

Effect of Western Secular Music on Choice of Music as a Study Subject by Muslim Students in Mombasa County, Kenya

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Abstract- The study of music as a subject is very vital since among other importance may lead to income generation through a teaching career, music production and marketing of music resources. Kenya National Examinations Council annual report for the last twenty-eight years indicates that the number of candidates who enrol for Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education music has consistently declined from 2,544 in 1989 to 1,100 in 2017. Education Management Information System, indicate that the Muslim students who sat for KCSE between the years 2011-2015 in Mombasa County were three. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the influence of Western secular music in the secondary school curriculum on the choice of music subject by Muslim students in Mombasa county, Kenya. The study employed a descriptive research design. The sample population consisted of twenty-seven (27) participants constituting of two (2) music teachers, eight (8) students, eight (8) parents, one (1) Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development Officer at the national level, one (1) Quality Assurance and Standard Officer and seven (7) career masters. Data was collected through questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussion and were analysed using both qualitative (narration) and quantitative (SPSS ver. 25.0) methods - descriptive and inferential statistics. The results showed that Western secular music was prohibited by Islamic laws which were strictly adhered to by the Muslim parents/guardians and students. In conclusion, the music curriculum in the Kenyan education system dominates western secular pieces. This inadequacy of Islamic music content in the curriculum has influenced the reluctance of the Muslim students on choice of music subject. The study recommends that the Ministry of Education should engage Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development and Quality Assurance Standard directorate to incorporate independent Islamic music to promote the choice of the subject by both Muslim students and Muslim community-sponsored schools.

Index Terms- Choice, Curriculum, Music, Muslim, Secular

1. INTRODUCTION

In a developed world such as Canada and the United Kingdom, many Muslim parents would rather have their children stay at home during music lessons. Some parents insisted that they could not allow their children to be in the same room where musical instruments were being played (Storsve, Westby & Ruud, 2012). Generally, there were continuous believes that music was haram (forbidden) by Muslim doctrine where they neither listen to it nor play a role in it (Khan, 2016). Therefore, there is no clarity within Islam whether Muslims are banned from learning/singing music (Von Grunebaum, 2013). The debate on music lesson within Islam is divisive because of the lack of a clear explanation of the issue of music (McDonald, 2014).

Music being a practical subject it involves students in listening to a range of music, and developing skills of composing and making music, it is a sensitive area for Muslims and a controversial issue in the Muslim world (Radocy & Boyle, 2012; Alwasilah, 2013). The Qur'an has not mentioned about music rather the favourable and unfavourable references are found in the Hadiths, the sayings of the Prophet (Islam & Alam, 2013). Nevertheless, chanting and the call to prayer, that uses the human voice is the accepted form of music by all scholars whereas instrumental music is not (Titon, 2015). The thought of learning and performing music by some Muslims recognize that it can be used for both good and bad purposes (Sarrazin, 2013). There is no doubt that music stirs the soul, evoking a range of emotions that would otherwise arouse misbehaviour. Many Muslim parents do not want to risk their children being exposed to the decadent aspects of music and tend to condemn popular music because it is associated with the potential hazards of pop culture (Izsak, 2013). According to the Muslim religion, it is not permissible to recite the Holy Qur'an, supplications, and words of praise in tunes that are commensurate to entertainment and amusement gatherings (Cook, 2018). Muslim parents are guided by the teaching of the Messenger of Allah that the person with the sin of singing (al-ghina') and playing of the drum would be raised on the day of resurrection blind, deaf and dumb (Izsak, 2013). It declares that whoever listens to the entertainment (song and music), the lead would be melted inside his ear on the day of judgment. Therefore, this study was vital in understanding the dynamics of music subject acceptance in a Muslim dominated county of Mombasa in Kenya.

These authors have dealt with the negative attitude of Muslims towards Western music in the European world. They have not pointed out whether the inclusion of Western music has discouraged Muslim students in Mombasa county, Kenya, from pursuing music

and this is what this research intended to establish. In fact, according to Von Grunebaum, there is no clarity within Islam whether Muslims are banned from learning/singing Western music. Macdonald, says that the debate on music lesson within Islam is divisive because of lack of clear explanation.

In Africa, musical education based upon Western value has negative implications for the modern musical educational policies curriculum and practice for the modern African states (Casmir, Nwakego and Umenziwa 2015). Kenya has experienced dropping of music subject enrolment by Muslim students from 2008 to 2015 with Mombasa County taking the lead (Ongati, 2015). The Kenyan music scholars have carried out studies on Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) music examination which is based on the content of the curriculum: Mbeche (2000), Auma, (2006), Ongati, (2009). They addressed musicianship in general but none of their studies focuses on the influence of the content of music curriculum on the choice of music by Muslim students, hence the need for this study.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Muslim students hardly opt for Music subject. They are never willing to study music at post-primary level. According to Casimir and Umazinwa, (2015), it is rare for a Muslim student to take up music as a career subject. Current music education curricula designate Western classical music as the music most worthy of study through the emphasis on elements of music that are decidedly Western (Hess, 2015). This violates students' identities (Muslim identities). Musical content has been influenced by religion practice, meaning and values. Muslim students may not pursue music as a course because of what is taught in music. They may find it a challenge to perform Western pieces. Muslim girls hardly accept to put on dance skirts as costumes. The music taught in class is of no value to Muslims because it is not applicable in their services. Continuous drop by Muslim students pursuing Music subject informed this study. Scholarly works in Kenya in music curriculum left a gap in knowledge on the choice of Music subject by Muslim students that this study sought to fill. The question was thus, 'What influenced Western secular music in secondary school music curriculum on the choice of music as a study subject by Muslim Students in Mombasa County, Kenya?

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design: This study was conducted through descriptive research design method: the information was obtained from a sample rather than the entire population.

Study Area: The study was carried out in the one secondary school offering Music subject in Mombasa County.

Study population: The target population consisted of all students in secondary schools in Mombasa County currently taking or once took music. According to the QASO, Mombasa County, there are forty-four (44) secondary schools in the county having a total of twenty thousand and five (20,005) students. Out of the forty-four (44) schools, twenty-eight (28) are Muslim community-sponsored while sixteen (16) are non-Muslim community sponsored. Currently, there is only one school which offers music and has a population of eighty-seven (87) music students distributed as follows: form one forty-four (44) students, form two twenty-one (21) students, form three– ten (10) students and form four–twelve (12) students. The accessible population consists of Muslim students in Mombasa County who once took music as a subject and dropped it. They were only eight (8) students, three (3) music teachers, one (1) KICD officer, county QASO and career masters.

Sample size: Purposive sampling was used to select all the form 3 and 4 Muslim students who took music at junior secondary and dropped it at senior secondary; they were 9 in total, the 3 music teachers in the county, the KICD officer at the national level and QASO at the county level were selected all through purposive sampling. 9 parents to form 3 and 4 Muslim students who dropped music were also purposively selected. 30% of career masters from the Muslim community-sponsored schools were part of the sample.

Data collection: The research instruments comprised of the questionnaire, interview schedule and focus group discussion (FGD) schedule. Besides, content analysis was used to get the data from KNEC annual reports, KCSE past papers and examination schedule documents. The equipment included a tape recorder and a camera.

Validity: questionnaires were pre-tested to check whether they generated the intended data as per the study objectives.

Reliability: Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.82 was achieved from the test thus data reliability was assured in this study.

Data Analysis: quantitative data were analysed using statistical package for social scientists (SPSS) Version 25.0 and presented in tables form. While qualitative data were described as verbatim and presented in a narration form.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Muslim parents/guardians were asked to assist in providing their opinions concerning the influence of Western secular music on the choice of Music subject by Muslim students. Table 3.1 shows the findings.

Table 3.1: Effects of Western secular music on the choice of music subject by Muslim students

Variables	SA-A	Un	SD-D
There is no need for a Muslim student to learn Western secular music	75.0%	12.5%	12.5%
There is no problem for a Muslim student to learn western secular music for examination purposes.	62.5%	12.5%	25.0%

The teaching of Western pieces can discourage Muslim students from taking music subject	62.5%	12.5%	25.0%
A Muslim student should not even own discs containing Western secular music	62.5%	0.0%	37.5%
Muslim students should not play Western music instruments because it can distort Islamic faith	62.5%	0.0%	37.5%
Western music can lower one's moral standards	62.5%	0.0%	37.5%
The government should emphasize on Islamic rather than Western music	75.0%	0.0%	25.0%

[SA-A = strongly agree or agree: Un=undecided: SD-D = Strongly disagree or disagree]

Table 3.1 shows that the majority of Muslim parents/guardians felt that there was no need for Muslim students learning Western secular music (75.0%). However, when it is required for examination, the participants felt it was not a problem (62.5%). As an intervening measure, the participants opined that the government should emphasize on Islamic music rather than Western music (75.0%). The researcher computed Kruskal-Wallis H test to determine the differences between the effect of Western secular music in secondary schools' music curriculum on the choice of music subject by Muslim students according to Muslim parental/guardian knowledge of child's previous engagement in music subject. Table 3.2 illustrates the findings.

Table 3.2: Kruskal-Wallis H test for Western secular music on the choice of music subject by Muslim students
Test Statistics^{a,b}

Variables	Kruskal-Wallis H	Df	Asymp. Sig.
There is no need for a Muslim student to learn Western secular music	4.000	1	.046
There is no problem for a Muslim student to learn Western secular music for examination purposes	2.286	1	.131
The teaching of Western pieces can discourage Muslim students from taking music subject	2.286	1	.131
A Muslim student should not even own discs containing Western secular music	1.667	1	.197
Muslim students should not play Western music instruments because it can distort Islamic faith	1.667	1	.197
Western music can lower one's moral standards	1.667	1	.197
the government should emphasize on Islamic rather than Western music	3.000	1	.083

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Are you aware that your son/daughter used to take music subject and has dropped it?

The results determined that there were no statistically significant differences between there being no problem for Muslim students learning Western secular music for examination purposes, $H(1) = 2.286, p > .05$; the teaching of Western pieces discourages Muslim students from taking music subject, $H(1) = 2.286, p > .05$; the Muslim student not even owning discs containing Western secular music, $H(1) = 1.667, p > .05$; the Muslim students should not play Western music instruments because it could distort Islamic faith, $H(1) = 1.667, p > .05$; the Western music lowering one's moral standards $H(1) = 1.667, p > .05$; and the government should emphasize on Islamic music rather than western music, $H(1) = 3.000, p > .05$.

The results showed an existing significant relationship between there being no need for the Muslim students learning Western secular music, $H(1) = 4.000, p = .046$. Western secular music is not allowed to be performed nor learnt by the Muslim students with regards to requirement by the Islamic beliefs and the saying of the Prophet (Islam & Alam, 2013).

The teaching of Western pieces or listening to it by the Muslim students was highly discouraged as it was viewed as erosive and immoral (Sovatsky, 2014; Nouriaie-Simone, 2014). Western music in all its entirety (reading, performing – singing and playing instruments) was not allowed by the sayings from the Prophet. There have been many incidences where Muslim students taking Music subject refused to perform Western secular music. It is forbidden (*haram*) as per the unfavourable references of music performance from the *Hadiths*, the sayings of the Prophet (Islam & Alam, 2013). It is not easy to interfere with religious beliefs instead as a learning institution, teachers are only required to offer guidance.

In general, music is bethought by the Muslims to be forbidden by Muslim doctrine, which should not be listened to or performed (Khan, 2016). However, some varieties of this art are permissible (*halal*), which do not have a negative effect on the proper upbringing (Aidi, 2014). The study established that the Muslim students who pursued Music subject beyond junior school had been known to have excelled in the music examination of voice set pieces and the performance on instruments. Music is career-maker for all students pursuing it; therefore, allowing the Muslim students to take music classes would benefit their future endeavours in music.

Secular music is a non-religious form of art, which Islamic laws prohibit listening and performing it. However, music has gained dominance globally, hence, making it difficult to avoid. According to the study by O'Brien (2017), non-Muslim countries, as well as some Muslim countries, are bombarded by music, songs and rhythms of dancers. Muslim parents are guided by the teaching of the Messenger of Allah that the person with the sin of singing (*al-ghina'*) and playing of the drum would be raised on the day of resurrection blind, deaf and dumb (Izsak, 2013). The fear of Allah's wrath threatens Muslim parents/guardians to allow their children taking Music subject. Besides, the music curriculum in the Kenyan education system has a limitation in the inclusion of Islamic music. This lack of Islamic music content in the curriculum has influenced the reluctance of the Muslim students on choice of music subject.

The initial belief of Muslim students not taking up music as a KCSE examinable subject was attributed to the music curriculum having overemphasised Western secular set pieces. However, according to FGD (2019), there was no overemphasise of Western music in the curriculum, but the teaching of its pieces had discouraged many of them from choosing it. The inherent negative attitude towards Western secular music by Muslim faithful leads to continuous removal of Muslim students from music classes globally. Mombasa County has had similar experiences where Muslim parents in Muslim sponsored schools had prohibited the inclusion of Music subject in their curriculum. This was made possible to avoid any possibilities of their children coming across music education in those schools.

There are, few Muslim students who've taken music subject and proved that the Muslim students are fast learners of Western music, though, they only encountered it in most cases during music classes. The religious teaching bars them from associating with Western music and culture thus opts to quit Music subject. From these findings, the researcher found that Muslim students' enrolment in Music subject in Mombasa County could improve as long as the music curriculum incorporates Islamic music.

4. CONCLUSION

The music curriculum in the Kenyan education system dominates western secular pieces. This lack of Islamic music content in the curriculum has influenced the reluctance of the Muslim students on choice of music subject.

5. RECOMMENDATION

The Western secular music limits the participation of Muslims students from choosing music subject. Therefore, the Ministry of Education should engage Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development and Quality Assurance Standard directorate to incorporate independent Islamic music to promote the choice of the subject by both Muslim students and Muslim community-sponsored schools.

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