

## EMOTIONAL STABILITY THROUGH *SO I BIRA BARI BII* SONG OF *BARI BII* MUSIC GROUP IN OGONI COMMUNITY RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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### Abstract

The Ogoni people domicile in south-south part of Nigeria are endowed with rich cultural heritage and natural resources. Cultural activities are expressed, celebrated and commemorated in their music, dance, songs and costumes of the *Bari Bii* music group of Ogoni land. This is a group that is famous in their music. This study therefore discussed the emotional stability of ogoni people through listening to *So I Bira Bari Bii* song of *Bari Bii* music group, the study employs for its methodology data elicited through oral interviews, and bibliographical evidences. The study through its perspective on emotional stability of *So I Bira Bari Bii* song of *Bari Bii* music group reveals that the song appeals to the Ogoni people's emotion to maintain *Bari Bii* music group and for the group to continue performing their songs as a corrective measure in the community. It recommends that *So I Bari Bii* song of *Bari Bii* music group should be performed in all Rivers State Communities for peaceful co-existence.

**Key words:** Emotional, stability, song, culture, sustenance.

### Introduction

In Ogoni community, the *Bari Bii* music group has been part of all activities that goes on in the communities be it social or cultural celebrations, they attach songs to virtually all their performances. Every event in ogoni land are marked with music since it is the main source of their communication and culture.

Agu (1990) points out that,

Songs have a strong control of power during worship, it gives the different types of songs during worship in the traditional society. There is still strong belief in the use of songs in achieving control of power, song of supplications, invocation, magic songs, songs for curing and infact, songs for every aspect of life (p. 51).

The *So I Bira Bari Bii* song of the *Bari Bii* music group is a song of supplication to usher in joy among the community and the presentation of gifts for peaceful co-existence amongst members of the community. Agu (2017) supports that:

Most Nigerian music do not only entertain, they gladden the heart, soothe and calm the nerves, enhance manual labour, comfort the bereaved and sorrowful, heighten emotions as well as motivate warriors in battle, wrestlers in contest and competitions in sports and games, promotes good behavior, patriotism, education, graces ceremonies, festivals, marriages, burial ceremonies (p. 30).

*So I Bira Bari Bii* song soothes and calms the nerves and emotions of the people, the song contributes a lot to the transmission and sustenance of cultural heritage through the knowledge it impacts on the younger generations by the elderly members of the communities. *So I Bira Bari Bii* song enhance progress, unity and encourages group cohesion among communities, it provides medium through which members of the community require close and continuous interaction with their culture song texts through interaction to get things done and people's participation. Nwankpa (2013) ascertains that "community music programme provides opportunity for the members of the community to express, explore, create, recreate and enjoy music and musical activities." (p. 3)

Okafor (2005) supports that,

Through song texts, a person learned the moral codes of his land, its chronology and history and the guiding principles and ethics of his land. He also learned about his own language, the things his people lived by and how the society worked (p. 209).

The *Bari Bii* music groups through *I so Bira Bari* song texts pass message to the communities on the norms and values of the community, the chronology of events that has happened in the community, how the community works and different cultures in the community. Uche (2015) posits that "song texts depend on the singers intended message, which maybe direct or indirect depending also on the activity in which the songs are performed." (p. 8) The *So I Bira Bari Bii* song of the *Bari Bii* music group serve not only as a medium for entertainment and social relationship but as an intricate part of emotion.

### **The *Bari Bii* Music Group of Ogoni Community**

According to Nelson Gbarador, the leader of the group in an oral interview disclose that, *Bari Bii* in Ogoni language means God's play and the group is as old as their forefathers. The music group comprised of men from different communities. During the training of members, members come together and stay in the *Bari Bii* compound for six months and during this period, all the members learn how to sing, dance and play their musical instruments, that is the reason why the group does not feel the absence of any member because individuals take up responsibilities; they all can play, dance and sing *Bari Bii* songs. Kpugita (2019) also in an oral interview posits that "*Bari Bii* music gives him happiness, I can play all the instruments, sing all the songs and also dance to the music." The unique thing about this group is that they make use of only seven musical instruments and these instruments are preserved in *Amakiri* shrine where their spiritual father resides. Before they leave for any performance, their spiritual father prays to the gods of the land to protect them from evil spirit attack, the seven musical instruments are:

S/NO	QTY	FOLK NAME	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
1	2	<i>Akiri</i>	Small slit wooden drums

2	1	<i>Kere</i>	Drum
3	1	<i>Gira (big size)</i>	Big metal gong
4	1	<i>Gira (small size)</i>	Small metal gong
5	1	<i>Kana</i>	Musical pot
6	1	<i>Koo</i>	Big slit wooden drum

The musical instruments play a very great role in *Bari Bii* songs because without musical instruments, the *Bari Bii* songs would not be recognized and danced by the community. Chukwu (2011) confirms that,

The African membrane drums 'talks' as well as sings. Each African society understands the sounds or tones produced from the specie of her drums. During performances, for instance, the master drummer expresses and or tells stories and gives information or directives to members of his group as the performance is going on and they understand whatever the drum talks or sings (p. 3).

Among the seven *Bari Bii* musical instruments the lead instrument is the small slit wooden drum (*akira*) and the other remaining instruments play supportive roles to the lead instrument. Youths from fifteen years and above are eligible to register as members of the group and the registration is open to both male and female from within and outside Ogoni communities. Although there is need for the recruitment of new members for the continuity of the group, new members register with one jar of palm wine, a bottle of hot drink, a big dried fish and a cash payment of two hundred (N200) naira or three hundred (N300) naira respectively. The fulfilment of these items makes person a member of *Bari Bii* music group, also non-indigenes who are interested to register as members produce the same items and pay the same amount of money. There are behaviours and conducts expected of a registered member:

A registered member must not belong to any cult group

A member must not steal

Decisions taken by members must not be disclosed to non-members of the group

No fighting among members

There must be no bribery allegation against any member of the group.

The *Bari Bii* music group has different costumes, the selection of the costume depends on the occasion and invitation accepted to be honoured by the group but they feature prominently on T-shirt and any coloured *George* wrapper to attract the audience. As soon as the group is informed of the death of a member by the deceased family with a bottle of hot drink, the members participate fully during the burial especially the vigil of the dead member. On the vigil day, the group sings, dance and play their musical instruments from that night to the next morning of the burial day proper and the family appreciates the members with the following items: a bunch of plantain, a male fowl, drinks and ingredients for cooking of the plantain. These items when presented by the deceased family, the members collect the items and cook by themselves for their entertainment.

### **Emotional Stability of *So I Bira Bari Bii* Song of *Bari Bii* Music Group**

The *So I Bira Bari Bii* song is one of the many songs of the *Bari Bii* music group, the *Bari Bii* music group songs are entirely sung as a corrective measure praise and peace in the community, they use their song text to coordinate members of the community. Their songs reveal secret crime even if the crime is committed by the king (*menebo*). Such crime is revealed by the group through their songs. They do not shield crime no matter how highly placed the person is in the community. Iyeh (2006) posits that "when somebody respected in the society misbehaves by disrupting the moral or social equilibrium, the Africans use the medium of dance and songs to parody the actions of such a one thereby putting him/her in check." (p. 54) The *Bari Bii* music group use their music to sanitize, communicate, checkmate and educate the people on the norms and values of the community. The music group serves as security agency through their songs and nobody invites any security agency to arrest them because of exposing ills committed by any member of the community through their music. Due to the exposure and fearless attitude of the music group, some members of the community are not comfortable with their songs and stopped patronizing and listening to their music, the group now came up with this song, *So I Bira Bari Bii* to appeal to their emotions.

Folk song	Literal English Translation
<i>Pie babe ksi-dap birabari bi-co</i>	They said we cannot play
<i>oo-oo</i>	Baribii culture ooh-ooh-ooh
<i>Bi-ra-ba-ri-biioo</i>	Play baribi culture oh oh
<i>Ba bee ksi-dap bira-ba-ri-biioo</i>	Play baribi culture oh
<i>Biraba-ribii-oo</i>	Play baribi culture oh
<i>Oh ba bee ksi-dap biraba-ri-biioo</i>	Play abribi culture oh
<i>Biioo - oo-birabiioo</i>	They said we cannot play culture
<i>Biioo - oobira-bari-bii ooh</i>	Play baribi culture oh
<i>I - dap birabarido --- oo</i>	Play baribi culture oh
<i>Bira - bari</i>	That we can't play bari - bii
<i>Biioo -----</i>	Culture play ba-ri-bii
<i>Bari-biioo-ooyaabira-bari-bii</i>	Play oo -----
<i>Biraba-ri - ohh</i>	Play bari-bii we're playing bari-bii
<i>Oo bi-ra-ba-ri-biioo</i>	Play bari - bii ooh
<i>Oh bira - bari - bii ooh</i>	Play bari - bii oh.

# SO I BIRA BARI BII

BARI BII GROUP

Ogoni Folk Song

The musical score is arranged in nine staves. The first three staves (CALL 1, CALL 2, RESP.) are in treble clef with a 12/8 time signature and contain rests. The remaining six staves are in alto clef with a 12/8 time signature. The AKIRI parts feature eighth-note patterns with accents. The KOO part uses a dotted quarter note followed by an eighth note. The GIRA parts use eighth notes and quarter notes. The KERE part is a simple drum pattern. The KANA part uses quarter and eighth notes.

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C. 1 *s* Oo ba - be ko ii ga bi - ra Ba - ri bii oo

C. 2 *s*

RS. *s*

A.1

A.2

KO

GT.

GM.

KE.

KA.

The musical score consists of ten staves. The first staff, labeled 'C. 1', is a vocal line in treble clef with a soprano clef (s) below it. It begins with a triplet of eighth notes (indicated by a '3' above the staff) and contains the lyrics: 'Oo ba - be ko ii ga bi - ra Ba-ri bii oo'. The second staff, 'C. 2', and the third staff, 'RS.', are empty. The fourth staff, 'A. 1', is a rhythmic line with a double bar line and a snare drum symbol (II) at the beginning, featuring a series of eighth notes with accents. The fifth staff, 'A. 2', is similar to A. 1. The sixth staff, 'KO', features a double bar line and a snare drum symbol, with groups of eighth notes. The seventh staff, 'GT.', features a double bar line and a snare drum symbol, with eighth notes and rests. The eighth staff, 'GM.', features a double bar line and a snare drum symbol, with eighth notes and rests. The ninth staff, 'KE.', is empty. The tenth staff, 'KA.', features a double bar line and a snare drum symbol, with eighth notes and rests.

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C. 1  
oo o bi ra Ba-ri bii

C. 2

RS.

A.1

A.2

KO

GT.

GM.

KE.

KA.

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3

The above song attracts pity, sorrow and touches emotions of the people on the *Bari Bii* music group. And maintenance of their culture Agu (2017) supports that, Every music is expected to deliver a message, inform, educate and possibly entertain. Through this process people's attitude and behavior are put on check, making it possible and easy for them to adhere to the laws. There are songs for checking vices which the community frowns at (p. 21).



*So I Bira Bari Bii* song touches the emotions of the people, informing them that the non-existence of *Bari Bii* music in the culture affects Ogoni communities, therefore that *Bari Bii* music should be encouraged to be performed in the community in order not to go into extinction. Agu (2017) informs that "music is mostly associated with the perception and experience of emotions. It is especially used to strengthen and change emotions in the listener." (p. 19) Okafor (2005) affirms that "music helps to bring a lot of stability into the mind." (p. 12) The *So I Bira Bari Bii* song affects the emotions of the people and stabilizes the mind of the people through the song. They honour invitations both within and outside the country, for the music group not to go into extinction, different communities in Ogoni came together to form a central *Bari Bii* music group but before now different communities in Ogoni formed their own *Bari Bii* music group for the growth of the music group.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The *So I Bira Bari Bii* music of the *Bari Bii* music is a song to appeal to the emotions of the members of the community to continue with the music group. Skinner's operant conditioning theory in Iwundu (2004) was adopted. Skinner advocates that every human behavior operates upon the environment such as walking, running, receiving the telephone as well as talking. In Skinner's opinion, human behaviour is not isolated from the environment. The *Bari Bii* music group operates within the environment and fish out any evil behavior operated within the environment, no matter how highly placed the person involved is placed in the community. They find out information whether the evil was done in the night or day light, they walk, communicate within the community to get first-hand information and they don't hide evil, they pass their good or bad information through songs. Due to their exposure on the evil performed in the community, some members of the community were not comfortable with the exposure, the music group compose the song, *So I Bira Bari Bii* song for the emotional stability, continuity of the group and maintenance of Ogoni culture.

### **Findings**

The *Bari Bii* music group is a group that is deeply rooted in Ogoni culture, the name *Bari Bii* means 'God's play'. The music group makes use of only seven musical instruments which includes two slit wooden drums (*akiri*), one drum (*kere*), one big metal gong (*gira*), one small metal gong (*gira*), one musical pot (*kana*) and one big slit wooden drum (*koo*) and these instruments are kept in their spiritual father's shrine, *Amachree*. *Bari Bii* music in Ogoni community is a music that attracts members of the community and their music serves as a corrective measure and emotional stability in the community and sometimes their music does not go down well with some members of the community. The *Bari Bii* music group for their music not to be stopped from performance came up with the song *So I Bira Bari Bii* to touch their emotions and also to inform the community on the importance of *Bari Bii* music group to Ogoni culture, the music is sustained for the music group not to go into extinction. Members of *Bari Bii* music group from different Ogoni communities organized themselves to keep it alive for the continuity of Ogoni culture and occasions.

### Conclusion

So I bira Bari Bii music is an age long song that appeals to the emotions of the people of Ogoni. The song inspires the people for the maintenance of love and culture in the community. Songs are part of social integration, unity, communication and progress of the community once a person emotion is stable, the result is success, security stability, togetherness, cultural stability consistency in development of the community So I bira Bari Bii Song is also performed during cultural celebrations in the community.

### Recommendations

1. The Ogoni community should encourage the *Bari Bii* music group to continue their good work through their songs to check illicit behavior in the community.
2. Culture and religion should be maintained through the *So I Bira Bari Bii* song of *Bari Bii* music group.
3. The *Bari Bii* music group song especially the *So I Bira Bari Bii* should be performed for emotional stability of people both within and outside the community.

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