



## Popular Ubuntu (humaneness) song themes of South Western, Nigeria as pedagogical tools for moral development in contemporary classroom

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### ABSTRACT

Music is a potent tool for moral instruction in Nigerian schools, embedded in cultural pedagogies to nurture values and character development among primary pupils. However, a dearth of academic exploration exists in its practical implementation. This paper explores Ubuntu moral song-based instruction in ten (10) primary schools in Osun State, revealing insights through classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student focus groups. Investigate the integration of Ubuntu moral songs in pedagogical practices. Explore teachers' methods of translating musical content into moral messages. A mixed-methods approach that includes classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student focus groups was used. The outcome of the study shows student receptiveness to moral instruction through songs. Identify prevalent Ubuntu moral themes conveyed through music. Assess the effectiveness of singalongs and group discussions in reinforcing moral values. Teachers consciously use moral music to highlight ethical issues, employing singalongs and group discussions. The study concludes that students relate moral scenarios in Ubuntu songs to contemporary societal issues, showcasing the relevance of moral instruction through music. Recommendations include sustained student engagement, linking virtues with practical ethics, and participatory teaching methods. These practices aim to reinforce positive values within Nigeria's cultural landscape by harnessing music's power.

**Keywords** morals, education, music pedagogy, Nigerian schools

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.36349/olijhe.2024.v01i02.009>

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### **Introduction**

Music has long served as a conduit for moral education in Nigerian cultural pedagogies, conveying ethical messages and shaping character development among youths. Through rhymes extolling communal values, folk songs criticizing greed, and playful melodies imparting life lessons, music facilitates the intergenerational transfer of norms that govern social relations (Omojola, 2015). While traditional musical arts still thrive as informal learning practices, their deliberate integration into formal schooling spaces remains underexplored in Nigeria's postcolonial education system. Academic studies on African music education have analyzed traditional apprenticeship models oriented around skilled performers transmitting cultural knowledge to novices (Nketia, 2019). Other inquiries explore school programs teaching musical skills like instrumentation as an artistic endeavour divorced from value transmission (Herbst et al., 2003).

However, there exists a dearth of scholarship investigating the practical implementation of music as a pedagogical tool for moral development within contemporary classrooms. Specifically, the use of moral songs, defined as "music containing ethical messages and meant for instruction, not mere entertainment" (Adedeji, 2019), constitutes a gap begging further academic exploration. Music constitutes a cultural form steeped in meaning with proven impacts on moral, social, and personality development (Wright, 2019). Studies demonstrate how lyric analysis develops critical thinking as students interpret song meanings and relate them to their lived realities (Dunbar-Hall, 1991). Group singalong sessions build collective identities, solidarity, and teamwork virtues as children coordinate their voices and rhythms (Marsh, 1999). Discussing Ubuntu song themes exposes students to community values from different cultural worldviews (Mans, 2009). This "mediated modelling" through discussing musical narratives provides indirect moral education, combating problems like ethnicity in Nigerian schools (Omojola, 2015).

Furthermore, music education scholars argue that songs' poetic elements, like symbolism and imagery, make moral messages more emotionally resonant for children compared to conventional instructional modes (Elliott, 1995). The playful, recreational nature of Ubuntu music-making also engages students, keeping them attentive to embedded virtues in ways that lecturing cannot. Exploring the relative effectiveness of music versus traditional pedagogies for moral education constitutes an analytical gap. While music constitutes a cultural reservoir of communal ethical wisdom, its diversity across Nigeria's over 250 ethnic groups raises complex dynamics within educational settings (Okafor, 2005). The imposition of dominant cultures' musical forms in multi-ethnic classrooms risks alienating minorities if not done sensitively. Furthermore, modern genres like hip-hop feature moral themes that are unsuitable as teaching tools. Thus, educators must judiciously select songs that resonate across pluralistic contexts while aligning with national curricular objectives. This study navigates the tension between embracing Ubuntu music's potency for value development and avoiding cultural hegemony or age-inappropriate content. The paper responds to the need for empirical evidence on music as a contemporary moral education praxis rooted in Nigerian traditions. This study explores song-based techniques employed by Osun State primary educators to nurture ethical thinking consciously, convey cultural wisdom, and shape the next generation's character. The inquiry's significance stems from capturing the lived realities of music's didactic power rather than waxing lyrical about its theoretical potential. The ubiquity of ubuntu or 'humaneness' tropes aligns findings with precedents on music's role in articulating communal ethical paradigms within sub-Saharan traditions described by scholars like Omojola (2015) and Agawu (2016). They attribute the dominance of compassion and dignity over individualistic success or salvation notions

within indigenous musical narratives to fundamental assumptions of personhood derived relationally through communal participation rather than atomization. This resonates with Yoruba societal mores around morality rooted in communal bonds, not abstraction (Taiwo, 2010). Care orientation also echoes Gilligan's psychoanalytic frameworks, contrasting feminine approaches prioritizing nurture and reciprocity with masculine legalistic modes focused on abstract rules and duties detached from contextual bonds when constructing moral worldviews (1982).

This substantiates literature on music sustaining intergenerational transmission of oral histories and value paradigms contextualized through familial role models who consecrate wisdom through exemplary lives, not detached platitudes (Agawu, 2016). This study aims to address this gap by examining how primary school teachers in southwestern Nigeria consciously leverage Ubuntu moral songs to nurture students' values, impart ethical lessons, and shape character development.

### **Aims and Objectives of the Study**

This study examines popular Ubuntu (humaneness) song themes from Southwestern Nigeria as pedagogical tools for moral development in contemporary classrooms. The specific objectives, therefore, are to:

1. Trace the Instructional Techniques of Employing Moral Songs
2. Highlight the students' receptivity and meaning-making.
3. Discuss the range of moral values imparted via songs and
4. Examine the sing-long-think model's effectiveness.

### **Methodology**

This study adopts an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, beginning with extensive qualitative data gathering through classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student

focus groups undertaken across ten (10) primary schools in Osun State. Qualitative findings uncovered themes and patterns regarding the use of moral songs in instructional practices, which informed follow-up quantitative surveys examining outcomes and impacts based on educators' and learners' perspectives. This facilitates a rich, context-attuned understanding of real-world moral song-based pedagogies while enabling a broader gauge of prevalence for certain techniques and their relative effectiveness.

This study explores specific pedagogical techniques employed, from singalongs to group discussions, to reinforce moral themes emanating from musical content. By observing real-world classroom practices around music-based moral education, this inquiry fills a void in existing literature dominated by theoretical analysis or historical perspectives. This study interviews teachers on their motivations for employing moral Ubuntu songs and their perceived impacts on student values. It observes if music attracts greater voluntary student participation, signalling engagement with moral themes.

### **Findings and Discussion**

#### **Background**

The analysis of this study reveals nuanced uniformity in the core pedagogical techniques recursively employed by educators across the ten (10) ethnically diverse schools for stimulating moral engagement. During focus groups, 14 of 18 rural students explicitly connected the portrayed ideal of a caring, humble person across various songs' protagonists to internalized examples set by grandparents whose lived wisdom inspires communities. Lyric analysis of Ubuntu songs pervading observed lessons and student recollections in focus groups demonstrate compassion and empathy as the foremost moral themes conveyed through musical narratives. Tales depict characters uplifting disenfranchised groups, embracing outcasts,

healing broken bonds, or sacrificing self-interest to alleviate others' adversity through actions framed as morally exemplary. Triangulating observational, interview, and focus group accounts reveals Ubuntu-esque communitarian morality, emphasizing compassion, dignity, and reciprocity as the preeminent ethical framework propagated through song-based instructional practices across observed southwestern Nigerian primary classrooms in Osun State. These humanistic virtues resonate with students' socio-cultural realities aligned to Yoruba philosophical worldviews centred on communal relationality, contrasting individualistic orientations within Western moral paradigms (Taiwo, 2010; Fayemi, 2018).

Classroom observational data combined with teacher interview reflections and student focus group discussions unveils multifaceted insights on the current practical integration of moral musical arts within primary education spaces for nurturing character development in southwestern Nigerian schools. Four interwoven thematic categories encapsulate techniques employed, perceived outcomes, and explanatory patterns underlying music-based moral pedagogy efficacy based on participants' lived experiences. The findings provide practitioners with transferable pedagogical insights while expanding scholarly perspectives on music's cultural functionality.

**Objective 1: Trace the Instructional Techniques Employing Moral Songs**

Four distinct pedagogical techniques emerged across the observed lessons and educator accounts using musical arts for ethical instruction: immersive group singalongs, dialectical questioning through songs, linking themes to current events and issues, and composing original moral songs. Their configuration and frequency varied between classes, but shared aims of nurturing moral thinking through engagement with musical substance persisted.

Participative communal singalongs constituted

the predominant musical mode, with all ten (10) schools observing opening lessons by leading children through call-and-response renditions of songs extolling generosity, integrity, respect, or other virtues for 5–10 minutes. Teachers consciously accompanied singing with dramatized gestures, highlighting lyrics symbolizing embodiments of values, from sharing actions emphasizing altruism to hands over hearts conveying sincerity. Six (6) schools transitioned into dialectical questioning, getting students to interpret meanings, identify moral imperatives, and deliberate real-world application around song themes. Four (4) instructors made interdisciplinary connections to current events, analyzing underlying ethical issues through musical narratives on poverty, corruption, or climate crises. Two (2) exceptional cases even facilitated the composition of original songs by splitting classes into teams tasked with thematically conveying the ills of bullying or lying and drawing on existing melodies.

In interviews, music teachers reported participatory singing's impacts on memorization, resonance, and embodiment, while ethics colleagues valued dialectical questioning for stimulating critical thinking and real-world problem-solving. Overall, these techniques demonstrate concerted efforts to leverage the musical arts' artistic and affective power alongside dialogical reasoning for holistic moral education.

**Objective 2: Highlight the Students' Receptivity and Meaning-Making**

Classroom observer notes Focus group transcripts and pictorial diagrams reveal students across the ten (10) schools visually and verbally exhibiting highly engaged receptivity to musical moral education techniques. Immersive participation through call-and-response singing, hands waving to rhythms, and volunteering thoughts during discussions

signalled active meaning-making around unpacking virtues. Eight (8) student groups described connecting scenarios in song vignettes portraying greed's moral descent into theft or lying's social ostracization consequences with observations from their communities. This substantiates theoretical postulations on music's capacity for conjuring imaginative scenarios that resonate with children's lived realities in compelling ways that detached didactic modes cannot recreate.

However, three (3) rural school participants struggled with comprehending Igbo and Hausa songs during singalongs amidst Yoruba majority contexts. They emphasized appreciating moral themes once teachers facilitated translations and dialogues afterwards. This highlights the need for nuanced selection and adaptation of musical materials attentive to linguistic diversity to enable optimum receptivity within pluralistic rooms. Students overwhelmingly affirmed that group interaction around debating meanings elicited greater self-awareness of virtues beyond just memorizing Ubuntu song lyrics. Integrating dialectical questioning and current events into connections sustains engagement more than habitual participatory singing alone. Thus, the multifaceted deployment of musical arts alongside imaginative, discursive, and analytical scaffolding proves essential for actualizing receptive environments where the music moves from passive hearing into activating moral consciousness.

### **Objective 3: Discuss the Range of Moral Values Imparted via Songs**

Content analysis of observed lessons' musical materials using Ubuntu lyrics annotation software combined with thematic coding of value references during classroom discussions and focus groups reveals six (6) prominent moral values propagated across the Ubuntu song repertoire: honesty, respect, equality, empathy, integrity, and hard work. Truthfulness and sincerity notions constitute the most frequently conveyed virtues, with eighteen (18) songs

embedding related imagery like shining light dispelling lies or birds soaring freely with hearts as light as feathers unburdened by deception. Thirteen (13) songs advocate respect for elders, with metaphors equating authority figures to trees providing protective shade and wisdom rooted in age. Ten (10) melodies champion equality and dignity for all persons, regardless of gender, disability, or ethnic origin. Content analysis shows kid-friendly symbolism around cooperation, uplifting marginalized groups, and celebrating diversity recurring throughout the musical catalogue.

Empathy and care virtues follow as the next prevalent Ubuntu moral theme, housed in eight (8) songs cherishing communal bonds. Integrity, in the sense of courage and commitment to ethical principles even under social pressures and temptations, fills seven (7) anthems. Lastly, five (5) choral pieces extol diligence, resilience, and determination as definitive traits enabling personal growth. Collectively, this thematic assemblage demonstrates volume, variety, and multifaceted lenses through which songs medium moral messaging tailored for juvenile comprehension. Findings reveal conscious curating of developmentally appropriate musical content to convey values serving both national priorities like anti-corruption and universal goals like nurturing empathy.

### **Objective 4: Examine the Sing-long-Think Model Effectiveness**

Both educator interviews and student focus groups explicitly highlighted the perceived effectiveness of dialogically integrating participatory musical engagement with critical reasoning in moral education contexts. Teachers overwhelmingly described the initial activation of lessons through communal singing for experientially embodying virtues before dialectically unpacking meanings and real-life applications through discussions, debate, questioning, and composing original lyrics. This termed this sequenced

configuration the 'sing-long-think' approach contrasting passive listening. They attributed its benefits to sustaining engagement while enabling the indigenization of cultural Ubuntu song wisdom to resonate with the young generation's evolving realities during contemplative segments. Among students too, overwhelmingly majorities across all focus groups narrated assimilating lessons better when enjoying acting out songs initially before reflecting afterwards.

Observational tallies that quantified the 'sing-long-think'ified participation rates signalled the 'sing-long-think' model's superiority over singular techniques alone. Classrooms witness 95–100% student involvement during the opening 10-minute participatory singing routines, as indicated by vibrant engagement in call-and-response, claps, and choreography. However, continued immersive musical activity alone precipitously drops involvement to 75% by minute 15, as concentration wanes sans stimulation from creative challenges. Transitioning instead into dialogical reasoning modes sustainably restores involvement to upwards of 90%, as evidenced by raised-hand volunteering perspectives during meaning interpretation. Thus, alternating musical arts immersion with analytical discussion proves optimally effective for moral instruction by harmonizing experiential and conceptual learning.

Synthesizing evidence across the four interlinked thematic categories reveals students' widespread receptivity and educators' multidimensional techniques consciously targeting ethical consciousness development through strategic deployment of musical arts. Participative call-and-response singing builds communal identity with virtues, while interpretive questioning sustains critical engagement. Ancillary integration of current event analysis and creative composition enhances contextual resonance. The structured alternation between musical immersion and

dialogue maximizes sustained participatory learning. Collectively, these emerging best practices underscore music education's potency within Nigerian public schools as conduits for stimulating moral reasoning while transmitting cultural values to the next generation. Findings reveal music education unconsciously regenerating Ubuntu-esque morality and nourishing relational virtues as bridges between home socialization and school spaces, illuminating avenues for culturally reconciling competing spaces to reinforce mutual ethical formation.

### **Conclusion**

This ethnographic inquiry into Nigerian primary school teachers' praxis of integrating musical arts for stimulating moral consciousness reveals Ubuntu-esque communitarian ethics emphasizing compassion and dignity as the predominant framework conveyed through songs. Findings reveal four (4) recurrent techniques employed across observed classrooms: participative group singing, interpretive questioning through lyrics, interdisciplinary societal connections, and creative composition. Students exhibit engaged receptivity with music-based lessons, articulating linkages between Ubuntu song narratives and familial role models' wisdom. Alternating musical immersion and analytical dialogue prove optimally impactful for sustaining engagement.

Recommendations centre on consciously curating Ubuntu song repertoires beyond entertainment towards virtue themes resonating with indigenous mores while adapting materials to enable multicultural participation. Foregrounding universal humanity tropes bridges pluralism. Structured sequencing of collaborative musical experiences inspiring emotional embodiment of virtues, followed by conceptual scaffolding through discussions, debate, or creative re-expression, sustains participative reception while developing critical thinking.

The longitudinal impacts of such values-centric music education constitute promising research

directions. Qualitative surveys tracking moral reasoning capacity and retention of ethical knowledge between learners undertaking music-based character lessons compared with those receiving conventional civics instruction can reveal comparative outcomes for broader advocacy. Wider ethnographies blending observational and narrative analytical methods could follow graduates of musical morality immersion through adolescence into early adulthood, assessing continuous reverberations on citizenship. Do song-cultivated empathetic sensibilities during childhood organically translate into adult community service? Do techniques linking musical content with current issues seed sustained civic engagement? Further research exploring optimal age-appropriate curriculum balancing instruction with lyrical analysis for transformative longevity offers fertile ground.

This study highlights the underutilized potential of the musical arts in stimulating moral engagement beyond creative-aesthetic ends and reinforcing cultural wisdom. Findings reveal practical techniques developed through Nigerian educators' ingenuity resonating with traditional pedagogies adaptable across global fourth spaces, seeking humanistic roots and rejecting atomization. If classrooms swallow humanity's better angels as emulation fodder, where else shall our moral compass orient our wings? Music education offers a panacea for replenishing that wisdom wellspring. This work constitutes initial wind gathering, buoying further flights towards that horizon. The findings of this study will expand scholarly understanding of music's functionality in modern Nigerian schooling while generating practical recommendations for educators to enhance value transmission through Ubuntu songs.

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