

THE USE OF IGBO FOLK SONGS IN PROMOTING CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN UPPER BASIC SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY OF NWAFOR ORIZU COLLEGE, DEMONSTRATION SECONDARY SCHOOL, AWKA, ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

The Igbo culture is enriched with different cultural practices and among all of them, Igbo folksongs are known to be one of the most essential and most engaging cultural practices. Igbo folksongs have long been part of the Igbo culture and tradition, as they serve as a medium for sharing values, beliefs and stories from the past. These Igbo folksongs can be utilized as an effective tool for teaching conflict resolution skills in basic school. This research aims to explore the potentials of Igbo folksongs in shaping attitudes and behaviors that might result to conflict and to foster a culture of peace among basic school students. The research employed a quantitative survey design, utilizing a structured questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument, with teachers and students of upper basic schools constituting the study population. Findings revealed that integrating folk songs into classroom activities significantly enhances students' engagement, fosters positive attitudes, and improve their ability to resolve conflicts collaboratively. The researchers conclude the paper by recommending the consistent use of the Igbo folksongs in educating students on how best to resolve conflict.

Keywords: Folksong, Conflict, Conflict Resolution, the use of folksongs in conflict resolution, Basic schools.

INTRODUCTION

Students in basic schools are said to be at the developmental stage where the foundations laid during early childhood are further developed, strengthened and refined. At this stage, children are more receptive to learning, social interaction, and value formation, making it easier to communicate ideas, educate and positively direct their behavior. Educational experiences encountered during this period tend to leave lasting impressions, as knowledge acquired in childhood often remains with individuals throughout their lives. Consequently, the use of music, particularly folksong, becomes a powerful tool for teaching character formation and social orientation among growing children. Folksong is spontaneously composed music of a race, tribe, group etc. of a humble nature, orally transmitted from generation to generation with an unknown composer (Nnamani, 2014). It is a traditional form of music that reflects the beliefs, values, customs and experiences of a particular community and it is usually passed down orally. Folksong as a peculiar genre of music, often carry moral lessons, social warnings, historical narratives, and communal expectations, making them effective instruments for socialization. For children, folksongs serve not only a source of entertainment but are generally essential in character building, appropriate language use, respect for authority, and appreciation of cultural heritage. Conflict on the other hand, is an inevitable aspect of human interaction, particularly among children who are still developing emotionally, socially and cognitively. In basic school setting, conflict often arises due to differences in personality, background, opinions, misunderstandings, or opinions. If not properly handled can disrupt learning, affect peer relationships and negatively influence the emotional well being of students. Folksongs often address themes such as unity, patience, respect, forgiveness, cooperation, and the consequences of negative behavior. The use of folksongs in conflict resolution lies in its ability to communicate sensitive messages in a gentle, engaging, and culturally familiar manner. When used in the classroom or school environment, these songs can help children reflect on their actions, understand the value of peaceful relationships and learn appropriate ways of handling disagreements. Music, being a universal language of the soul, transcends barriers and appeals directly to emotions, making it an effective medium for influencing attitudes and promoting behavioral change among students.

Purpose of the research

This study aims at scrutinizing the following issues:

1. The importance and effectiveness of folksongs in the lives of basic school students
2. Highlighting reasons for conflict that may exist among students in basic schools.
3. How Igbo folksongs are used to promote peace among basic school students.

Research Questions

The research questions for this work are as follows:

1. Are folksongs important in the lives of basic school children?
2. Why do conflicts exist among basic school students?
3. Can Igbo folksongs be used to resolve conflicts among students in basic schools?

Review of related literature

Folksongs

Folksongs are very essential when it comes to culture as they reflect and showcase the values, beliefs and traditions of a particular community or group of people. According to Ojukwu and Ogidi (2020), folksongs is spontaneous composed music of a race, tribe group etc. of a humble nature, orally transmitted from generation to generation usually with an unknown composer. As the very essence of culture, folk music forms the basis of people's tradition and identity (Nwamara, 2017). Folksongs often contain stories of the past that are passed down from generation to generation, preserving important historical and cultural information. Folksongs are being passed verbally or orally which brings about it having different versions. It brings togetherness and unity as it helps to strengthen bonds within a community or culture and also reinforce a sense of collective identity, helping people feel connected to their history and tradition. Okpokwasili, (2023) explains that,

Folk songs are songs that are influenced by the lifestyle of and traditions of a set of people in a given society and are closely bound to a culture which integrates, reflects and addresses the customs and practices of the community and in addition must have been passed down from generation to generation using oral medium.

Igbo folk song is that which is peculiar to the Igbos in terms of music. It is a rich tradition that encompasses a wide variety of musical styles and stories. It is also passed down from generation to generation through an oral or verbal means. Nwaodu, and Ojukwu, (2021) stated that folk songs are part of life in Igbo culture and society which affects the peoples belief system and way of living. Igbo folksongs are unique and have some common themes, which may include family, community, love, courage, and wisdom and are mostly based on proverbs and stories and community.

Upper basic schools

In Nigeria, the upper basic schools refers to the second level of the basic education structure, as provided under the 9-3-4 educational system and the Universal Basic Education programme (UBE). The upper basic school comprises of Junior secondary schools classes (JSS1-3) and it comes immediately after Lower basic education (primary 1-3) and Middle basic education (primary 4-6).

Conflict

It is a fact that as humans exist, conflict is bound to exist as well. This is so because conflict is a natural and inevitable part of human existence. Omisore and Abiodun (2014) stated that conflict is an inseparable part of people's lives and that it is also a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate the rivals. Conflict can be a misunderstanding or disagreement between two or more parties. According to the Cambridge dictionary, conflict is an active disagreement between people with opposing opinions or principles and it is also seen as a situation in which beliefs, needs and facts are very different and cannot easily exist together. Conflict refers to a disagreement between people or members of an organization and such disagreement is inherent in relationships between all human beings. Ukata and Silas-Dikibo (2020), Ugoo-Okonkwo and Erhiegueke (2025).

Conflict in basic schools

Conflicts occur in basic schools when there is a misunderstanding or disagreement between students. This might be as a result of discrimination, academic or social disagreements or even peer pressure. Students who seem not to tolerate or overlook some certain actions, statements or behaviors from another student might end up having a conflict rival and this can have a negative impact on the students well-being and academic performance.

Causes of conflict in Basic schools

Diversity: Differences in race, religion, ethnicity, or socio-economic status can cause tension among students. If majority of the students in a school are from the same tribe or religion, the minority which are not from that tribe or religion, who also do not speak the same language might feel neglected and it might at any slight chance result to conflict.

Lack of Empathy: Students may lack empathy or understanding that people have different views and feelings that may not align with theirs; this may lead to some hurtful behaviors which may later bring about conflict.

Emotional factor: Students might have personal issues they are dealing with like family problem or mental health challenges that can affect their behavior, and when not understood, can bring conflict among students.

Discrimination: Some students might come together to form a clique and they may act and feel more superior, making others feel less of themselves. This can create an uncomfortable and unwelcoming behavior for certain group of students and it might lead to a negative academic and social outcome.

Conflict resolution in Upper Basic schools

Conflict resolution is the process of whereby individuals in conflict get to a common ground to find a solution to their problem starting from its root. It is also a way by which peaceful solutions to disagreements are brought up; this involves understanding different perspectives and working together to reach a compromise that satisfies all parties involved.

Conflict among basic school students are inevitable, so it is essential to educate them on how to manage and resolve conflict easily and in a peaceful manner. Conflict resolution in basic school is therefore a process of enlightening students on how to resolve issues with one another which at the end will bring peace and unity. This may include teaching communication, empathy and problem-solving skills to navigate disagreements and build positive relationships. The use of folksongs can play a very vital role in achieving that.

The use of folksongs in promoting conflict resolution in basic schools

It is for a fact that conflicts among students in basic schools come in a natural way, it can be through misunderstanding or even disagreement but when there is a peaceful foundation laid, it is easy to navigate conflict. Folksongs can be used as a tool to promote or resolve conflict in this case because it educates students on what should be done even as the offended and the offender. With the use of folksongs, empathy, compromise and active listening can be learned. When Igbo folk songs like “*Udo ka mma, Nwanne di na mba* and *k’anyi choba obi nwanne n’uwa*” are sang or played it creates the mind of unity in diversity and oneness among students, and it promotes peace.

The theory of **peace building** by Howell, G. (2020) posits a more nuanced understanding of how music communicates and makes meaning as key to its effective use as a tool in building peace and reconciliation. It addresses the complexity of music and its relationships as contributors to peace, helping to reveal internal contradictions between peace-promoting intentions, in support of more effective, coherent, peace-promoting musical action.

When disagreement or conflict is noticed or seen among students, they can be called, examined and during the process of resolution, Igbo folk songs can be introduced as a means of promoting peace and shunning conflict. This type of song will expose them to a good friendship and equally make them understand how to tolerate and live with others. These folk songs will also help in softening the hearts of those students who wish to carry on with the conflict rather than letting go. Students who feel discriminated or isolated, with the use of folksongs can start to feel comfortable and also learn to associate with other students. These folksongs can also boost the morale of students who are academically down and with time they will begin to do well.

Robb, S. et al, (2018) asserts that:

Music education fosters emotional competence, self-efficacy, and stronger social relationships in children. These skills are foundational for conflict resolution, as they help students manage emotions, communicate effectively, and make responsible decisions (pg.24).

Okpara, M. U. (2016) expresses the fact that folksongs have educative and corrective values, as they are valuable for character molding and for imbuing societal norms and values, and they serve as strong weapons for fighting societal ills, as they are often meant for correction (pg.19).

Students who are being trained in their own native language on how to behave and relate with other people, end up being the best peace makers and builders of the society as they choose peace over conflict all the time.

Methodology

This study is a survey that seeks to find out the use of folksong in teaching and promoting conflict resolution in basic schools. The population that was used for this survey was 120 people, which consists of 105 students and 15 teachers. The research instrument for this survey is the questionnaire titled “the use of folksongs in teaching and promoting conflict resolution in basic schools”. It has three sections that consists of four questions each which was built on a five point rating scale, strongly agree (5), agree (4), unsure (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1). The questionnaire was distributed and collected by the researchers.

Out of the 120 questionnaires that were given out, 8 were retrieved from the teachers and 102 from the students. The data collected was analyzed with the used of mean in answering the research questions.

SECTION A: Table one (1)**The importance and effectiveness of folksongs in the lives of upper basic school students**

S/N	How important in folksong in the lives of basic school students	total Number	Mean	Average	
1	Folksongs are basically important for students in basic schools.	110	4.19	3.89	Agree
2	Students who are raised with the knowledge of folk songs tend to associate better.	110	3.87	3.92	Agree
3	Folksongs help students academically.	110	3.38	3.56	Agree
4	Folksongs inculcate discipline.	110	3.6	3.56	Agree

SECTION B: Table two (2)**Reasons why conflict exist among basic school students**

S/N	Why does conflict exist among basic school students?	Total Number	Mean	Average	
1	Students do not tolerate one another.	110	3.77.	3.94	Agree
2	Students do not know how best to relate with students from other tribes.	110	3.85	3.38	unsure
3	There is discrimination among students.	110	3.74	4.16	Strongly Agree
4	Academic capability of students might make them neglect or look down on fellow students.	110	4.25	4.18	Strongly Agree

SECTION C: Table three (3)**Igbo folksongs are used for conflict resolution among basic school students**

S/N	Can Igbo folksongs be used to resolve conflict?	Total Number	Mean	Average	
1	Igbo folksongs restore peace among students who are in conflict.	110	3.40	3.83	Agree
2	Being advised with an Igbo folksong can generally bring oneness among students.	110	4.05	4.21	Strongly Agree
3	Igbo folksongs can educate students on how best to treat and live with other students.	110	3.8	3.93	Agree
4	Igbo folksong brings equality among students.	110	4.35	3.56	Agree

Findings

The response gotten from both students and teachers where sampled together with regards to the use of folk music in teaching and promoting conflict resolution in basic schools. The first table shows the mean response on the importance and effectiveness of folksongs on the lives of basic school students and the total mean is 15.04, while the average is 14.93, this showcases the fact that folksongs are effective when it comes to the lives of basic school children. The second table, with the total means of 15.61 and average of 15.66, shows reasons why conflicts exist among basic school students and there is an agreement that discrimination, neglect and intolerance from students can bring about conflict among themselves. The last table indicates the mean responses of respondents in alignment with the use of folksongs in resolving conflicts among basic school students and its total mean is 15.6, while the average is 15.53. From these responses, it is obvious that the use of Igbo folksong in teaching and promoting conflict resolution among students in basic schools is essential and will help as an instrument to foster peace and unity.

Conclusion

Folk songs are good in educating and enlightening students on how to live with one another; it fosters peace and retains unity among people who are being taught with it. When a student is being exposed to a folksong in his/her language or even in any language they can understand, it tends to create more impact on the student's life and that is why the use of Igbo folksong is essential in this write up. Peace and harmony among basic school students can be well developed when folksongs are used to educate them.

Recommendations

From the findings of this study, the researcher recommends consistent use of the Igbo folksongs in educating students especially those from the Southeast of Nigeria, on how best to live with fellow students and how to easily resolve conflicts amongst them. Also, the researchers suggest that teachers who basically teach the native languages should help in inculcating the values and usefulness of folksongs in student's life.

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