

# VIOLENCE IN MUSIC

## NASILJE U MUZICI

**Autor:** Filip Šušulić, II-1 Gimnazija „Stevan Jakovljević“

**Mentor:** Biljana Pipović, profesor engleskog jezika

Fondacija darovitih "Hristifor Crnilovic," Vlasotince

### ABSTRACT

This work will contain the most important facts about violence in all kinds of music. Music represents our personality, music shows who we are. The potential impact, and more notably, the dangers that different styles can have on us, have got a lot of attention in the news and the medical profession which is one of the reasons that made me choose this subject. Violence on television and in movies has always been a big issue, but only recently violence in music seemed to come to the forefront. The effects of music influence are widely known and I will explain them better in this work. With artists who are pushing the limits, special interest groups consequently reacting through protests and court cases, violence in music has been on everyone's mind lately. This is why teenagers should think about music they are listening to, because it has great influence on their behaviour and their social status. In addition, some of the researches have shown that individuals who listen to music with violence accept the everyday idea of violence in their lives more frequently.

**Key words:** violence, music, survey

### REZIME

Ovaj rad će sadržati najznačajnije činjenice o nasilju u svim vrstama muzike. Muzika predstavlja našu ličnost, muzika pokazuje ko smo mi. Potencijalni uticaj i još značajnije, opasnosti koje različiti stilovi muzike mogu da imaju na nas, su dobili puno pažnje u vestima ali i u medicini što je jedan od razloga koji su me nagnali da odlučim da pišem o ovoj temi. Nasilje na televiziji i u filmovima je oduvek bio veliki problem, ali tek u skorije vreme nasilje u muzici je pocelo da dolazi na čelo ovih problema. Efekti uticaja muzike su siroko poznati i ja ću ih bolje objasniti u ovom radu. Sa umetnicima koji pomeraju granice, specijalnim interesnim grupama koje reaguju preko protesta i sudskih slucajeva, nasilje u muzici je na svacijem umu trenutno. Ovo je razlog zašto bi tinejdzeri trebali da razmisle o muzici koju slušaju, jer ona ima veliki uticaj na njihovo ponašanje i društveni status. U prilog tome, neka istraživanja su pokazala da pojedinci koji slušaju muziku s nasiljem lakše prihvataju ideju nasilja u svakodnevnom životu.

**Ključne reči:** nasilje, muzika, istrazivanje



### **Music generally speaking**

Researchers have long believed that the type of music we listen to tells a lot about who we are; opening up someone's CD case is like opening a window into their mind.

Although much of the debate about the effects of media on youth revolves around television, music is very important to children and adolescents. In a survey in some schools in California students were asked what media they would choose to take with them if they were stranded on an deserted island. Over 80 % of the total sample nominated music as one of their first three choices. Music's importance to youth can also be measured by the amount of time they spend listening to it. Recent surveys have shown that average teenager spends about 21 hour a week listening to the music. Music is also one of the background activities while doing a lot of other stuff, for example while driving a car or while studying. Whether it is a CD player, radio or television, music is reproduced everywhere around us.

### **The Effects of Violent Music Content on Teenagers**

Throughout history the human populous has been attracted to music. Whether it be part of a ritual, an emotional release, religious reasons, or just for listening pleasure music has been at the center of our society. Recently, references have often been made to link violent and deviant behavior to music and certain music genres. Some such genres include, but are not limited to, heavy metal, rock, death metal, rap, gansta rap, industrial, hardcore, and alternative music. During the last decade we have seen music lyrics become more and more violent and sexually explicit. Experts argue that this can cause problems with children and adolescents. In most music today, especially rap and heavy metal, most of the lyrics contain references to violence, sex, and/or drugs. Teenagers often do not understand what is being said, in fact in one study only 30 percent of those questioned knew the lyrics to their favorite songs and they all had varied comprehension as to what the message was. Generally speaking we should know what we are listening to because, lyrics are the soul of every song. We shouldn't only listen to the rhythm of the song as every song is a piece of art for itself.

## **The most violent music genres**

Novadays, songs with most violent lyrics are usually heavy metal, gangsta rap, industrial and hardcore rock songs. All of these music genres have a high proportion of violent and sexual themes. Examples of these kinds of music can be heard almost everyday. Moreover, songs with violent lyrics are getting recorded more now than in the past.

Here are some statistics:

- The Parents Music Resource Center states that American adolescents listen to approximately 10,500 hours of music between the periods of 7th to 12th grades - this is a mere 500 hours less than the amount of time spent in school over the entire 12 years.
- Entertainment Monitor reported that in 1995 only 10 of the top 40 popular compact discs on sale during the holiday season were void of profanity or lyrics dealing with violence, sex, and drugs.
- Several studies have found that parents are often unaware of the lyrics in the songs that their children are listening to.
- In 1998, research concluded music videos were more violent than feature films and television, averaging four violent scenes each.
- In 1997, a study found that 22.4% of MTV video contained violence and 25% depicted weapon carrying.

I will especially write about violence in heavy metal and rap music. Because they, in my opinion, have the most violent songs.

## **Violence in rap music**

Rap music is one of the music genres which is mainly listened to by teenagers so it has a great influence on them .

One of the things that attracts teenagers to listen to this kind of music is the fact that most of the rappers who record this kind of songs are usually speaking about their own life which is often very hard, because more than a half of rappers had bad childhood or they either lived in very hard conditions. They also have a life where murders and violence is a normal thing, especially for the ones who lived in ghetto . A large percent of rappers was, or still is, a member of a gang, and by recording songs they are trying to represent their gang, which leads to songs with violent lyrics and very disturbing context. These are some of the things which give the motivation to listeners to continue listening to this kind of music and gives them another access to look on violence as it was an everyday thing.

Each famous rapper has recorded at least 1 song with an aggressive and disturbing context. *2pac* with the song *Hit 'em up* (the song about his way of revenge to his enemies who tried to kill him), *Eminem* with the song *Stan* (*Stan* is the song about a deranged fan that kills his girlfriend, puts her body in the trunk of his car, and drives off a bridge after not receiving a response to his fan mail from rapper Eminem). *Dr. Dre* with the song *The day the niggaz took over* (This song retells the L.A. riots in 1992) and *DMX* with the song *X is coming for you* (This is from the Dark Man's first album. He speaks of shooting his enemy in front of his family, after raping his victim's 18 year old daughter).

These are some lyrics which show how violent some of the songs are:

'I hope your conscience EATS AT YOU and you can't BREATHE without me...Hey Slim, that's my girlfriend screamin in the trunk but I didn't slit her throat, I just tied her up, see I ain't like you cause if she suffocates she'll suffer more...'  
*Eminem "Stan"*

'I put my Glock to your dome and you started to cry *Boom biddy bye bye*. Any last prayers before you die?'  
*Cypress Hill "Boom biddy Bye Bye"*

Although some say that rap music is complete rubbish, some studies have been conducted to assess the effects of listening to rap music on teenagers and young adults. Findings thus far are mixed, but overall they suggest that listening to rap music does not cause aggressive or deviant behaviour. Although the research has found a correlation between preference for rap music and behavioral problems, drug or alcohol use, arrests and sexual promiscuity, these behavioral problems usually begin before students start listening to rap, which indicates that the music does not cause behavioral problems or addiction. Rather, it suggests that problematic youth are more inclined to prefer this kind of rap music.



## Violence in Heavy metal music

There are probably several reasons for violence in this music --the appearance of the musicians, the loud and powerful style of the music, the theatrics of the live performances - but what receives the most attention is the basic themes of the lyrics. The basic themes of many of the successful heavy metal songs are extreme rebellion, violence, substance abuse, sexual promiscuity, perversion, and Satanism. When it comes to heavy metal, people typically either love it, or hate it. The heart-pounding drum beats combined with aggressive and raw lyrics is the recipe for a style of music that's been at the center of controversy for years.

A number of studies shows positive associations between exposure to heavy metal music and a variety of troublesome attitudes and behaviours. Fans of heavy metal music tend to possess different characteristics from other youth. At the same time, there is no evidence that heavy metal fans see themselves as socially isolated. Heavy metal music is represented by itself with a lot of violence which is widely known and it is a music of the ones that are different from the others.

A quick scan of the lyrics of any heavy metal band will often reveal some gasp-inducing subject matter. Not the sort of poetry to be quoting to grandmother over lunch, but can such music really incite people to violence, not to mention murder?

One study revealed that of the 700 most popular songs of "heavy metal," 50% speak of killings, 35% of Satanism and 7% about suicide.

Here is what a person who attended a heavy metal concert said, *"After an hour or so, even I felt drugged. But 20,000 people, most of them high on marijuana, if nothing stronger, were rocking the whole building, swaying, standing on their seats, arms around each other...the crowd seemed hypnotized in thrall. It was part of a mass frenzy."*

Lyrics in heavy metal music are mainly described as the ones that cause a lot of murders and suicides. Sometimes this type of lyrics leads to killings. In a town called Jefferson-Township, (New Jersey), a youth named Thomas Sullivan stabbed his mother, Betty-Ann, to death in the basement of their house. Setting fire to the divan with the aim of destroying the house and killing his father and younger brother, he ran outside and committed suicide by slashing his wrists. All week long before this carnage, Thomas had been humming a rock song about blood and killing your mother. The police later established that Thomas was a talented student, outstanding sportsman and had belonged to the Scouts. He began to dabble in "hard metal" rock music and, before committing his crime, he confided to his friends that Satan appeared to him and ordered the killing of his family.

This is only one of the examples where heavy metal music led to murders or suicides and one of the reasons why heavy metal music is in the center of controversy

novadays. When someone is listening to, for example *Slayer's* songs, he cant stay apathetic. It affects him in many different ways.

On the other hand, one teacher said that the student who wore *Metallica* t-shirt everyday had been seen wearing a suit and going to church regullary with his family. Also, lot of people in charge of some very important business said that they listen to heavy metal and it didn't have any effect on them. Generally speaking, heavy metal music can't have such an enormous effect on people's lives, but in some cases it does have.



### **A survey**

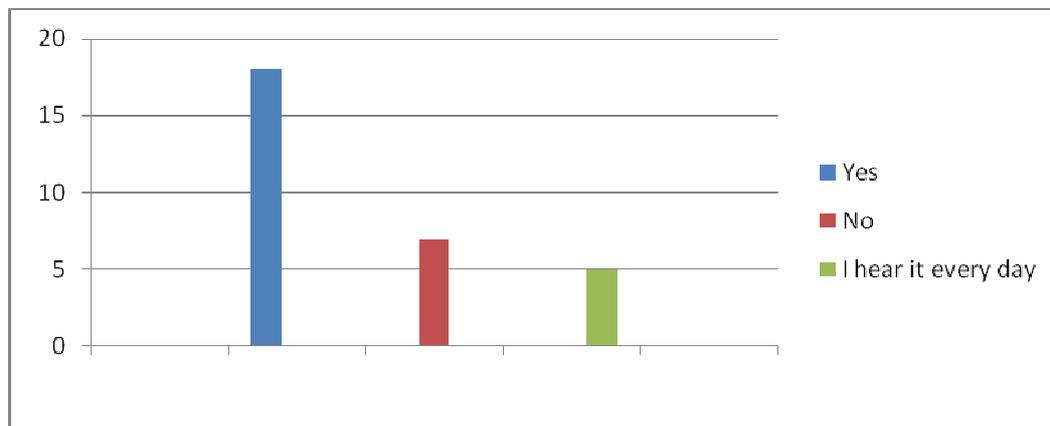
Recently I've conducted a survey and interviewed 30 people within 16 to 18 years of age. I have asked them a few questions about music and its effects. The questions were :

- Have you ever heard any extremely violent song?
- Do you like this kind of music (rap and heavy metal in the first place)?
- What kind of feelings does this music arouse in you ?
- Do you think that some meassures against this music should be taken?

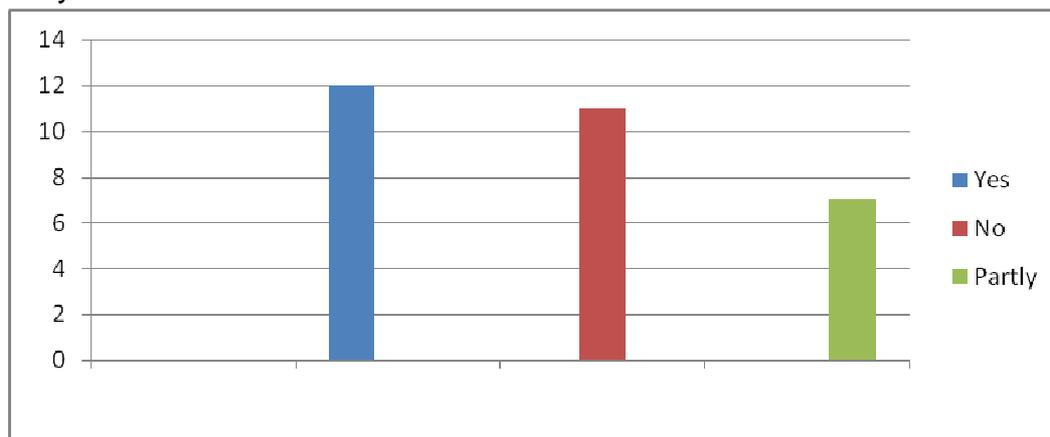
Therefore, this survey was meant to show what knowledge about violent music and its effects teenegers from Vlasotince possessed. The results weren't so suprising although this was the first survey of this kind carried out in this area.

These were the answers :

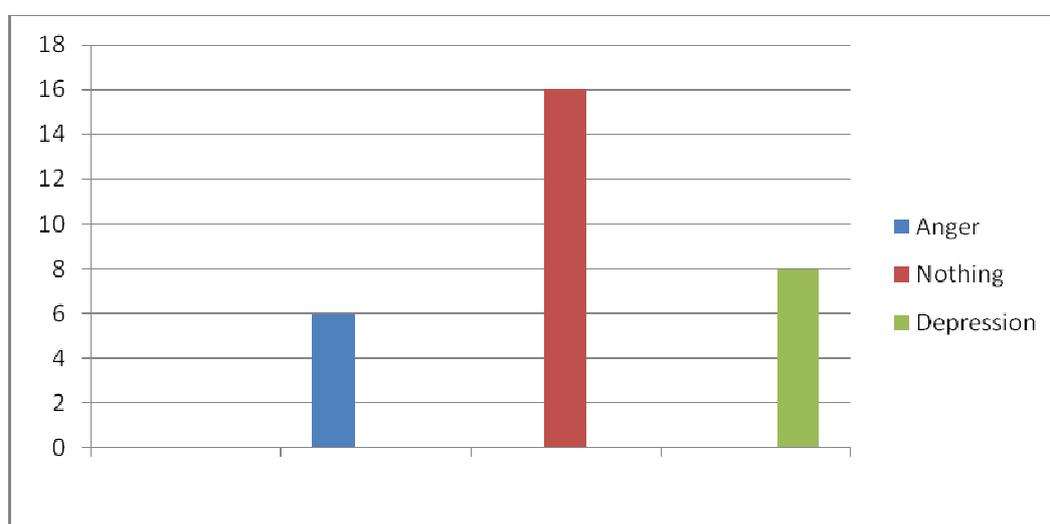
Have you ever heard any extremely violent song?



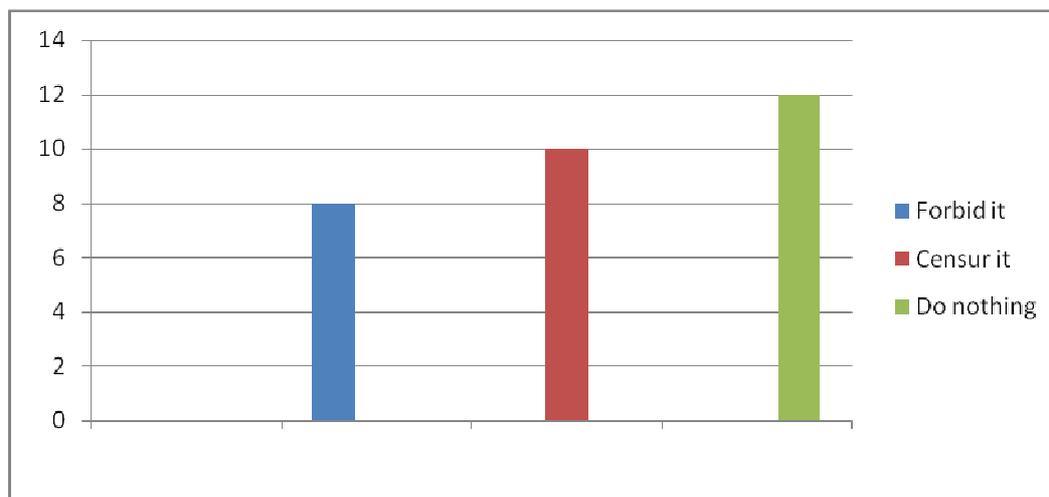
Do you like this kind of music ?



What kind of feelings does this music arouse in you ?



Do you think that some measures against this music should be taken?



Two general groups emerge from this survey :

- People who are well informed about violent music and its effects
- People who are satisfied with this kind of music and wouldn't do anything to prevent it.

By analyzing the results I have concluded that the majority of listeners belongs to the second group.

### **Effects of violent music**

Nowadays there is a concern that violent music emphasizes feelings like violence, racism, suicidal thoughts , satanism and so on . They are based on a lot of facts and researches. These effects don't need to affect only large group of people so they could become important, because they are already very dangerous, and we should do something about this. Across the studies, songs with violent lyrics were associated with increases in hostile and aggressive feelings. Some of the scientists also connect violent music as a starter for some shootings. It is true that a number of adolescent suicide victims have spent the hours listening to all kinds of violent music. It is also true that several of young people who took part in school shootings have been 2pac's fans. However there are millions of violent music fans who are living normal everyday life without any excesses.

Again I will mention that everything depends on our personality and our mind, and not so much on the effects around us. There is also a huge effect which music causes on listeners mood. As I mentioned before in my survey, in our region most of the examinees said that music didn't cause any big changes in their mood and behaviour, while some of the examinees answered that this music caused depression and moreover anger in them!

The artists producing these songs are under a lot of pressure from the media but they all have their reasons for creating this kind of music. Here are some of their comments.

*"When you start censoring the books and censoring the video games and censoring the TV and the movies, you're going to still have people with their problems and you're still going to have these situations."*

- *Ice Cube, rapper*

*"I wanna thank everybody who could look past the controversy and see the album for what it was and also for what it isn't."*

- *Eminem's Grammy acceptance speech*

## **What should be done?**

### - Continue Use of Warning Stickers

Warning stickers let parents and listeners know that an album contains explicit lyrics. Without these warning stickers parents cannot be sure what kind of music their children listen to. They give parents a sense of security because they know that the record industry wants to protect children as well.

### - Artists Taking Responsibility

Artists should not have to compromise their artistic integrity, but they must understand that certain age groups should not listen to certain music. If an artist makes music that contains violent lyrics, he should not offer it to young children. Artists also need to understand that they are role models to countless children of different ages, and they should try to act that way as much as possible.

### - Higher Parental Monitoring

Since studies have found that violent tendencies are less frequent after listening to violent music when parental control is high, it seems clear that if families encourage communication, their children may be less likely to act on aggressive tendencies. Parents should also take an active role in their children's lives, taking note of what music they buy and what radio stations they listen to .

## **Conclusion**

Whether you're a rap-lover, head-banger, or Mozart-hugger, musical preference and personality go hand-in-hand. The potential effects they have on your character and behavior, however, particularly in terms of more aggressive music, are still being debated. Nonetheless, like any one of our other tastes, whether it's in food, clothing or choice of friends or partners, musical preference is just another excerpt in the biography of who we are. Canadian rock band Triumph said it best: *"Music holds the secret, to know it can make you whole. It's not just a game of notes, it's the sound inside your soul."*

## **Content**

### **Page 1**

1. Abstract

### **Page 2**

1. Music Generally Speaking
2. The Effects of Violent Music Content on Teenagers

### **Page 3**

1. The most violent music genres
2. Violence in rap music

### **Page 4**

1. Violence in rap music

### **Page 5,6 and 7**

1. Violence in heavy metal music
2. Survey

### **Page 8**

1. Effects of violent music

### **Page 9**

1. What should be done

### **Page 10**

1. Conclusion
2. Content
3. Literature

## **Literature**

<http://www.orthodoxphotos.com/readings/rock/violence>

<http://www.queendom.com/articles/>

<http://www.psychology.iastate.edu/>

*USA Today*, October 11, 1985, p. 10

*Information for Parents' Music Resource Center*, Nashville, TN. 1990

*Satanism: Is Your Family Safe?*, Schwarz and Empey, Newyork , p. 154