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THE PLACE OF IGBO CHILDREN'S GAME SONGS IN ATTAINMENT OF VISION 2030

Abstract

Children's game songs have been an essential part of the growth and development of children in indigenous Africa in general, and Igbo society in particular. Regrettably, most of these game songs, which focus on exercises for physical growth, and mostly importantly, on impacting positive moral values on children in order to grow into responsible adults, thrive in oral tradition, which is now being eroded. The social media, which has taken over almost all the avenues for indigenous musical training, and internal migration, is one of the major contributing factors. In order to sustain this all-important cultural heritage, therefore, there is need to preserve these performative activities especially in the formal school setting. This study examines selected Igbo children game songs, their roles in the growth, development and character formation of a child, and as well explores possible mediums of transmission in modern times. Hinging on Traditional Theory, which highlights fusing the old and the present for sustainability, the study holds that to save these songs and all their attributes from extinction, modern methods of preserving and retrieving them are of paramount importance.

Keywords: Children game songs, Social media, Modern Preservation methods, vision 2030, Positive values

Introduction

Music generally is central to the cultural life of the indigenous Africa. Hence, each event in indigenous Africa has music as an imperious motivator. It is a vital part of the continent's diverse cultural heritage passed down through generations. Indigenous children's game songs, in particular, play significant roles in the socialization and cultural education of young people- teaching important values, language, cultural norms and trainings on various aspects of physical exercises for growth and development. However, the rapid urbanization, internal migration, globalization and digitalization of modern society threaten the continuity of these traditions, as younger generations increasingly prioritize western style of education and entertainment over traditional practices. The rise in digital media and social platforms changed the way people consume and interact with cultural content. The indigenous children game song practices are giving way to modern songs which are easily accessed and downloaded for consumption. There is also a decline in the use of indigenous languages, which helps in expressing the songs, in favor of colonial languages. Hence, thorough examination of song-texts of traditional ethnic music usually reveals a set of standards that distinguish and sharply characterize civilization as a way to indicate the degree of cultural complexity (Samuel, 2013). The corpus of indigenous Igbo children's game songs function as entertaining outlet, as well as a tool in training for physical growth and development of the Igbo child, and to some extent, in the control of social order.

It is important to note that what makes any song adaptable is the fact that it is a creation of human beings and that it remains significant due to its continued usefulness to its maker

(Akuno, 2013). Most Igbo children's game song performances are often accompanied by dance, drama, and other forms of expressive behaviors (Omojola, 2006). However, shifts in values and beliefs have brought about some changes in social values and life styles, thus, conflicting with traditional practices (Ofuani, 2012). In this vein, some game songs may be seen as outdated as a result of change in social context, beliefs and values. Moreover, the dominant approach to preserving indigenous African music relied heavily on paper documentation, which often fails to capture the complexity and nuances of oral traditions. Prints cannot fully convey the rhythmic representation of activities and the lyrical subtleness of the songs. More importantly, the context in which these songs are performed is often lost in translation. It is necessary therefore, to explore modern methods for preserving and transmitting indigenous African music, particularly, children game songs, outside paper documentation.

This study therefore, examines innovative approaches such as digital archiving, community-based education programs, formal school settings, and interactive cultural festivals, to preserving and promoting this vital cultural tradition, so that by 2030 and beyond, a continued vitality and transmission of indigenous African musical heritage will be ensured.

Characteristics of Igbo Children's Game Songs

Children's game songs generally are formed mainly by their functions. They are mainly designed to generate and foster team spirit, which facilitate social interaction among children- teaching them to work together, take turns and build relationships. These features are vital elements in enhancing co-operation as well as reducing negative competitions.

Most Igbo children's game songs incorporate elements of storytelling that are acted out during actions, which enhances imaginative and narrative skills. They are usually performed in Igbo language and its dialects- leading to exploration of the local languages/dialects (Nzewi, 1983). These songs are usually appropriate to the different age grades and levels of development of children who perform them. They are mostly in call-and-response style, simple, catchy, repetitive actions, easy to learn-and-remember melodies, which are usually fun to learn and dance along. Each song offers new learning experiences such as skills, words, actions, playing of instruments or other physical activities such as clapping of hands, dancing, among other game actions, which in turn, help in developing motor skills and co-ordination (Okafor, 1989).

Every game song upholds values and beliefs of the people, in this vein, Egwin (2016) observed that both the lyrics and actions of Igbo children's game songs reflect the overall social, cultural, economic and religious realities of a traditional society, and evoke in the children, the feeling of attachment and belonging to their root (Egwin, 2016). Each game song derives its name from the occasion it is sung, or the role it plays. However, some of the songs which are used in different exercises for the child's physical training also have educational content for the child's adaptation to the society.

Children, therefore, should be made to understand the reason behind the rules of the games, especially those that portray justice, fairness, honesty, patience, peace, good behavior, self-control and other aspects of human behavior and welfare.

Relevance of Igbo Children's Game songs

Igbo songs, generally, are cultural expressions and avenues through which children's creative potentials are developed and exposed, enabling the children to mature intellectually and emotionally. They also develop and absorb concepts and attitudes that facilitate socialization (Akuno, 2005; Agu, 2011). Game songs teach children how to perform various activities from cradle, such as, physical activities, which encourage children to use their bodies and

physical skills to either walk, cultivate, mash palm fruits and other activities that help in physical development. Songs and movements also encourage children to be creative and imaginative as they experiment with sounds and beats. Their cognitive, physical, social and emotional wellbeing are also developed as they sing and play. Language skills are also developed, as the lyrics of the songs are rooted in local languages.

Through game songs, children engage in a lot of activities such as dancing, singing, playing of instruments, jumping, running, among other activities. All these help in the development of physical fitness, proper metabolic functioning and good health (Ibekwe, 2011). These experiences are later utilized in life in relevant situations. This is in line with the philosophy of education in Nigeria which states that “the quality of education at all levels should be oriented towards exposing the children at certain stages of their development to various cultural practices of their community in order to inculcate in them, the value obligations of the society and the right attitude to life at a later stage” (FGN: 2004). Nketia, (1999), adds that our indigenous songs are not relics of forgotten or abandoned past, but living traditions, cultivated and practiced actively in traditional contexts by the majority of our people as an integral part of their community. This shows that exploring children's game songs, and their connections to African values, can provide insight into cultural traditions, community dynamics and the transmission of moral principles. Hence, indigenous African music, particularly children's game songs, serve as vibrant vessel for preserving African values and cultural heritage beyond the confines of written documentation. Through oral tradition, communal participation, and intergenerational transmission, these songs embody the essence of African identity, wisdom and community. Embracing and celebrating these musical traditions can ensure continuous transmission of these values- fostering a rich cultural legacy that thrives beyond the boundaries of paper and other social media avenues (Hallen, 2002).

To save Igbo children's game songs from being lost or altered, due to the breakdown and displacement of societal structure, which also leads to reduced opportunity for their oral transmission, Coombe,(1998), advises that modern technological devices should be employed to preserve/archive and disseminate this tradition in ways that should engage modern audience.

Theoretical Concepts

Traditional theory is a broad approach adopted by various scholars across various disciplines or fields of study. Their meeting point however, remains that the old and the present be harmonized for sustainability of the tradition, as well as for relevance to modern audience. In other words, the theory typically advocates the fusion of the old and the present to realize an acceptable balance.

Illustrating, using education, Hirsch (1987) notes that educators may integrate some pedagogical methods that emphasize rigorous academic standards- which are traditional approaches- with modern technologies and methodologies to enhance learning outcomes. Scruton (2013) also states that modern architects can draw on old traditions to create buildings that honor historical aesthetics, while meeting contemporary needs for functionality and sustainability.

In line with this traditional theory, Omojola (1995) and Onyeji (2005) also agree that it is possible to adapt traditional African music and dance for performance in modern times without losing their cultural identity. According to the authors, this could be achieved through balance approach that would blend traditional African music with modern performance environments, while maintaining its cultural significance. The concept of harmonizing the old and the present, could also involve respecting ancient wisdom, while

applying it to address current challenges and opportunities. Therefore, traditional theory, overall, provides a framework for understanding the legacy of past practices and integrating them with contemporary ideas and innovations.

Modern elements can be incorporated into Igbo children's game songs to create a fusion of the old and the new sounds. This involves drawing inspiration from traditional techniques and styles during a contemporary interpretation performance of the songs. The process of harmonization can help cultivate a deeper appreciation for tradition, while encouraging creative adjustments that are relevant in today's world. For instance, by animations-bringing these children's game songs and actions using audio-visual device to showcase cultural heritage, while making the songs and actions adaptable to modern audience.

The main idea of this fusion, therefore, is to respect and preserve the wisdom and effectiveness of traditional practices, while adapting them to fit contemporary contexts (Igbi, 2021). In other words, traditional theory involves finding a balance between preserving valuable traditions and adapting them to contemporary contexts.

Analysis of Some Selected Igbo Children's Game Songs

1. Dedede

English Translation

Dedede, nwa na-amu ije
walk

Dedede, a child is learning to

Dedede, echile bu ije

Dedede, tomorrow is walk

Dedede, nwanne echi bu ije
walk

Dedede, next tomorrow is

A mother or a nanny uses the above to teach a child how to walk. She recites it as she leads the child along, step by step, in steady rhythmic patterns.

2. Song 2

Call

Response

Akpan koro(2ice)

kpan koro(2ice)

Udu mu e (2ice)

Ogene(2ice)

O ti ku o

Aye- ee(2ice)

Onye O mara

Udu ya ya ya udu yaa

Translation into English version

Call

Response

Akpankoro –nonsense syllable

kpankoro

My pot drum e

metal gong (2ice)

Otikuo (nonsense syllables)

a yeo

He that falters

pot drum yayaya (the sound) drum yaa

Other children game songs abound where people are appreciated, which serve as a source of encouragement to whoever dances well. This makes for self-esteem to those that dance well and humiliation to those that do not dance well. This is to say that game songs are also used as instrument of teaching children to learn the art of dancing at an early age.

For instance, such song as the one below is used for learning of dance steps

3.

Song 3

Call

Onye ga-agba egwu
 Ngozi ga-agba egwu
 O bu ihere n'eme ya?
 K'obu egwu n'atu ya
 I ga-agb'egwu Iga gb'egwu
 Ekwensu rapu ya

Response

Iyaa g'agba egwu
 Iyaa g'agba egwu
 Iyaa g'agba egwu
 Iyaa g'agba egwu
 I ga gb'egwu ewo
 K'ola k'ola be di ya

(many names will be mentioned in turn and they will dance in a circular form)

Translation into English version

Call

Who will dance
 Ngozi will dance
 Is she feeling shy?
 Or is it fear that is catching her
 Satan leave her to go

Response

Iyaa will dance
 Iyaa will dance
 Iyaa will dance
 Iyaa will dance
 To go to her husband's house

Children's games are designed to generate and foster the spirit of '*esprit-de-corps*' which is a vital element in every societal life in which there is competition, socialization with individuals and other members of the group

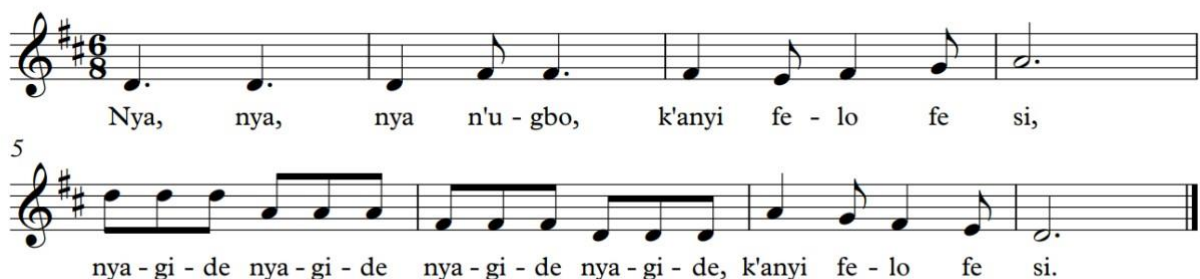
4. *Nya nya nya nugbo*

K'ayi feluo fesi

Nyagide nyagide nyagide nyagide kanyi feluo fesi

NYA N'UGBO

Felicia Ezugwu



The above song originates from Igbokaenyi, a riverine area of Igbo speaking community in Anambra state, southeast Nigeria. The song teaches how to paddle a canoe movement against the tide on the river, and how to overcome an uphill task, generally.

5. *Okpa kwao kanyi je inyio Okpa kwao, kanyi je iyi nnene.*

Chi efo kanyi jee iyio inine

Song number two is also a call for girls who go to stream together at the signal of the cockcrow – showing daybreak. This teaches the children the initial chores or tasks on waking up in the morning.

OKPA KWA

Felicia Ezugwu

8

O-kpa kwa k'a-nyi jee i - yo__ i - ni - ne chi e fo k'a-nyi jee i - yo__ i - ni -

15

ne nwa-nne m k'a-nyi jee i - yo__ i - ni - ne O-kpa kwa k'a-nyi jee i -

20

yo__ i - ni - ne o - tu a - ka k'a-nyi jee i - yo__ i - ni -

ne i - yo__ i - ni - ne i - yo__ i - ni - ne

6. *Onye nako ede ede mara nma okuko*

ONYE N'AKO EDE

Transcribe By Felicia Ezeugwu

ALLEGRO

O nye n'a k'e de e de ma ra'm ma'o ku ko o nye n'a k'e de e de

8
ma ra'm ma'o ku ko du be mu n'a k'e de e de ma ra'm ma'o ku ko Chi de ra_ n'a k'e

15
de e de ma ra'm ma'o ku ko A nyi n'a k'e de e de ma ra'm ma'o ku ko o nye

22
n'a k'e de e de ma ra'm ma'o ku ko du be mu n'a k'e de e de ma ra'm ma'o ku

29
ko Chi de ra_ n'a k'e de e de ma ra'm ma'o ku

33
ko A nyi n'a k'e de e de ma ra'm ma'o ku ko.

This song teaches farming methods, especially how to cultivate. The song is meant to teach the dignity in labour among the Igbo.

7. *mgbe anyi neme inyanga ewo ewo akpukpu ukwuanyi na ga na kolota kokokokoi.*

INYANGA

Felicia Ezugwu

M-gbe a - nyi na - eme i - nya - ga e - wo, e - wo, a -

4
kpu-kpu - kw'a - nyi na ga na ko - lo - ta ko ko koi koi

Song number five shows the use of alliteration to mimic how young ladies walk to woo suitors on the road. Through this song, children, especially young girls learn how to carry themselves when they are walking.

These game songs are adaptable because they have some features that make them relevant to different kinds of activities and functions. They also capture different intentions and utilize variety of symbols to carry out those intentions, thereby, taking on different significances in the process and speaking to different situations through different activities (Akuno, 2013).

Challenges to Igbo Children's Game Songs and the Implications

A nation is best identified with its cultural heritage and diversity (Igbi, 2021). Therefore, the growth of any nation is partly based on how these cultural norms are harnessed and channeled. The Igbo child's musical activities according to Agu (2011) help him to know his culture and immediate surrounding history of the land and general knowledge of his own music and culture. He further emphasized that music and culture are important possession of a people. Game songs are important media through which cultural values are imbued in a child in Igbo tradition. Regrettably, folklore in modern Igbo and African societies in general, is faced with several challenges due to historical, social and cultural transformations on account of the following:

Internal Migration and Insecurity: Movement to urban areas to make a living as a result of modern trends and economic situations has led to break down of traditional economic structures that support folklore practices (Esimone and Ojukwu, 2011). Hence the traditional environments for social interaction such as moonlight situations are almost non-existent. The issue of insecurity and individualized way of life are also hindrances to those remaining in village environments, inconveniently making use of available traditional structures/outlets.

This migration encourages the abandonment of the traditional cultural practices and the younger generation from their traditional values and histories (Okpewho, 1992). The effect is loss of cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge system because as the traditional practices become less frequent or non-existent, communal ties weaken as a result of reduced opportunity or disruption of folklore transfer. The decline in oral storytelling also adds to misrepresenting folklore for only entertainment material, thereby distorting its original meaning and context.

Western Culture, Technology and Globalization: The rise in digital media and social platforms has changed the way people consume and interact with cultural content. The traditional folklore practices are giving way to modern music which is easily accessed and downloaded for consumption. The popularity of modern music seems to be overshadowing indigenous folk songs and thus the moral values expressed in them. There is also a decline in the use of indigenous language in favor of languages such as English and French.

Globalization has also brought about some changes in social values and lifestyles which are conflicting with traditional practices. Such shifts in values and beliefs include way of dressing, acquisition of wealth, status attainment, among others, leading to traditional folklore being seen as outdated. Modern technology and global culture have the capability of overshadowing local folklore consequently diminishing the peculiarity of Igbo/African values (Barber 1997). In other words, its cultural significance may also be seriously compromised when modified to suit modern trend because it is deeply rooted in local languages.

To mitigate these challenges, Euba (1990) is of the opinion that there should be synchronization between African musical traditions and western music that enhances African heritage. That it could be achieved by preserving elements of traditional music as well as embracing new forms which would ensure that African music remains relevant in modern time. Therefore, in order to continue to transmit Igbo children's game songs in the face of modern trends, it should be integrated into formal education and digital platforms. Bilingual education and media that include indigenous language should be promoted especially in formal school systems, and their use in daily life seriously encouraged. Urban spaces and events dedicated to traditional and cultural expressions should also be created and made available to different modern environments.

Conclusion

Traditional education in Igbo society made tremendous achievements in the life of the individuals and the society as a corporate entity. The individuals became fully integrated into his society, observing the societal laws and respecting the damages of the society. Through indigenous songs, especially children game songs, the child were taught how to walk, carry out some chores, swim, and farm among other intellectual and developmental attributes.

However, the social background of the Igbo child has changed tremendously. Activities usually in form of songs, storytelling and games, with each activity designed to impart maximum happiness and also educate the participants during moonlights have seriously been affected by urbanization. Television and cable networks have not helped matters. It will be worthwhile endeavor if modern educational policy makers and practitioners should seriously examine the elements in these children game songs in Igbo land and integrate them into educational policies and practices. The tenacity and discipline embedded in these game songs, which made the Igbo child vibrant and responsible need desperately to be re-cultivated. These songs do not only provide recreation through participation, fitness and efficient body co-ordination are also achieved.

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