

The Relevance of Childlore -in Inculcating Community Values in Hadejia

Emirate

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ABSTRACT

This paper looks at childlore as a branch of folklore that deals with songs that are composed and sung by children, or those that are composed by adults but adopted by children in their day-to-day plays, inculcating community values in Hadejia Emirate. An effort has been made to look at how children's songs are sung in Hadejia Emirate that cut across Hadejia, Auyo, Kafin Hausa, Guri, Birniwa, Kaugama, Malam Madori, and Kiri Kasamma LGAs, particularly in rural areas. Children between the ages of three and ten gathered in village squares to sing different songs for their pleasure. In a typical Hausa community in West Africa, most of these songs are sung to correct a misdeed done by a member of the community (didactic) or to ridicule a bachelor, a naughty boy, or a wayward girl. At times, these songs are composed to suit a contemporary issue. In such communities, families live together in the same compound; members of the extended families do not build their own houses away from the extended family. The large families usually stay together. Thus, there are a lot of children that always play around, unlike in an urban setting where most parents do not let their children go out and play with other children in their neighborhood. In a typical traditional African setting, such as Hadejia emirate, children have the freedom to go out and play with other children, even at night. This gives them the opportunity to mix and sing freely with their peers. This research therefore brings out the relevance of childlore, or children's play, in typical Hausa societies.

KEYWORDS: Childlore, Folk Songs, Hadejia Emirate, Oral Literature

INTRODUCTION

Childlore in African societies encompasses a treasure trove of cultural wisdom passed down through generations among children. Through storytelling, games, songs, and riddles, childlore serves as a vehicle for transmitting essential values, traditions, and societal norms. It plays a pivotal role in socialising youngsters, instilling moral virtues, and fostering a sense of community. This oral tradition is not just recreational; it is a profound educational tool that nurtures creativity, critical thinking, and problem-

solving skills. Childlore's adaptability to modern contexts ensures its relevance in shaping contemporary African identities and preserving cultural heritage amidst globalization. Moreover, this vibrant tradition acts as a bridge between generations, facilitating the transfer of ancestral wisdom while nurturing emotional well-being and resilience among children. Childlore stands as a testament to the resilience, creativity, and unity within diverse African cultures, anchoring the younger generation to their roots while embracing the future. Childlore, as a branch of folklore, deals with songs that are composed and sung by children or those that are composed by adults but adopted by children in their day-to-day plays. "The domain of childlore therefore encompasses every aspect of a child's play life, from the cradle to the transition into adulthood" (Iwaketok 2014:6). African children's oral poetry discusses contemporary issues as they affect their immediate communities. This happens when the children have taken it upon themselves to address issues, such as when an adult member of the community commits fornication. Definitely, the children take it as a duty to satirise him. Sometimes it is sung to mock a boy who got bed-wet or a girl who got pregnant out of wedlock. When the songs are being sung, the children do not have to necessarily call names, but it is done in such a way that every member of the community understands who is being ridiculed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Childlore, the traditional knowledge, stories, songs, and riddles passed down among children in societies, holds immense cultural significance worldwide, particularly in African societies. This literature review explores the depth and relevance of childlore in various cultural contexts, focusing on its role in socialisation, education, cultural preservation, and community cohesion. Childlore serves as a fundamental tool for socialising young individuals into their respective cultures. In African societies, it

plays a pivotal role in transmitting values, morals, and societal norms from one generation to another. Radin (2015) emphasises how folktales and games embedded in folklore impart crucial cultural knowledge and contribute to identity formation among African children. Through these traditions, children learn social behaviour, ethical values, and community norms. The educational value of childlore is well-documented. Finnegan (1997) highlights how play songs and riddles within Childlore are not merely entertaining but serve as educational tools. These traditions foster language development, enhance cognitive skills, develop problem-solving abilities and critical thinking among children. They act as informal educational methods that complement formal schooling, providing a holistic learning experience. Childlore acts as a reservoir of cultural heritage, preserving traditions and narratives specific to diverse African cultures. Iwokedok (2013) opines that the importance of documenting and studying Childlore for cultural preservation cannot be overemphasised as it serves as the first point of contact an African child makes after his family. Thus, this stresses the role childlore plays in child's socialisation. These scholars stress that Childlore reflects the essence of a culture, encapsulating its beliefs, rituals, and history. By documenting these oral traditions, researchers ensure the safeguarding of invaluable cultural heritage from being lost to modernization. Childlore fosters a sense of community and identity among children. Spears (1991) and Murphy (1978) highlight how storytelling and communal games create bonds among children, irrespective of their backgrounds. This shared experience cultivates unity, respect for diversity, and a sense of belonging within the community. Childlore not only connects children to their cultural roots but also unites generations, strengthening familial and societal bonds. While deeply rooted in tradition, Childlore adapts to modern contexts. Kellogg (1973) notes that Childlore evolves to address contemporary themes and challenges

faced by African societies. This adaptability ensures its relevance in shaping the identities of the younger generation amidst globalization. It also serves as a tool for navigating and understanding the complexities of modern society while retaining cultural authenticity. The study of Childlore holds practical implications for education, policy-making, and community development. Insights gained from this research can inform educational strategies that integrate indigenous knowledge into formal setting. It can also help in preserving endangered languages and contribute to community programme that promote cultural appreciation and unity. Therefore, childlore stands as a vibrant and multifaceted aspect of African cultural heritage. Its significance spans socialization, education, cultural preservation, community cohesion, and adaptation to contemporary contexts. Documenting, studying, and preserving. Childlore is an essential step towards honoring diverse cultures, fostering holistic childhood development, and maintaining the richness of African heritage for future generations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Hadejia emirate is situated in present-day Jigawa State, in the northwest geopolitical zone of Northern Nigeria. The emirate's demography is relatively homogeneous, implying that they share the same beliefs, customs, and traditions. The residents of the emirate comprised the population of this study. The researchers visited to the local government areas (LGAs) regularly comprising the emirate and conducted interviews with a large number of children in order to gather sufficient data for the study.

Collecting data for studies on oral literature such as this demands a dedicated and culturally sensitive methodology that respects the oral traditions and contexts of the communities being studied. Fieldwork serves as the cornerstone of collecting oral literature. Researchers immerse themselves within the communities, establishing

rapport and trust. Participant observation allows for firsthand experiences, such as observing rituals, storytelling sessions, and traditional performances where oral literature is shared. This method enabled the researchers to understand the context, complexities, and cultural significance of narratives and traditions.

Engaging in oral interviews with community members, especially elders and storytellers, is crucial. Researchers employ structured or semi-structured interviews to gather narratives, legends, folktales, and personal stories. Storytelling sessions provide an opportunity for participants to share their narratives, allowing researchers to record, transcribe, and analyse the oral texts. These interviews aim to capture the authenticity and richness of oral traditions. Utilising audio and video recording devices is instrumental in capturing oral performances and storytelling sessions. This method preserves the intonations, emotions, gestures, and expressions that enrich oral narratives. The use of technology ensures accurate documentation, enabling researchers to revisit and analyse the collected data in detail.

DISCUSSION

The field of childlore is rich with literature, right from the earliest times to the present. This shows its relevance to Hausa communities since time immemorial. Research on Childlore in African societies holds immense significance due to its multifaceted impact on cultural preservation, education, and social development. Understanding and documenting this rich tradition is crucial for several reasons. The relevance of this research cannot be overemphasised in the field of oral literature in general and the area of childlore in particular. Childlore serves as a repository of cultural knowledge and practices. This study on oral traditions allows for the preservation of disappearing folklore, ensuring that invaluable aspects of African heritage are not lost amidst

modernization. Documenting these narratives, games, and songs provides insight into traditional values, beliefs, and societal structures. The study offers a unique lens into childhood socialisation and education in the Hadejia Emirate. It reveals how children learn, communicate, and learn cultural norms, thereby aiding in the development of educational approaches that incorporate indigenous knowledge systems.

The research also reveals its role in shaping values, morals, and cognitive development among African children, especially in villages. Furthermore, understanding Childlore contributes to inter-generational connections. Investigating the transmission of folklore from elders to younger ones sheds light on the dynamics of knowledge transfer within communities. This knowledge exchange fosters respect for cultural heritage and strengthens bonds between generations. This research fills the gap, as the insights gained from such research inform educational policies, language preservation efforts, and community development programs. It also inspires innovative approaches to early childhood education that integrates traditional knowledge with contemporary learning methodologies. In essence, the research reveals that children songs in African communities are vital for safeguarding cultural heritage, understanding childhood socialisation, strengthening inter-generational ties, promoting diversity, and informing practical applications across educational and community development spheres. It stands as a crucial step towards honouring and preserving Africa's rich cultural legacy for generations to come. It is against this background that the researchers believe that there is a gap in the study of childlore in the selected communities in Hadejia emirates.

According to Finnegan (1977), historical-geographical theory helps the folklorist tell the same story over and over again at different places and times. Thus, this paper tries to look at a particular song sung by children from different backgrounds over a period

of time. Though different people in different places may tend to give subjective meanings to the songs as they are sung by children, the content may vary over the years.

Text 1 Hausa

Gloss

Naci na kasa tashi.

I can't sit up because I'm overfed.

Baba zari gare ka.

Baba you are greedy.

Ai tuwon ne dadi.

The meal is so delicious.

Baba dai sai ka daure.

Baba, you have to be careful next time.

In bar miyar har da nama?

Why should I leave the soup with meat?

Yanzu ai sai Ka bar ta.

But now you have to give it up.

This song is sung to ridicule a greedy boy who is fond of overfeeding himself. It is sung to make him conscious of the quantity of food he consumes. Five boys, about 10 to 12 years old, will choose one among them to put some clothes in his shirt so that his stomach appears protruding. This song is accompanied by dancing and a chorus by the other children. They dramatise it in such a way that the boy in the costume will behave as if it were hard for him to get up.

Text 2 Hausa

Gloss

Kayi rawa kai malam kayi rawa

- You Teacher! You have danced

Banyi ba

- I have not

Kayi rawa kai mallam kayi rawa

- You Teacher! You have danced

Ga gemun?

- Even with my beard?

Kayi rawa kai mallam kayi rawa	- You Teacher! You have danced
Ga allon?	- Even with books?
Kayi rawa kai mallam kayi rawa	- You Teacher! You have danced
Wa ya gani?	- Who has seen me dancing?

This song shows the importance of being a teacher in African societies. It stresses the respect teachers have in the eyes of the people. Teachers, like saints, are not to be seen dancing. In this song, a teacher is spotted dancing with a beard and books in hand. The children are kind of lampooning this teacher, who was seen dancing.

Text 3 Hausa

Gloss

Saman layin mu kasan layin mu	In the whole of our street.
Wacece karuwa?	Who is a prostitute?
Jummai ce karuwa	Jummai is a prostitute
Mai ta aikata?	What has she done?
Tayi cikin shege.	She's carrying a bastard.

This song is sung in the village playground to mock a girl who is pregnant out of wedlock. It is considered taboo in most African societies for a girl to be pregnant out of wedlock. It is pertinent to note that the girl's name is not mentioned in the song to avoid trouble. But everyone in the community knows to whom the song is directed.

Some songs are sung without calling the culprit's name, but everyone knows who the song is addressed to. It is aimed at correcting bad habits or waywardness among children.

Generally, when children gather together to play, they usually sing a variety of songs for the fun of it. They do not bother so much about the meaning and implications of their songs. However, in some rare situations, they tend to sing songs that address contemporary issues that bedevil their communities. Most of the play songs by children are interesting because of the meanings they convey and the rhyming patterns they have. In most cases, children do not need a drum or any other instrument for their songs to be interesting. Finnegan (2012) observes thus: ‘‘Like children elsewhere, African children seem to have the familiar range of games and verse for their own play—nonsense songs, singing games, catch rhymes, and so on. (294).

Below are examples of oral poetry or playing songs with the message it conveys and it is rich in rhyme and rhythm.

Text 4 Hausa

Gloss

Dan Allah yara kuje makaramta

By God children go to school

Dan Allah yara ku dinga karatu

By God children study your books.

Kubi malaman makaranta

Obey teachers diligently.

Children sing this song. It underscores the importance of education for children. It encourages them to be studious and inculcates discipline in them.

Text 5 Hausa

Gloss

Jatau mai Magani

Jatau the medicine man,

Jatau

Jatau

Jatau ka bamu magani musha

Jatau give us medicine to drink

Jatau

Jatau.

Children sing this song in the playground. One of them will pretend to be a witch doctor and will dress like one. And the other children will be following him, singing the song, and clapping their hands. The song is meant to make fun of traditional medicine men.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the above children's play songs prove that most children's oral poetry conveys meanings that are sometimes difficult to grasp on the surface; they usually have hidden meanings. In a typical African setting like Hadejia Emirate, children are gathered every night in the playground or any other place to sing different songs before going to bed. Sometimes these acts are accompanied by beating drums and dancing. They sometimes cautioned or ridiculed an erring member of their community in order to make them adjust their bad habits. And sometimes they function as informal ways of controlling deviance. The research likely highlighted how folklore is integrated into the daily life of the community. Whether through storytelling sessions, cultural performances, or religious ceremonies, folklore serves as a constant reminder of the community's moral code and societal norms. A crucial aspect of the study would be the examination of how exposure to folklore influences the behavior and decision-making processes of individuals within the community. This could involve exploring how the lessons learned from folk stories shape attitudes towards honesty, kindness, respect for elders, and other moral virtues. Another finding may relate to how folklore adapts and evolves over time while still retaining its moral essence. Through the process of oral transmission, songs may undergo changes to reflect contemporary issues or societal transformations, yet the underlying moral messages remain intact.

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