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# Feminism and Profanity in African-American and Nigerian Hip Hop Music: A Comparison

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## ABSTRACT

*Profanity can be seen as words that are offensive because of not respecting religion, or offensive because of being rude. Profane words have become established in African American and Nigerian literary productions especially in Hip Hop music, used by the artists to draw or rather entice the young minds to their music. Such profane words are gender biased. Many works have been done on Hip Hop music in Nigeria but the comparison between African-American Hip Hop music and that of Nigeria Hip Hop in relation to feminism is a gap this paper intends to fill. Therefore, this paper examines the treatment of female characters and the effects of profane words used on females in the lyrics of Hip Hop music. Four artists are carefully selected, two from Nigeria and two African-American artists. Cultural imperialism and critical theory are employed as theoretical frameworks in analyzing this research as the paper concludes that females are not well treated in the lyrics used by Hip Hop artists.*

**Keywords:** *Feminism, Profanity, Swearing, Hip Hop, Gender, Rap, Music.*

## Introduction

Profanity is the use of certain words that are offensive, rude, impolite or generally unacceptable. This is common today in our society as a lot of people use it for different purposes. It can as well be seen as swearing, cursing, foul language, vulgar speech, bad language or words. Profanity is also seen as swearing because according to Andrew (2014:25), "studies have shown that, when compared with people who do not swear frequently, frequent swearers also tend to have lower pain tolerance. Swearing was shown to increase the ability of the subject to tolerate pain." For these reasons, swearing has continued to increase, despite its inappropriateness in certain situations. "Obscenity is also considered a type of unprotected speech, under the argument that offensive words also constitute a form of harm, particularly to the vulnerable and young" (Jessica, 2012:4). It is also established that "there are many psychological studies that suggest swear words, in the appropriate context, can be beneficial when used for group unity, coherence, and general expressiveness" (Jessica, 2012:4).

Dr. Elmer Towns, a college and seminary professor, discusses profanity from a biblical standpoint. He defines cursing by using two basic kinds of profanity. First, taking the name of the Lord in vain, and second: making vulgar, guttural references to human sexuality, anatomical parts and biological functions. Towns (2015:2) sees the use of profanity as absolutely wrong. He also believes that profanity reduces man to the level of animals and makes mockery of the belief in

God. According to Towns (2015:3), "cursing is incompatible with holiness...a Christian cannot practice consistent personal holiness and curse... It is incompatible to try to live for God in our lifestyle and dishonor his name in our speech." He agrees that the basic reason why cursing is wrong is because God says it is wrong, and that it can also lower relationships between husband and wife.

### **FEMINISM AND NIGERIAN HIP HOP MUSIC**

Feminism is a gender-based movement for the actualization of freedom slogan for the female folks and their recognition as a major stake holder in the development of our society. The term feminism can be used to describe a political, cultural or economic movement aimed at establishing equal rights and legal protection for women. Feminism involves political and sociological theories and philosophies concerned with issues of gender difference, as well as a movement that advocates gender equality for women and campaigns for women's rights and interests. Although the terms "feminism" and "feminist" did not gain widespread use until the 1970s, they were already being used in the public parlance much earlier. Feminist, over the years, have advocated for better treatment of women in literary productions. Women should not be seen as objects of satisfaction for men's pleasure or to promote their personal goals. One of such areas is in the area of media and in particular, music. The treatment of women in music has called for various investigations and Nigerian Hip Hop music, which is our aim in this paper, is not left behind as profanity has been a selling instrument to promote hip hop music in Nigeria. The use of profane words has become part of hip hop music artists and such words have reduced the worth of female folks drastically.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This paper employs the Critical Theory and Cultural Imperialism Theory as our analytical tools in examining the treatment of feminism in Nigerian Hip Hop music that makes use of profane words in their music. Critical theory is linked to the five Frankfurt School German philosophers and social theorists in the Western European Marxist tradition. According to Horkheimer, (as quoted by Anaeto, 2012) it is a theory which seeks human emancipation from slavery and works to create a world which satisfies the needs and powers of human beings (Horkheimer 1972:246. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/critical-theory/>). This theory condemns the mass production of information and media texts brought about by media technology of mass media and the consequent lowering of standards of the original works of arts and media texts which is now replaced with caricatures of pop culture. Hip-hop falls under the group of debased media texts and genre; a product of mass media and the revolt of sub-culture against the dominant ideology. The Cultural Imperialism theory on the other hand was propounded by Herb Schiller in 1973 and states that western nations dominate the media around the world, which in turn has a powerful effect on third world cultures by imposing on them western values and thereby destroying their native cultures. This is relevant to this work because the hip-hop music and the idiosyncrasies that go with it are imported to Nigeria particularly through the media, having originated from Bronx in the USA (Umoh, 2023: 7-8)

### **African-American Hip Hop**

Hip hop has developed over the years and has affected youth culture around the world. For a lot of youths, hip hop, especially the African-American hip hop is a reflection of the social, economic, cultural, and political realities and conditions of their lives. Hip hop communicates to them in a language they can understand. According to Buchi (2009:10) "hip hop cannot be dismissed as merely a passing fad or as a youth movement that will soon run its course. Instead, hip hop must be taken seriously as a cultural, political, economic and intellectual phenomenon deserving of scholarly study." Rap music according to Andrew (2014:25) is "a form of communication with a distinct cultural narrative within the African American experience." He further states that rap music "bears witness to many of the cultural, institutional, structural, economic, historical, social and political concerns of our time within the wider discourses of oppression, and the particular position of negation for many Americans, especially Blacks and Hispanics." Andrew makes it clear, the fact that African American hip hop has its roots in the slavery of the Black race. He buttresses that hip hop is the "identity of the Black race

because it stood as a major weapon to fight against slavery and oppression, therefore it has come to stay." Andrew (2014:24)

Although, contemporary African American hip hop is not as revolutionary as it was in the past, Andrew says further that "there is still a cultural, though fewer revolutionary lyrics in current hip hop... Current lyrics are more individualistic and formulaic as opposed to the communal past." Andrew (2014:25) We can deduce from the forgoing that the long-standing African oral tradition is what has provided rap with most of its social importance.

Sandra (2013:117) states that the word "hip hop" is used to describe clothing, language, attitude, and customs. Therefore, hip hop is a culture. Sandra claims that one of the most important aspects of the hip hop culture is being authentic. And this authenticity is established by hip hop artistes in three main ways; being true to themselves, reflecting the community from which they come, and having an understanding and respect for the styles and origins of early hip hop. To represent the hip hop culture requires an individual to be self-associated with it by listening to rap music, dressing in the hip hop style and speaking in contemporary urban dialect.

Haugen (2003:431) in his research entitled *Unladylike Divas: Language, Gender, and Female Gangster Rappers*, explores an aspect that is rarely talked about when it comes to the origin of hip hop. It is the fact that female rappers like Mia X, Lil Kim and the Lady of Rage came into the hip hop world. And just like the male rappers, it was acceptable for them to express themselves. This included profanity, sex, drugs, violence, and more taboo topics for traditional feminine behaviour.

Noble (2004:44) says that "to actually define hip hop culture is a difficult task... Because hip hop culture is so broad in scope." It is best to describe how hip hop is structured rather than defining it as it might bring about limitations in the quest to define the concept. According to Boyd, (2002), "rap is what you do; hip hop is what you are. Rap is the act; hip hop is the culture." (Quoted in Jessica, 2012:5).

Another area where African American hip hop has experienced growth is in fashion. Fashion has transformed hip hop from a simply auditory art form to a more visual one. The impact and influence of fashion in the African American culture and the creativity and cultural influence African Americans have had and continue to have predates hip hop, back to the earliest periods of enslavement in America. Hip hop lovers realized that their unique fashion not only allows them to express emotion and creativity, but also to show solidarity with others. These fashion statements have included a variety of clothing over the lifetime of hip hop, and one of the most common staples were baggy jeans and t-shirts alongside huge chains and jewelry which has been described and popularly known today as "bling."

### **Nigerian Hip Hop**

Nigerian hip hop music came alive as a result of the influence of the American hip hop culture, but the basis for which this genre is used in Nigeria is not so strong to the point where it becomes our culture. In other words, unlike the African American hip hop music, this genre does not describe our identity. It is rather seen as a borrowed culture that has been successful in Nigeria. The level of success that hip hop has attained in Nigeria lies on how Nigerian hip hop artistes have been able to fine-tune this genre of music to soothe the Nigerian audience. Citron (2000:21) believes that "in the context of Nigerian multilingual hip hop, there appears to be no depth." According to Olusegun and Ayokunle (2011:31), "...the wide acceptability of Nigerian hip hop music is (partly) based on the artistes' incorporation of local popular languages in the composition and performance of the music." This assumption is based on the fact that many of the award-winning singles and albums of the contemporary hip hop artistes exhibit mixtures of different languages including the standard English language, Pidgin English, Yoruba, Igbo, and other local dialects. However, the overall image of hip hop been associated with ruggedness and swag has not changed.

### **Profanity in Rap Music**

Profanity is a hallmark of rap music, and as we know, there are certain swear words that are used in rap music that reduce the value of women by encouraging misogyny. Gretchen (2013:27) defines

misogyny as "the hatred or disdain for women" and "an ideology that reduces women to objects for men's ownership, use or abuse." Town (2015:3) discovers that music has more sexual content than any other media outlets. "Sexually explicit and derogatory lyrics are especially apparent in rap music, which has been criticized for its graphic derogatory presentation of women using lyrics that objectify, exploit or victimize them".

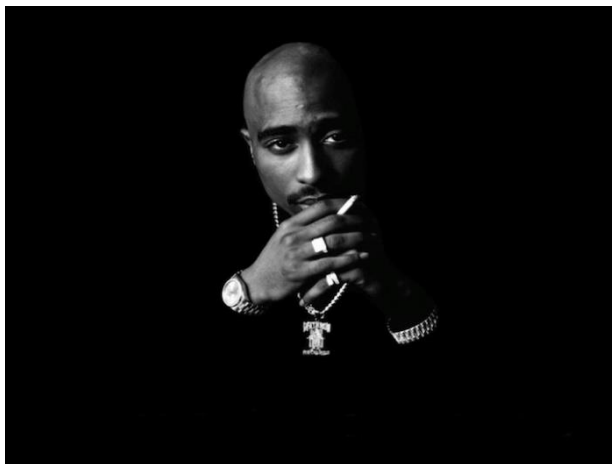
The use of profanity in rap brought about the description of women as commodities that can be owned. Women as a result are described in rap lyrics as 'bitches' and 'whores' with reference to sex. Profanity about women in rap lyrics describes women as a tool for sexual abuse. Therefore, when the words 'bitch' and 'whore' are mentioned in any lyrics, other words like 'pussy,' booty, "ass, 'dick' and fuck' are bound to follow. There are six themes common in misogynistic rap music, three of those six themes are: derogatory statements about women in relation to sex; statements involving violent actions towards women, particularly in relation to sex; and references to women as usable and discard able beings.

As quoted in Gretchen's (2013:13) where he says that Armstrong (2001) worked on hip hop music titled: *The Influence of Rap/Hip-Hop Music: A Mixed Method Analysis*. He conducted a content analysis of 490 rap songs from 1987 to 1993, and it was revealed that 22% contained lyrics that featured violence against women including assault, rape and murder. His research grouped rap songs into various categories in which rappers either pride themselves on sex acts appearing to harm women, justify other forms of violence, warn women who challenge the male domination that they will be assaulted or seem to invite male violence against women. After this research, Weitzer and Krubin (2009), conducted a follow up research which analyzed how women were portrayed in 403 rap songs. It was a content analysis, and the outcome featured themes of "derogatory naming and shaming of women; sexual objectification of women; distrust of women; legitimization of violence against women; and celebration of pimping, appeared at the highest frequency. Sexual objectification occurred in 67% of the misogynistic lyrics of the song that were sampled." Burton (2012:6-7).

### **Forms of Swearing in African-American Hip-Hop Music**

Profanity is examined from the music of two African American hip hop artistes: Tupac. Shakur and Lii Wayne, and two Nigerian hip hop artistes; Olamide and Lil Kesh.

#### **Tupac Amaru Shakur**



Tupac was an American rapper born as Lesane Parish Crooks, but renamed "Tupac Shakur" a year after his birth. Popularly known as 2pac and Makaveli, Shakur was born on June 16, 1971 in Harlem, New York city. He is one of the most influential rappers in hip hop history, and is regarded by many as the greatest rapper of all time. As of 2007, 2pac sold over 75 million records worldwide. His albums *All Eyez on Me* and his greatest hits are among the best-selling albums in the United States.

Shakur started his carrier as a roadie, backup dancer and MC for the alternative hip hop group, *Digital Underground*. He later moved on to become a solo artiste. Most of Shakur's songs revolved around violence and hardship in inner cities. It also involved racism and other social vices. He was also a vocal participant during the East Coast- West Coast hip hop rivalry. He was involved in conflicts with other rappers, record label staffs and producers, especially The Notorious B.I.G and the label; *Bad Boys Records*. 2pac was shot in a drive-by shooting on September 7, 1996 at the intercession of Flamingo Road and Koval Lane in Las Vegas Nevada.

A lot of 2pac's songs reflected the circumstances in which he grew up. It also reflected his environment and its activities which included violence, hard drugs, police brutality and other social vices. He was an activist whose lyrics mostly talked about the hard life of the youths. He used his music as platform to clamor for positive change. 2pac, in response to critics on his sexual abuse. Therefore, when the words 'bitch' and 'whore' are mentioned in any lyrics, other words like 'pussy,' 'booty,' 'ass,' 'dick' and 'fuck' are bound to follow.

### Lil Wayne

Li Wayne released his solo debut album *The Block is Hot* in 1999. He gained more popularity with his fourth album *The Carter* (2004). Wayne has recorded over 10 studio albums, but gained prominence in his sixth album; *The Carter 3* (2008) which became his most successful album till date. It sold over 1 million copies in the first week of its release. The album won the Grammy Award for best rap album. Wayne has sold over 100 million records worldwide. He sold over 15 million albums and 37 million digital tracks in the United States, which makes him one of the best-selling artists of all time. (Misty, 2011)

Lil Wayne raps a lot about sex. His lyrics could be described as sensationalist, bizzare or offensive. A lot of his lyrics are also misogynistic as he addresses women as 'bitches' and 'whores.' He addresses women as commodities that can be used and discarded at will.

### Emphatic Profanity

2pac used emphatic swearing in his lyrics. In other words, he uses profanity to place more emphasis on the message he passes across. He uses it as a tool to make his message resonate in the hearts of its listeners. As a fact, rappers are taken to be serious or passionate about an issue when profanity is used.

*"...all the young motherfuckers that was... in crime, we a motherfucking team."*

The statement above is an example of 2pac's use of emphatic swearing. If he had just said "we are a team," it might not have had impact on its listeners. But the use of "motherfucking" in an emphatic way not only gave energy to the sentence, but also made it noticeable. The use of profanity in the early stages of hip hop showed that the artist cared, since most of the songs talked about the hardships in different areas of society. Therefore, the level of anger, pain and frustration that the artist felt could be measured by the level of profanity he used in his lyrics. 2pac's use of emphatic swearing served him well, as his fans could relate to his music. The government could tell how serious 2pac and other rappers are about effecting change and speaking out for members of the black community.

Lil Wayne also uses profanity in an emphatic form. In his song 'started,' one of his lyrics says. *"Make that ho drink her motherfucking tears"*

He places emphasis on the "ho's" tears by using the word "flicking." Just like 2pac, Lil Wayne uses profanity in an emphatic form to stress a point or place emphasis on a word. Also, in his song 'Hot Revolver,' Wayne uses emphatic swearing.

*"Girl when I think of you,*

*my dick starts jumping like a fucking kangaroo. -*

*"I'll put it in her backyard like a fucking Doghouse."*

Emphatic swearing is used a lot by 2pac and Lil Wayne. It is also a common form of swearing in African American hip hop that is used by most rap artists.

### **Abusive Profanity**

Abusive swearing is another form of profanity that is used by 2pac and Lil Wayne. 2pac employs profanity to insult and demean people, especially his fellow rap artists. An example of this is seen in his song *Hit' em Up*. The song is based on the East Coast-West Coast hip hop conflict. 2pac dissed Biggie, and the Bad Boy record label alongside other rappers and record executives. This song is one of the most profane songs of 2pac because a lot of profanity is used, and all these abusive words are mixed with anger. He talks and raps at the same time.

The lyrics says;

*"I fucked your bitch, you fat motherfucker  
Fuck your bitch and the clique you claim  
You claim to be a player but I fucked your wife.  
We blossom bad boys niggas fuck for life...  
Biggie Smalls and Jr Mafia some punk ass bitches...  
Lil kid don't fuck around with Gs  
You motherfuckers know what time it is...  
Ama let my lil homies ride on you... Bad boy bitches  
Any you niggaz from New York that wanna bring it, bring it;  
But we aint singing, we bringing drama,."*

2pac uses abusive profanity in *God Bless the Dead* when he raps;

*"Fuck the police and all the court, same way they fucked us,  
And why the hell I'm flocked in jail; they let them white boys free,  
We be shocked as hell."*

From the song, *Hail Mary*, 2pac raps;

*"...never realize the precious time that bitch niggaz is wasting..."*

This line from the rest of the lyrics is also abusive because it ridicules those it was directed to with the use of the word "bitch."

Lil Wayne uses abusive profanity as well. An example can be seen in his song "*started:*"

*"Make that ho drink her motherfucking tears"*

This lyric uses abusive profanity because it refers to the female as "ho" or "whore," which is not only offensive but also disrespectful to the female gender.

We also see another example of abusive swearing in his song "*scream and shout*"

*"And I'll make that bitch and shout and let it all out"*

Again we see the use of abusive swearing as the word "bitch" is used to describe a woman.

In the song "wowzers," he says;

*"Beat that pussy, go to sleep...  
Fuck that bitch until she tired."*

Another example of the use of abusive swearing can be seen in his song "*We be Steady Mobbin*"

*"Man fuck these niggas  
I'ma spare everything but these niggas...  
And fuck these bitches,  
I swear I care about everything but these bitches...  
Crazy motherfucker, I am one, but the crazy thing is  
I began one*

*But I can fuck your girl and make her kill for me,  
Then steal for me...  
Then I'll murder that bitch and send her body back to your ass."*

### **Idiomatic Profanity**

This is a third form of swearing used in 2pac's music. This means he uses certain words that will normally be seen as offensive in a way that only show bonding or friendship among a group of people.

For example, in his song "God Bless the Dead," he raps'

*"Rest in peace ya '11 the young motherfuckers that passed too early,  
All the young motherfuckers that was... in crime,  
We a fucking team."*

"Motherfucker" in this context, it is not meant in an abusive way. It is more like saying "my fellow brother" or "friend." It is a term that most rappers or African Americans from the street use to refer to each other, to show that they belong to the same social group, peer group or race.

In another example from the same song, 2pac raps;

*"Ain't nobody promise me a thing  
I've been caught up in this game,  
Ever since I was a little motherfucker."*

Here, he uses the word "motherfucker" to replace the obvious word that should have been there which is "kid." He does this to give off an "I don't care" vibe which relates better to his listeners and creates a sense of brotherhood or closeness to them. It also draws some emphasis.

In 'Hail Mary;'

*"...revenge is the sweetest joy next to getting pussy."*

Pac uses sexual profanity in a way that is not offensive or misogynistic. But rather, "Pussy" here is used to replace "sex." He tries to emphasize how pleasurable it is to take revenge by comparing it to having sex.

Lil Wayne does not use idiomatic swearing as much as 2pac does. He rarely uses swearing in an idiomatic form, but here is an example of one of the instances he uses this type of swearing. In his song; "The Sky is the Limit,"

*"... So you know I'ma ride with my motherfucking niggas...  
And tell all my niggas that the sky is the limit."*

Here, "niggas" is used in a way that creates an atmosphere of friendship. Therefore, the phrase "my motherfucking niggas" or "my niggas" is another way of saying "my very close friends" or "my friends" respectively. The word "nigga" is normally an offensive term used to refer to men of the black race. And it is considered offensive when it is used especially by a white man or the white race. However, there are black men that find it offensive if a fellow black man refers to them as "nigga." But youths, especially the African American youths from the streets refer to themselves as "niggas" and this is not offensive to them because the term is more of a code that they use to make themselves feel on the same level. In the lyrics above, Lil Wayne uses the word "nigga" in the same context.

### **Dysphemistic Profanity**

Another type of swearing this course will focus on is dysphemistic swearing. 2pac does not use provocative swearing. He does not use lyrics that forces the listener to think about something provocative or negative. Therefore, there are no examples of dysphemistic lyrics in 2pac's songs.

Lil Wayne on the other hand, uses lyrics that are sexually dysphemistic in nature, in other words, a lot of his lyrics forces the listener to think about sexually related issues. Which is most of the time immoral. And this is due to the way he describes the process of sex in his lyrics.



For instance, in his song; 'Starters' his lyrics say;

*"I fuck her till she cry,  
Make that ho drink her fucking tears/  
Lord I hope she swallow more than tears."*

This lyric shows the use of profanity in a dysphemistic form because the lyric makes its listeners to think of something negative or provocative. In this case, the first possible thought that could come to the mind of the listener is "rape" which is a negative thing. As a result of the negative picture this lyric brings to mind, the profanity used in it is dysphemistic.

In this lyric, Wayne uses profanity in a dysphemistic form as he creates an immoral image in the minds of the listeners. In other words, the lyrics channels the listener's thought to sex. Which is immoral because a lot of youth listen to rap music?

## **Olamide**



Olamide Adedeji who is best known by his stage name *Olamide Baddo*, is a Nigerian hip hop recording artist and the CEO of the record label; YBNL nation. He was born on March 15, 1989 in Bariga, Lagos state. He decided to pursue a career in music in 2000. His lyrics are mostly in Yoruba and pidgin. In 2011 he released his debut album *Rapsodi* while signed to Coded Tunes. His second album; *YBNL* was released in 2012 under his record label YBNL Nation. The album included the singles 'Voice of the Street,' 'First of All,' 'Ilefo Illuminati,' and 'Stupid Love.' His hit single; "First of All" made him more prominent and took his career to the next level. His third studio album *Baddest Guy Ever Liveth* was released in November, 2013. The album included the singles; 'Durosoko' and 'Yemi my Lover.' Olamide has won different music awards including The Headies Awards. He is considered the best Yoruba rapper in Nigeria since Dagrín. Olamide uses profanity more than any other Nigerian rapper. His lyrics are sexual and provocative. Some of his songs like 'Don't Stop' have been banned by the Nigerian Broadcasting Cooperation (NBC) because of the vulgar lyrics that it contains.

Most of Olamide's lyrics just like Lil Wayne's, contain a lot of sexual analogies. He is known for this, and his passionate use of this type of profanity has continued to increase ever since he came into spotlight. They have become even filthier. In his song "stupid love," we see him describe a girl's behind as 'bosom.' He also states how he intends to sleep with the girl. Olamide uses metaphors and similes to describe a girl's private part and how he wants to get his own taste of her body. Just as Olamide does use profanity in a dysphemistic form, and sometimes in an idiomatic form. But he does not use it in an emphatic, cathartic, or abusive form. Although some of his lyrics are abusive but not profane. Most of his lyrics can be likened to misogyny because he presents women in ways that are disrespectful and offensive just as we have seen in the lyrics stated earlier.



## Lil Kesh



Keshinro Ololade is a Nigerian rapper, singer and songwriter. He is popularly known by his stage name; Lil Kesh. He was born on March 14, 1995 in Bariga, Lagos State, Nigeria. Kesh took interest in dancing before he moved into music as he started off rapping among his peers. His professional music career started in 2012. He started rising to popularity in 2014 after he released his first single; 'lyrically,' which was known and accepted among Nigerian University students. Through his signing with YBNL Nation, he released 'Shoki' which brought him into spotlight and made him an artiste to be reckoned with. He has been nominated for several awards including the Nigerian Entertainment Awards and the Headies Award for Next Rated Artiste. Lil Kesh released his debut studio album on March 17, 2016 titled *Y.A.G.I*, an acronym for 'Young and Getting It.' Lil Kesh announced on April 26, 2016 that he had established his own record label called YAGI Records as a result of the expiration of his 2-year contract with YBNL Nation. This was later confirmed by the CEO of the label. Lil Kesh raps mostly in Yoruba and pidgin, with a bit of English. His style of rap is similar to that of Olamide. The themes of his songs are also similar to Olamide's, as he uses vulgar words in most of his lyrics.

### Dysphemistic Profanity

Olamide uses dysphemistic swearing in his lyrics in the sense that he uses vulgar lyrics that are provocative and make the listener to think of something negative and immoral. An example could be seen in his song; 'Dont Stop,' which contains dysphemistic vulgar lyrics like'

*"...Je kin wo be.."*

meaning 'let me enter the place.' This describes the act of sex.

Another vulgar lyric in the song says;

*wa gba ponron... meaning (come let me give you penis)*

Another example can be seen in his song 'Falila'

*"Skirt ti wo Ion pe ni mu seya oo"* (the skirt she puts on is called "do the jobs fast)

The lyric means that Falila's skirt is so short and inviting so much so that it makes one have the urge to have sex with her immediately.

In the same song, he says;

*"I want to fisi fisi..." meaning (I want to put it inside)*

In this context, "putting it" describes penetrative sex.

Lil Kesh also uses this type of profanity as he creates sexual images in the mind of his listeners.

In his song "Ladi" he raps;

*"Emi Keshi... baba shoki, kima ladi kima jedi kima mudi*

(Me Kesh, father of shoki. I should be eating ass, licking ass, drinking ass)

*Nigba ti mo ridi kemi mo pariwo aahh!*

(When I saw Kemi's buttocks, I shouted aahh!)...

*She said "Kesh you want to sample me;*

*Are you sure that you can handle me?*

Another example can be seen in his song "Gbese," he raps;

*"I won't stop singing untill I gbo yon re kanu"  
(Put your breast in my mouth)*

The examples taken from songs of these two Nigerian rap artistes, is a clear indication on the fact that they use lyrics that are not only extremely sexual, but dysphemistic at the same time.

### **Idiomatic Profanity**

We can still see some examples of idiomatic swearing in Olamide's lyrics.

In his song "Fucking with the Devil," he raps;

*"Fucking with the devil... no condoms"*

In this context profanity is used in an idiomatic as the lyrics above use the phrase "fucking with the devil" to mean hanging out with the devil or messing with the devil without caution or protection which is represented by the use of "condoms" in the lyrics. Therefore, "fucking" in this context is used to mean one of two things; either hanging out with, or irritating someone. Another example of the use of idiomatic swearing can be seen in his song "Awon Goons Mi," which means "My Goons"

*"Shout out s' awon goons mi, awon eruku mi  
Awon loni kima Para to ni keeping cool mi*

(Shout out to my goons... they said I should not be angry, but keep my cool)

*So bi gobe sele ninu hood mi,  
Teba gbo bajinotu ema awon goons mi"*

(If there is any trouble in my hood, you will see my goons)

In this lyric, we see the use of the word "goons" which is normally an abusive word just like the word "nigga." But it is used in this context to mean "my friends from the hood." Lil Kesh on the other hand does not use idiomatic swearing in his songs.

The emphatic, cathartic and abusive use of profanity is not as common in Nigerian rap music as it is in the African American rap music. In fact, the use of profanity in general is not common in Nigerian rap music as much as it is in African American hip hop. This is because there is no purpose for which it is used except for fun or for the sake of following the trend of profanity in hip hop. Profanity in African American hip hop on the other hand is used for some certain reasons as well as fun.

### **Comparative Analysis of Profanity in African-American and Nigerian Hip-Hop Music**

Profanities in African American hip hop have reasons for which they are used. Rap music originated from The Bronx, in New York City, and the use of profanity served a purpose in the early stages of hip hop which was to speak against the struggles of the black youths. Profanity in African American hip hop is more or less a tradition that has been and will always be part of rap music. It is one of the hallmarks of this genre of music. It is for this reason that profanity in African American hip hop is almost becoming a necessity for most rap artist in the United States. Apart from been used as a weapon for revolt, profanity in African American rap music was used by most artists to create a "bad boy" image for themselves, since profanity was associated with ruggedness, disrespect and fearlessness. Many of these rappers use profanity to make them look tough. They also top it all off by dressing in ways that make them look like gangsters.

Profanity is also used in African American hip hop as evidence that these rappers once lived the life of struggle and violence. The use of profanity is a reflection of their background or where they come from. Looking into the background of the African American rap artists, we will find out that most of them are from the "streets" and have been through different problems. Some have been involved in drug dealing, some have been in and out of jail and so on. Therefore, they use profanity in their songs because it is part of who they are and where they come from. African American rap artists also use profanity to relate better with their fan base; young African Americans, especially those from the "streets." Profanity is more like a code that builds a level of closeness

between the artist and the fans, as they can relate better to the song. Profanity can also be used for fun. Rappers sometimes play with swear words in their songs; not for any reason, but for the sake of using profanity. (Taylor, 1998)

On the other hand, there is the Nigerian hip hop world which is different from that of its American counterparts. Nigeria is one of the countries that was influenced by American hip hop. Rap artists in Nigeria added a bit of the Nigerian culture into hip hop so that it will appeal to the Nigerian audience. Nigerian languages like Yoruba, Igbo, and pidgin are used in the Nigerian hip hop scene to make the audience feel like they are being told stories, because rap is more like talking to the audience. However, profanity is not a very common element of Nigerian hip hop. With the emergence of artists like MI, Ice Prince, Olamide, Lil Kesh, Reminisce and so on, profanity becomes much more popular. Olamide is known to have the most profane lyrics in Nigerian hip hop as his lyrics are filled with a lot of sexual words. And what makes it different from the others is that he uses profanity purely in Yoruba with a little infusion of pidgin and English. Other rappers like MI, Ice Prince and Reminisce use profanity just like the African American rappers because they use it in English.

There are no specific reasons why profanity is used in Nigerian hip hop. It is not a trend that existed from the inception of hip hop in Nigeria; therefore, it is not used by many hip hop artists in Nigeria. Some artists, sometimes use emphatic swearing, but it does not resonate with the Nigerian audience because swearing in English is not part of the Nigerian hip hop culture, neither is it the language of the Nigerian "streets." Profanity in pidgin or any other Nigerian language has more impact on the listeners because these words originated from Nigeria, and are used a lot in the Nigerian "streets." This is one of the reasons why Olamide is very popular. He uses profanity in Yoruba. Which is also a reflection of his origin in the "streets." Therefore, the type of profanity he uses is synonymous with what is used in Nigeria. In this case, profanity is used to create a close relationship between the artist and the audience. In other words, the audience feels like the artist understands them. Sometimes, swear words are being created by Nigerian artists in their indigenous languages, and as time goes on many people begin to use those words in daily conversation.

Unlike African American hip hop, Nigerian hip hop can survive without profanity because; profanity did not play a major role in the Nigerian hip hop scene. Another reason why Nigerian hip hop artists use profanity especially those in English, is to go with the vibe that they get from their American counterparts. They use it because they see the American rappers use it, not because they need to use it. In other words, they use it for fun; because it feels good.

### **Comparison of the Forms of Profanity in African American and Nigerian Hip-Hop**

There are five types of profanity; emphatic, abusive, dysphemistic, idiomatic and cathartic. The main types of swearing used in the African American hip hop music include abusive, emphatic, idiomatic and dysphemistic swearing. As stated earlier, profanity in the American hip hop scene is a necessity; a phenomenon that is functional in almost every case.

Emphatic swearing is one of the most used types of swearing in American hip hop. Profanity used in an emphatic form has been a very useful way through which these rappers let their audience know how important their point is. When this type of profanity is used in American hip hop, it fulfils its purpose because the audience are able to know what the artist is trying to stress. This does not take a conscious effort. The audience becomes unconsciously aware of what the artist is emphasizing. They also know when profanity is being used in an emphatic form, because the ability to differentiate when profanity is used in any form is stored in their subconscious. This is as a result of the fact that profanity is a very common phenomenon, not only in hip hop, but also in normal conversations.

As much as emphatic swearing plays a very important role in American hip hop, it doesn't do the same in Nigerian hip hop. Emphatic swearing is used very rarely by Nigerian hip hop artist; and even when it is used, it does not create any effect on the audience. In all cases it is unnoticeable. This is mainly because most of the listeners cannot relate to it being used. And when they listen to Nigerian rap artists using profanity, they cannot, in most cases tell the form

in which it is being used. The fact remains that for a Nigerian hip hop artist, using profanity in an emphatic form does not help because it will not be noticed. Therefore, the best way a Nigerian hip hop artist can place emphasis on a topic is by rapping about that topic either in a predominant Nigerian language or in *pidgin* English. In other words, the artist has to emphasize a point by rapping about it in a Nigerian language that most people understand. It could also work if song is made in English; but the use of emphatic swearing is definitely not an effective way to make a point noticeable.

Abusive swearing is a common type of swearing that is used in American hip hop. And just as it clearly reveals, when profanity is used in this form, its intention is to ridicule, abuse or downgrade someone or something. Abusive swearing can be used in different scenarios, for example, during feuds between artists and so on. In cases like this, the artists unleash their arsenal of abusive profanity as they lash out on each other over an issue. They express their anger and aggression in their music, thereby making it their own battle field. On the other hand, abusive profanity is a rarely used type of swearing in the Nigerian hip hop scene. This does not mean that hip hop artists in Nigeria do not use abusive words in their music; they do, but they do not use abusive swear words. They could insult or demean anything and anyone without using profanity. This however, comes down to the fact that the use of profanity is not as relevant in the Nigerian hip hop world as it is with the Americans. This means that Nigerian artists could be abusive in their songs but not profane, except in very rare instances which might not be noticeable.

Dysphemistic swearing is also common in African American hip hop. Artists use profanity in this form to create negative or provocative thoughts in the minds of their audience. These thoughts are mostly sexual. When artists use lyrics with dysphemistic profanity, they create certain thoughts that create certain images on the listener's mind. For instance, Lil Wayne uses this type of profanity to describe sexual activities in such a way that one can easily begin to create images in the mind. This is because of how descriptive the lyrics are as regards sex. Dysphemistic swearing is also used in Nigerian hip hop and functions the same way. It is popular in Nigerian hip hop; and is known to be used mostly by Olamide and Lil Kesh. They use this type of profanity in most of their songs. Despite the fact that dysphemistic profanity is popular in Nigerian hip hop, these two artistes pilot its use in Nigerian hip hop. (Hodkinson, 2011)

Idiomatic swearing cannot be excluded from American hip hop because it is also a very common type of swearing. Artists use profanity in an idiomatic form to bring about closeness or to enhance good relationships either with their audience or with their fellow artistes. It is used often but, in this case, the swear words used are not offensive even though they might be offensive in their literal meaning. This type of profanity is also used in Nigerian hip hop but it is very rare. It almost does not exist. Only a few rappers use this; and they do, occasionally.

Cathartic swearing is rarely used in African American hip hop. This type of swearing is used more in conversations than in hip hop music because it is a sudden reaction to something negative. Therefore, it is not used a lot in African American hip hop. This type of profanity is also not used in Nigerian hip hop. Simply put it does not exist in the Nigerian hip hop scene.

### **Language Difference in the use of Profanity**

There is a difference in the language used in African American and Nigerian hip hop. In the African American hip hop world, only one language is used, and it is the English language. Therefore, profanity is used only in English. The reason is quite obvious. English is the official or predominant language in the United States. Therefore, it is used in music because it is understood by most if not all its citizens. Profanity in rap music is used in English. The language use in Nigerian hip hop is multilingual, as different Nigerian Languages are used in Nigerian hip hop in order for it to be accepted by the audience. English is also used as well in Nigerian hip hop. The multilingual nature of Nigerian hip hop is due to the multilingual nature of the nation itself as different artistes from different ethnic groups make music in their mother

tongue. Since the use of profanity in English is not as effective as it is in African American hip hop, Nigerian hip hop artistes have created profane words in their indigenous languages that are similar to that of their American counterparts. Some of these swear words might be mere interpretations of the English versions.

### **CONCLUSION**

From the study and cited examples above, it can be concluded that the Nigerian artists, as copied from their American counterparts, have not treated female gender properly in their music productions. Profane words have been established in the hip hop world and it might be difficult to eradicate that totally from the music world not to talk of reducing that trend by the regulatory bodies. Female folks continue to be subjugated by the males and the female artists who are into such music are not doing enough to eradicate or reduce that ugly trend in the music world. Profanity has been seen as a weapon they must employ to remain in the business successfully. The youths of this generation who are major partners and practitioners of the hip hop music are drawn to that field based on the words and practices of the hip hop artists. Feminists have little or nothing to do in stopping the ugly treatment of female gender in hip hop music and that implies that the females will continue to suffer or endure such situation for some time as the male artists are not ready to change that trend and the regulatory bodies are not empowered enough to reduce such treatment.

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