimbabwe (ZIMSTATS, 2022). It is argued in this study that hip-hop in Zimbabwe has developed into a powerful platform for underrepresented voices, enabling musicians to address and reflect on urgent societal concerns including VAW, poverty, and corruption. Zim hip-hop from Zimbabwe provides a distinctive perspective on these social issues, striking a chord with a younger audience and acting as a potent instrument for activism and awareness-raising.

This study analysed how VAW is represented and addressed by one of the most prominent and influential hip-hop artists in Zimbabwe, Holy Ten, who is known for his socially conscious and politically engaged lyrics, which often touch on issues such as poverty, corruption, and violence. As such, the study contributes to the existing literature on VAW and popular music by providing a case study of hip-hop in Zimbabwe, which is an under-researched and under-represented context to understand the specific ways in which hip-hop music contributes to the prevention and reduction of VAW, and how it is effectively used in interventions and campaigns against VAW. This study therefore provides insights on how Zimbabwean hip-hop can be used to promote social change by functioning as a platform to advocate against violence and to change the way society views women.

2 Nature of violence against women

As highlighted earlier, VAW is a global problem that affects individuals and societies at different levels. Women and girls of all races, colours and creeds are vulnerable, partly because of their biology (Dzinavane, 2016). Globally, the statistics are staggering. A comprehensive study by the WHO (2024) reports that approximately 1 in 3 women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence, highlighting the ubiquity of this issue. At the continental level, the research by Uthman et al. (2009) illustrates a harrowing picture in Africa, where intimate partner violence in certain regions reaches prevalence rates as high as 66.3%. Zooming in on Zimbabwe, Shamu et al. (2016) deduce that intimate partner violence prevails widely, afflicting 42.7% of the population.

The empirical literature on the subject, encapsulated in the systematic review by Muluneh et al. (2020), outlines multiple types of violence that women face in Sub-Saharan Africa, indicating pervasive issues of physical, sexual, and psychological violence. Their results indicate that this is a systemic issue rather than isolated incidents. This holistic perspective is mirrored in White et al.'s (2024) meta-analysis, which articulates a troubling global prevalence of intimate partner violence and its detrimental mental health outcomes, charting a multidimensional landscape of abuse with significant implications for women's mental health.

The relationship between male gender socialisation and gender-based violence has been examined by Fry, Skinner and Wheeler (2019), particularly within refugee populations in Sub-Saharan Africa. Their findings insinuate that traditional masculine norms can underpin attitudes and behaviours that justify or exacerbate violence against women and girls. Expanding further, Alderton et al. (2020) explore urban liveability, revealing the interlinkages between city planning, gender norms, and the safety of women, articulating how urban environments can either mitigate or aggravate VAW risks.

This study contributes to on-going debates on the role of music in the fight against VAW by focusing on the potential of Zim hip-hop lyrics produced by Holy Ten to challenge the normalisation of abuse of women and advocate behaviour change. Previous studies on music and VAW have largely focused on how different genres promote VAW. A study by Chari (2008), for example, revealed that musical lyrics produced by male artists in Zimbabwe celebrate negative stereotypes, violence and commodification of women. Zhou et al. (2022) note that music can normalise VAW by portraying women as sex objects or by demonstrating lack of respect for women as equal human beings. Certain songs use derogatory terms for women to show subordination or tell stories about abuse to affirm male superiority. In relation to hip hop music in general,

scholars have also focused mostly on the negative aspects. Adams and Fuller (2006) for example believe that hip-hop music promotes domestic violence and misogyny. The music and videos by international hip-hop artists such as Eminem, Ludacris and Ja Rule have largely been blamed for depicting women as sex objects with the result of perpetuating violence against them (ibid). Yende (2022) vehemently criticizes contemporary hip-hop music as contributing to toxic masculinity which propels VAW. Echoing the same sentiments, Ncube and Chipfupa (2017) view hip-hop music as a music genre replete with foul language, hyper masculinity, misogyny and violence. This overemphasis on the negative aspects of hip-hop music has detracted attention from the positive role of the genre in challenging the harmful stereotypes and attitudes that perpetuate VAW.

The current study examines how Zim hip-hop, a genre that has been associated with violence, aggression, deviance and misogyny, provides some artistic activism against VAW. The uniqueness of this study lies in its focus on a male artist, Holy Ten, singing anti-VAW lyrics. This is contrary to Zhou et al. (2022), who focused on how female artists raised their concerns through music. This study challenges orthodox claims that male artists always produce lyrics that glorify the subordination and oppression of women in society (Chari, 2008), and simultaneously proves that not all men, let alone Zim hip-hop artists, are enemies of women's liberation and empowerment. To successfully show how Holy Ten's music provides social commentary on VAW, the study is guided by three interrelated objectives: how the music identifies the different forms of VAW, how the music challenges the dominant behaviours that lubricate VAW, and the reflection of agency on the part of the abused women.

3 Zimbabwean hip-hop, VAW, and the theory of social change

Zimbabwean hip-hop (also known as Zim hip-hop) emerged in Zimbabwe in the early 1990s, influenced by global hip-hop culture and local social and political issues (Ncube & Chipfupa, 2017). Zim hip-hop is characterized by its fusion of traditional African rhythms and modern hip-hop beats, as well as its use of indigenous languages and diverse lyrical themes. Zim hip-hop artists often address topics such as poverty, corruption, violence, identity, and resistance (Chidora et al., 2023).

Given the rise of the new generation of Zim hip-hop artists, such as Holy Ten, Tehn Diamond, Bling 4 and Voltz JT among others, an exploration into the content of their music is crucial for understanding the themes of violence against women (VAW) that their work enunciates. While the global influence of hip-hop is significant, Zim hip-hop has begun carving its distinct niche, focusing on local struggles that mirror daily realities, which would include addressing the pervasive issue of VAW (Chidora et al., 2023). Zim hip-hop serves not just as a reflection of daily life but increasingly as a platform for socio-political engagement, including campaigns against VAW. The themes of VAW within hip-hop songs are multi-layered and often encompass aspects such as physical abuse, emotional and psychological manipulation, and economic control. Essential to this is how Zim hip-hop portrays these narratives, whether reinforcing negative stereotypes or challenging the status quo to instigate positive changes. However, the scant literature reveals a gap within academic discourse, which somewhat limits the understanding of these forms. Therefore, this study aims to close this gap by looking closely at Holy Ten's music, to see how he incorporates the themes on VAW and the interaction of his listeners and fans with the music he sings.

The analysis of the selected Zim hip-hop songs is based on the theory of social change which aims to empower individuals and communities to prevent VAW. The theory of social change also advocates measures to eventually eliminate violence against other people based on their gender. According to Ngcobo (2024), music serves as an effective tool for challenging societal norms surrounding VAW. By analysing Holy Ten's selected lyrical content and audience engagements with the songs, this study explores how Zim hip-hop contributes to either positive or negative change towards VAW.

4 Methods

The study utilised qualitative methodology and data were gathered mainly from Holy Ten's four songs selected from YouTube. This was important in appreciating the role of Zim hip-hop music in articulating violence against women. The study focused on Holy Ten as a case study because, as highlighted previously, he is one of the most popular and influential Zim hip-hop musicians. Holy Ten has been vocal about VAW and has collaborated with various organisations and campaigns to raise awareness and advocate change. Four songs were purposively sampled based on their link to the theme of VAW: *Pfumo* (Spear), *Kumba kune Vanhu* (There are people at home); *Pandichamuka* (When I wake up) and *Machills* (At the Chills). Chat box comments were purposively filtered by selecting those that directly focus on VAW and nothing else. This is mainly because the focus of the study was on the contents of their texts (Mutanda, 2024).

The authors made an effort to translate comments written in indigenous languages into English. Minor corrections were made on comments that had some minor spelling errors without losing the original meaning of the text. Critical discourse analysis was engaged to understand the meanings embedded in Holy Ten's selected songs (Mutanda, 2024). To assess the influence of Holy Ten's songs on his audiences, an audience reception study was carried out allowing the researchers to interview a sample of 10 members of Holy Ten's audience. These were purposively selected on the basis that they frequently attend Holy Ten's music shows, which makes them relevant cases for this study. These face-to-face unstructured interviews augmented data obtained from the chat box comments. Unstructured interviews were preferred because they are conversational in nature (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). This provided a framework for participants to freely share their views and perceptions regarding Holy Ten's musical lyrics and how they shape an anti-VAW discourse in Zimbabwe. Consequently, this allowed the researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the influence of Zim hip-hop music on audience awareness and attitudes.

5 Results and Discussion

This section presents the data on how Holy Ten expresses the nature of violence against women (VAW) in his musical lyrics. It goes on to discuss how the lyrics influence the audience's perception, awareness and attitudes of VAW. These attitudes and perceptions were gathered from the chat box comments on YouTube and unstructured interviews with some of the followers of Zim hip-hop music.

5.1 Nature of violence against women expressed in Zim hip-hop lyrics

The prevalence of physical violence features prominently in Holy Ten's selected songs. The most pervasive form of violence identified in the selected songs is intimate partner violence (IPV), which is mostly perpetrated by men against their wives. The song *Pfumo* (Spear), for example, highlights instances of physical violence caused by partners in marriage as shown by the following lyrics:

*You gave me the cuts, you gave me the blade
Feeling I don't need to wear shades
I am hiding black eye, that would take time*

The above lyrics show a partner crying about the physical violence she has suffered at the hands of her partner, indicated by the metaphors, "To hide black eye" and "Hand crimes" which shows that they are being beaten in private and when they appear in public places, they dress to hide the manifestations of the physical violence and act as if they are fine, which is a common occurrence in some marriages. This observation is akin to the findings by the Zimbabwe Health and Demographic Survey (2005-2006) indicating that 34.7% of Zimbabwean women reported having been physically abused but not having informed anyone about it. In Zimbabwe, as in many other patriarchal societies in Africa, restrictive norms and values promote a culture of silence on the part of the abused woman (ZHDS 2015). In this case therefore Holy Ten through his Zim hip-hop music becomes a voice of the voiceless speaking on behalf of the abused women. Thus,

contrary to the observation by Yende (2022) that hip-hop music promotes violence by promoting misogyny among the youth, Holy Ten's music actually competes with and complements mainstream discourses in addressing social ills such as gender-based violence (Ureke & Washaya, 2016, p. 72). His songs are loaded with anti-VAW themes.

In sync with the above, the song *Pandichamuka* (When I wake up) also laments the prevalence of physical violence against women. The following lyrics bear testimony to this:

*When they ask me, I will tell them I have wounds
They pierced me with thorns, they trampled on me
They pressed down my neck
The man of this house is drunk, it means trouble
When he thinks of it, he slaps everyone
You are mad, you beat me your wife, you beat the child, you are high on Marijuana*

This song presents another victim crying from the physical violence she has been facing from the husband who beats her, painting a shady picture of marriage. According to Ureke and Washaya (2016), violence against women is a result of power imbalance between men and women. As a result, some men try to assert their dominance over women through violent means. Bandura's Social Learning Theory states that people acquire new behaviours by observing and imitating role models in their surroundings. Holy Ten establishes himself as a social role model for young people by emphasizing the negative effects of physical aggression and offering sympathetic, non-violent alternatives. For listeners who may otherwise normalize such violence, lyrics like '*Mwanangu pfumo, tsveta*' [My son, put down the spear] in the song *Pfumo* serve as cautionary narrative warning against offering vicarious learning opportunities.

Drug and substance abuse by some men is one of the chief drivers of physical violence identified in Holy Ten's selected songs. In the song *Pandichamuka*, the wife laments:

*The man of this house is drunk, it means trouble
When he thinks of it, he slaps everyone
You are mad, you beat me your wife, you beat the child you are high on marijuana*

In the same vein, the wife in the song *Pandichamuka* says "You drink from January to December." All these lyrics reveal that drug and substance abuse are a key driver of gender-based violence. This sentiment is also captured by the late musician Oliver Mtukudzi in his song *Tozeza baba* (we are afraid of the father), which depicts a father perennially beating his wife each time he comes home drunk. In relation to this, Benyera (2017) submitted that gender-based violence is inextricably linked to alcohol abuse not only in Zimbabwe, but elsewhere especially in post-colonial countries. Holy Ten therefore raises the awareness of the drivers of gender-based violence in Zimbabwe.

Another observation is that Holy Ten speaks from the position of the women and children, who are the most frequent victims of violence in marriages. This, however, gives the inaccurate notion that only females are being abused. Also some men in the country are victims of marital violence from their wives. The above matter is clear from the sentiments given in the comment section of the two songs:

Comment 1: "*Men or Women, walk away from anything abusive, we all deserve better in this life and nothing in this life is more precious than life.*"

Comment 2: "*The message is clear; Leader of the Youth and we rally behind you and say no to any form of VAW on our women.*"

Comment 3: "*Let's join Holy Ten in protecting the girl child.*"

Comment 4: "*After this song, we need to start a Boy Child Association, main aim is to teach us boys how to treat woman or girl child.*"

The comments above, drawn from the two songs *Spear* and *When I wake up*, confirm the prevalence of physical violence in Zimbabwe, especially within marriages. Most of the participants show that they agree

with the narrative that physical violence is being perpetrated against women as shown in three of the four comments above, and only one of the listeners actually had a broad view and calls upon men and women to move out of abusive relationships. The comments by the listeners are mirrored in progressive legislations against the physical abuse of women in both public and private spaces, such as the Domestic Violence Act of 2007. In this case, it can be argued that Holy Ten's songs played an agenda setting role for the fight against gender-based violence in Zimbabwe (Mutanda, 2024). His music invites public commentary on people's experiences, perceptions and attitudes on gender-based violence, which is critical in sensitising policy makers and other stakeholders involved in the war against this scourge.

Emotional abuse is another major form of VAW in Zimbabwe as espoused in the songs *Pfumo* (Spear), *Pandichamuka* (When I wake up), and *Kumba kune vanhu* (There are people home). These songs articulate the subtleties of emotional abuse, including manipulation, verbal insults, and controlling behaviour. From the song *Kumba kune vanhu* (There are people home) we gather:

*When the music ends, we will put her in her place
I am hot, there is no air
Even if I walk around in rags, they just accuse me of being a witch
Being a single lady is no easy business, I am slowly dying*

Kumba kune vanhu shows a typical Zimbabwean young woman who is embroiled in socio-economic challenges, but the society does not have mercy on her, and they accuse her of engaging in socially undesirable behaviour for her responses to the situation at hand, even if she is doing it for survival as a last resort. Society and family then denigrate her not considering her situation. This subjects the young woman to unreasonable pressure from all sides, which puts her under emotional strain. The song Spear shows this:

*I am never high, though I am feeling slow pain
You are tying me down, then you get fade up every time you insult me
I'm feel that I need to embrace, the feeling that I need to escape (escape)
I'm feeling that I need to just wave goodbye
So, I can get freed of these chains (ahh)*

In the song Spear the woman is crying from the emotional abuse she has been facing at the hands of her partner, she feels she needs to escape but she cannot. In another song, When I Wake Up, Holy Ten gives a picture of another woman who is trapped in an abusive marriage where she is subjected to emotional abuse:

*I am a human being my friend
Don't do that in front of my kids
I was happy when you took me from my family
You paid the bride price and you put a curse on me
They have dug a grave for me
I lied to myself even though
I was advised to be cautious of loving dogs*

This song shows the emotional abuse women are going through in marriages which often subjects them to death or near-death experiences such that they start to regret the choice or the instant they got married. It is also important to note that this form of abuse is shown as deeply scarring, often leaving long-term psychological impacts. The following comments were made by listeners based on the songs above:

Comment 1: *"The song expresses solidarity with young girls who are trapped by harsh socio-economic conditions. They are judged by society for using their bodies to make ends meet. But the song by Ten*

pleads for us to see humanity in them and try to understand that they have not willingly chosen to live like this."

Comment 2: *"Spear... is so emotional, thank you Holy Ten for raising this awareness against VAW."*

Comment 3: *"Eish this is deep... Many are getting killed coz of VAW. Stop abusing us... we are also human. It hurts and it is not easy to try to fake a smile to your babies while you are broken inside."*

The above comments and lyrics show that emotional abuse resonates with the listeners, validating its existence in Zimbabwean communities. Holy Ten's lyrics and his audience's comments about them show that the musician actually does social commentary in his songs and stands to educate his listeners to shun violence against women. In addition, the findings show that emotional abuse in the songs sometimes takes the form of gas lighting, where victims are led to question their perceptions or sanity.

The songs by Holy Ten also address the grave issue of rape and sexual coercion, elucidating not just the acts themselves but their profound effects on victims, including stigma and silence surrounding the issue. The music also sheds light on sexual harassment both in private and public spaces, highlighting how such behaviours are often normalised or overlooked by society. The song *Spear* shows sexual abuse in marriages through the lyrics:

*Then on the-bed you come with a spear, and you break my legs
Where I was born, they just speak riddles to me
They tell me marriage is maintained because of the children (no-no)
They also say the society looks down on single mothers (aah aiwa, no, no)
But its better (better)*

In relation to the above lyrics, listeners made the following comments:

Comment 1: *"This right here ladies and gentlemen is a masterpiece... it talks of abuse in the hands of those who we love or cherish... "You come with a spear and break my legs", I call it linguistic prowess to convey the message in the right quantities or just sheer brilliance."*

Comment 2: *"Sexual violence coming with a spear to the matrimonial bed is very traumatising, together with the victims we stand."*

The foregoing highlights experiences of marital rape and sexual coercion suffered by women in marriages. The above lyrics complement some progressive legislations in Zimbabwe such as the Marital Rape Act which encourages women and men to report incidences of rape in marriage. As indicated in the lyrics however, it is difficult to report such cases. Culturally, the payment of *lobola* strips the woman of her right to report sexual abuse in marriage (Matope et. al. 2013, p. 198). This is further reinforced by African cultural norms that promote the objectification of women and reduce them to sex toys.

Economic abuse surfaces in songs through narratives of use of financial resources to exploit women, showing persistent economic dependency. The lyrics also show relationships where economic exploitation is interwoven with emotional or physical abuse, emphasizing the complexity of VAW. In the song *There Are People at Home*, Holy Ten outlines the economic exploitation of the girl child by stating:

*If you show her money, she will show you the legs
whilst she is busy with, she will turn from the way she was raised*

This shows that poor girls when they are given money by rich older men or boys, or they are in company of people who they deem may help them because of their societal positions of power expose their bodies and willingly take part in sexual activities due to the pressing situations in their homes. The lyrics also show that poor girls forgo their norms and values when they engage in such behaviour (*achafuratira njanji*). The song *At the Chills* also shows the economic manipulation of students in higher educational institutions stating:

*Just enter the BM (car) Vanessa
Just enter the BM (car) Vanessa
People's children (girls) wake up in our homes with hangover*

*Whilst their parents think they at Campus
They are made drunk by these sugar daddies (Ah?)
No one can say no to money*

The song above shows that financial manipulation is a real challenge in areas with many socio-economic challenges such as Zimbabwe. As a result, many young people fall prey to sexual, emotional or even physical abuse due to the coercion which usually comes from peer pressure, drugs, and alcohol abuse. The comments from the songs also show this:

Comment 1: *"So many Zimbabwean girls can resonate with this song. Societal pressures are messing us up."*

Comment 2: *"You are a star that's shining light on dark serious matters. Thanks, Holy Ten for using your artistry in spreading the message, No to VAW and all violence against the youth."*

Comment 3: *"Then someone says hip-hop does not have a meaning anymore, when the girl child has a defender."*

Comment 4: *"I am a 46-year-old mother of two girl children and my heart goes out to you young people and the challenges you are facing. I am happy to hear you children advising each other through music, there is hope for you and the future generations through young people like you Holy Ten. Well done son!"*

These comments show that financial coercion is a form of VAW predominantly affecting the youth due to the poor socio-economic conditions in the country, and hip-hop music particularly coming from Holy Ten is giving the public an educational tour and shedding light on the dark things happening among the youth and against the youths. Older people and the youth are also appreciating the artist Holy Ten for singing about issues which no-one is really talking about, which makes him fit for the title he gave for himself, "Leader of the Youth, Speaker of the Truth". Stories told through Holy Ten's music also reflect on how economic conditions lead to the exploitation and manipulation of women, framing economic coercion as a facet of VAW in Zimbabwe.

5.2 Influence of Zim hip-hop on the audience's awareness of violence against women

This theme examines the intersection of music, social commentary, and activism. The two main findings of this study outlined below show the impact of VAW undertones in Holy Ten's hip-hop songs on the listeners' awareness of VAW: Holy Ten's songs efficiently educate listeners on the nature and intensity of gender-based violence through his emotional storytelling, eloquently depicting the painful reality of this topic. Holy Ten's music effectively converts abstract concepts into tangible and relevant experiences by placing instances of gender-based violence into recognisable societal and interpersonal contexts. This approach serves to cultivate heightened public awareness as outlined by the comments below.

Comment 1: *"It's so sad, I know this other girl I used to judge her until she told her story. Life is not easy, guys, people are going through a lot. Let's be kind to others. I am sending her the link to the song where there are people at home so that she knows that she is not alone. I hope it will make her feel better."*

Comment 2: *"This song Spear just brought back some flashbacks when my family experienced the same situation. My mum eventually walked away with us and left my Dad. Holy Ten your story telling is top notch, and resonates with real life situations."*

Comment 3: *"This is so emotional (When I Wake Up) . . . thank you Holy Ten for raising this awareness against VAW."*

These remarks highlight the significant influence of Holy Ten's music in imparting knowledge to individuals and shedding light on the harsh truth of VAW in both communities and everyday existence. Holy Ten's songs effectively emphasise that VAW is not just a remote problem, but a widespread and harmful presence in both society and the domestic sphere. Through the skilful integration of complex storylines and thought-provoking contemplations in songs like *There Are People at Home* and *At the Chills*, Holy Ten initiates a transformative change in storytelling, compelling listeners to confront the unsettling realities surrounding gender-based violence that frequently remain concealed. These tracks function as a

reflective tool that portrays the systemic problems and obstacles that perpetuate violence against women and vulnerable individuals, hence challenging prevalent conventions.

In addition, Holy Ten explores the intimate realm in greater depth through songs such as *When I Wake Up* and *Spear*, illuminating the ways in which VAW can penetrate the sacredness of an individual's household. These songs function as a heart-breaking reminder that violence against women (VAW) transcends boundaries and has the potential to impact individuals regardless of their social standing or personal history. Essentially, Holy Ten's music serves to not only raise awareness of the widespread occurrence of VAW, but also to spark a demand for unified action, compelling society to overcome silence, question the existing state of affairs, and strive towards establishing a safer and fairer world for everyone. Holy Ten's artistic prowess acts as a guiding light, motivating listeners to become agents of change in the battle against gender-based violence.

Holy Ten's lyrics mirror prevalent societal issues, indirectly revealing the widespread extent of VAW. This portrayal helps to dismantle the culture of silence around these issues, underscoring their alarming frequency and urgency. The increasing traction of Holy Ten's songs on social media and various platforms signifies a growing spotlight on VAW discussions, with his music serving as a catalyst for broader engagement.

Comment 1: *"By reflecting societal realities, Holy Ten's music not only exposes the pervasiveness of VAW but also challenges societal norms and compels listeners to confront these uncomfortable truths."*

Comment 2: *"This is just wow. Holy... you have no idea what this song means to the girl child who has been through this. Thank you. God Bless you."*

Comment 3: *"Eish this is deep. Many are getting killed coz of VAW. Stop abusing us, we are also human. It hurts as it is not easy to try fake a smile to your bodies whilst you are broken inside."*

The examination of the aforementioned comments provides a noteworthy understanding of the widespread presence of VAW themes in Holy Ten's music. Two of the three comments emphasise that listeners establish a personal connection with the narratives of VAW portrayed by Holy Ten, suggesting a common experience with the topics he tackles. The resonance observed in Holy Ten's songs provides compelling proof that the depictions of VAW in these songs are not solely imaginary situations, but rather vivid portrayals of unpleasant realities that exist within society. The ability of listeners to connect with and recognise the themes of VAW in Holy Ten's music highlights the inherent and pervasive nature of these issues within communities. It implies that the problems surrounding VAW are not isolated occurrences, but rather deeply rooted societal problems that affect individuals at many levels. Holy Ten's music serves as a platform for marginalised individuals, illuminating the real-life encounters of those impacted by VAW and inciting conversations that question the acceptance of violence as normal in society. Holy Ten's songs shed light on the widespread occurrence of various types of VAW, including domestic violence, emotional abuse, and societal indifference. They act as a reflective tool, revealing the unpleasant reality experienced by numerous individuals. Holy Ten's artistic endeavours not only draw attention to these urgent matters but also cultivate empathy, comprehension, and a shared imperative to confront and eliminate VAW from the societal fabric.

6 Conclusion

The study confirmed Holy Ten's songs as a vivid lens through which the nature of VAW in Zimbabwe is both depicted and contested. His narratives unravel the layered reality of VAW, presenting a nuanced critique of societal norms and offering a voice to the silenced. Holy Ten's music emerges as a significant cultural commentary, shedding light on VAW's complexities and advocating for awareness and change. Holy Ten's portrayal of various VAW forms, from economic exploitation to domestic abuse, fulfils the study's aim to categorize VAW manifestations in Zimbabwe. His artistry brings these issues to the forefront, challenging societal acceptance and highlighting music's role in social awareness and advocacy against VAW. The study concludes that Holy Ten's music significantly influences cultural perceptions and public awareness of VAW. It fosters empathy, challenges societal norms, and encourages positive behavioural shifts, showcasing the transformative power of music in addressing and altering ingrained social issues.

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