

**MUSIC PERFORMANCE: PATH TO SOCIAL WELL-BEING AMONG CHILDREN LIVING IN DEPLORABLE ENVIRONMENT IN MAKOKO, NIGERIA.**

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Makoko is a slum neighbourhood in full view, spread out beneath the most travelled bridge in west Africa's megalopolis (the 3rd Mainland Bridge located on the coast of mainland Lagos). A third of the community is built on stilts along the lagoon and the rest is on the land.

Makoko is sometimes referred to as the "Venice of Africa". Its population is considered to be within the range of anywhere between 85,840 and 300,000.

It is not uncommon to find half-naked children rowing their own boats or playing on the verandas of wooden shacks without the slightest idea that life is supposed to offer much more than their current realities. The children of Makoko are faced with daunting challenges that is well beyond the capacity of children of their age-range in other climes. They are stressed with the imminence of forced eviction, the prevalence of abuse and the presence of diseases due to their deplorable living condition. With most of the population working in the fish-smoking or fishing industry, the air in and around Makoko is thick with fumes; smog seeps out from the hundreds of wood-burning kilns and smokehouses scattered across this community. No one is spared of this harassment- not even the children. Every day for them is pregnant with danger as you can readily find a child fishing to save his family from hunger when he should be in school. They are exploited by family and tourists. These children are traumatized daily. For them, their future is in their hands as it is obvious that nobody- not the government or even their own family- cares about what tomorrow may hold for them. They need relief. Indeed, life in Makoko is synonymous with struggle and resilience.

The squalor regardless, children of Makoko have big dreams for themselves and their community. But their state of health matters to the realization of these dreams. They can find solace in the rhythm of harmonious beats and bars that not only soothes the soul but also sets it in the right frame. With music, slum children can once again have their hopes of a better life rekindled and their minds enriched and fortified for greatness.

This session examines in detail the many angles musical performance explored in a bid to help slum children become better versions of themselves.

Makoko community is a floating slum adjacent to the third mainland bridge, Lagos, the busiest bridge in Sub-Saharan Africa. Most of the houses are built on stilts. Access to the community is by canoe. The community is squalor personified; the only two schools in the community are private enterprise, one is

the failed floating school the school we visited during the research was with a few writing desks and



chairs.

photograph by Salami Azeez (2019).

When the researchers visited the community, we observed a state of despondency on the faces of the children. The mission is to see how we can use the arts, music in particular as an instrument of promoting social well being among the children living in the deplorable environment.



photograph by Salami Azeez (2019).



children of the rich

Due to the significant gap that exists between the children of the elites and the children living in the slum, there are high tendencies of the slum dwellers developing low self-esteem. Using the

Yuletide season as an example, the children of the rich tend to be engaged in Christmas carol with so much pomp and pageantry, while the slum dwellers probably would wish and fantasize to be like them. It is on this wise that, the researcher decided to give these slum dwellers some sense of self-worth by engaging them in music that, these children from the affluent home sometimes are engaged in. The focus of this study is to provide hope to children that are socially deprived, under the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) goal 10: and reduce inequality by disproportionately affecting the poorest and most vulnerable. Makoko is a slum area in Yaba Local Government Development Area. Makoko is a poor community with inhabitants deprived of basic necessities of life.

The deprivation of Makoko children to good lives has made it rather impossible for children to have access to a good education. As most of the parents cannot afford the school fees for a good education, more so, government-owned schools are not within reach of these children. Invariably, if these kids lack basic primary education, is it music that would be more important to them? When as a matter of fact, music is just gaining prominence in the Universal Basic Education Scheme in Nigeria. It was a thing of a shock when the music session started that I observed that these children have not heard nor sang the popular Christmas tune “We wish you a Merry Christmas”. At that point, the researcher started musical training with them, with a step by step methods, the children learned the simple songs and learned many more songs which they had not heard before and at the end of the session, in between the music and dance session, the children had series of painting and drawing exercise sessions which led to the discovery of their latent skills which we intend to nurture, and when these skills are developed would serve as a means of livelihood for them in the future. Video clips and photographs of some of the sessions are available. After the few sessions with these children, the number of children increased to over two hundred from the initial fifty as the news of the training sessions spread like wild fire within the community.

#### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study imbibed the multicultural education theory. This is an approach that crosses all disciplines "the people left out of the functional curriculum should be addressed including their cultural histories and encounter." (Meier 1995:9). Supporting the assertions of Meier & Hartell (2009), there should be a law that enforces respect for persons and communities irrespective of cultural differences and environmental settlements. The people of Makoko are known to be deprived economically, this also affects them individually as the state of livelihood is low, hence, the environment is nothing to write home about.

The multiculturalists create cultural awareness, equity, and self-esteem; the multiculturalists wish to eradicate prejudice, misunderstanding, and ignorance (Greenlaw, 1996). In this study, we likened multiculturalism to be an idea of creating awareness and being more conscious of your environment, caring for those who lacked care, empowering the less empowered to be self-reliant and have better self-esteem. Through the arts that we teach, for instance, music, visual arts, and theatre and subsequent research embarked upon by this researcher, the arts meant to empower the individual, to stand on their feet. To also be actively involved in things that could change the society, most notably in an imbalanced society, where there is a wide gulf between the-have and the-have -not, this is the case of the Makoko residents.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

Music universal and timeless potential to influence how we feel and think was exactly what led us to embark on this research, my fellow researcher and myself specializes in the arts, felt terrible about the situation and the state of deprivation and despondency that pervades the slum dwellers in Makoko, Yaba Local Council Development Area (LCDA), Lagos State, Nigeria especially the children who are the voice of tomorrow. We engaged the children in the arts; The different forms of arts we engaged in were music, dance and crafts.

My concern is 'music performance: a path to social wellbeing among these slum dwellers.

The making of music as a path to social well being is a pattern of human effort that people organize and develop to meet specific needs or achieve certain 'goods.' Elliot (1995) declares that, without some form of intentional activity there can be musical sounds nor works o f musical sounds, music is something that people do.

The integrations of all forms of music and dance welcome any and all forms of musical social participation (Small, 1998). Music is a social practice, because it is a form of activity (Kramer, 1990). Music is paraxial in its nature and value, hence, skills are derived from it that can be judged as good and when it is said to be good, both the performers and audience would be encouraged and motivated and therefore be accomplished, and when all these happens, there is a state of wellbeing that has been created.

Music is vital to all societies and cultures because its doings and making help to define and reflect a society's values by fulfilling a wide range of divergent and evolving needs. Denora (2008) asserts that music is made by human beings for other human beings; that is why musical values are socially assigned to sound according to how sounds are used, experienced and understand as being 'good' for various purposes in personal and social life.

Plato and Aristotle were adamant in their belief that the nature of humankind lies in our social relationships. Anything living outside a social community would simply not be human. Human beings are inherently and necessarily social beings (Macdonald et.al. 2013).

Therefore, the elements of wellbeing as defined by Martins in 'FLOURISH' consist of Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment (PERMA). In other words, social well being is achieved through musical performance when music looks beyond boundaries and class stratification within the society, and music is integrated into the society of the low-income earners and the no bodies in quote. As earlier mentions, we have ecological music that are typically for a particular season, you do not hear these all the time, such was the situation in this study where we have to embark on teaching the children who are slum dwellers music to make them feel and have a pact in what the other children who were not in their shoes feel. Of course, during the Christmas season, the children of the rich have so much fun participating and singing at one Christmas carol service or the other, whereas these slum dwellers have not heard the Yuletide song we wish you a merry Christmas in their live time.

While this study ensures that the slum dwellers were taught the same songs and dance just like the children from the upper class, there was a sense of belonging that ensued from these ones. These benefits of social life provide a foundation for a global definition of a social version of well being (Corey 1998). When we engaged some of these slum dwellers in music and dance especially, dance, the children felt useful, the few of them who partook in the dance expressed joy and interacted with one

another within the dance group as though they were from the same parents, this is what arts can do resulting in a psychological wellbeing and social being. This confirms what Horney (1945) said that, the people who feel good about their personalities accept both the good and the bad aspects of their lives, exemplify good mental health and are likely to accept themselves and others also.

Music that we taught the children made them want to contribute socially to the environment by participating and performing in the Christmas carol service. The arts made the researchers see the potential in the children.

Hence, openness to experience and the desire and effort to grow continually was revealed when the researchers were first accepted by the traditional ruler of the community. No doubt, the lower Socioeconomic status (SES) have been linked consistently to diminished physical and mental health (Adler et al. 1994) because life at the level appears to impair health, promoting self-conceptions, whereas higher level of education should promote social wellbeing.



AKINTE OLUWAPONMILE The Balance Photography 42.4cm x 41.9cm 60,000 (2019).

## FINDINGS

- The study found out that, prior to the sessions had with these children, the children were timid, lacked self-esteem and could not express themselves in the Nigerian's lingual Franca which is English language but after series of sessions with them, music had helped the language development of the participating Makoko children. Before teaching them, the children were not able to pronounce some words; the children could not even express themselves while interacting with the researcher. At the end of the music session, the children had developed some level of self-confidence. The study implies that the skills restore self-esteem. The review was able to establish the presence of music in that community, thereby contributing to community development. The teachers of the children in Makoko school that was visited were not left out of the project as they contributed immensely to ensuring the children behaved decently during the training. They interpreted

the project intentions to the children in the ‘Gun language’. Our efforts to ensuring all our efforts at training these children will not be in vain is to further engage the families in the work of arts. What Music did for these children:

- It helped in language development
- It eliminated low self-esteem
- It restored self-confidence
- Gave them a sense of being useful
- It channeled them towards a path of being a better version of themselves.



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