

CHILDREN'S SATIRICAL SONGS AS ALTERNATIVES TO CORPORAL PUNISHMENTS IN NIGERIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: THE YORUBA EXAMPLE

**Kayode Olusola, Ph.D.
and
Funmilola Onyesiku**

Introduction

This paper examines the application of children's satirical songs as alternatives to corporal punishments among selected Public Primary Schools in rural communities of three different local governments in Ogun State. It investigates the context of performance as well as its lyrical content; in order to highlight the efficacy of satirical songs in enforcing discipline in schools. Through key-informant oral methods as primary source of data collection and review of related literature as secondary, the study relies on Sociological and Functional theories in Musicology as the premise for discourse. The research findings reveal that children satirical songs were songs composed by unknown individuals which are orally transmitted from generation to another in schools. These songs are performed by pupils in primary school to scold any child that exhibits unruly behaviour or negative attitudes towards learning. It is also observed that these songs have greater impact on the pupils as a measure to effect positive change in behaviour or attitude to learning than corporal punishments in schools. This paper concludes that satirical songs have provided alternative and efficacious measures to rewarding and correcting immoral behaviour or negative attitudes to learning among the primary school pupils. This paper therefore, suggests that the use of children satirical songs should be encouraged by the school authorities as an alternative to corporal punishment, which could inflict wounds or permanent disability in a child.

Musical practices as a phenomenon is imperative in all daily activities of people of Africa. This is due to functions and roles music plays in their belief system, thoughts, emotions and other exigent utilitarian roles in the total life of every individual in the society from birth to adulthood. These musical culture is embraced by both adults and children that exist in that particular African society. Children and adults are both directly or indirectly involved in the creativity, production and documentation of all the musical genres which exist in the society but it is observed that the greatest percentage of all the musical practices that exists in any African society involve adults especially men. Songs composed and performed mainly by children are generally regarded as 'Children Play Song' or 'Children Rhymes'.

Sequel to the above assertion, (Ibekwe, 2013), the children play songs include folk songs, game songs and rhymes, moonlight play songs, songs used in folklores and satirical songs. Satire is a form of literary and musical art that serves as a powerful weapon used in ridiculing the non-conformist with the norms and traditional values of the society. Any behaviour observed in an individual or group of people that does not conform to the acceptable behavioural pattern in the society is seen as unethical or immoral. Apart from moral and ethical education received by the children at home, children also receive formal education in schools. Some children received their elementary education in government or public Primary schools while others received theirs in private Nursery/Primary Schools located in the society. Apart from literacy education, schools also take responsibility of enforcing good moral behaviour in schools to compliment the efforts of the parents. Children are rewarded by their class-teachers for good and poor performances in their education, as well as their behaviours. The rewards for unruly behaviours could be in form of corporal punishment or the use of satirical songs to reproach the act.

Theoretical Framework

Sociological theory as popularized by Herbert Spencer in Adejumo Arinpe (2005) contends that norms and institutions are regarded as 'organs' that work towards the proper-functioning of the entire 'body' of society. Therefore, music is a human behaviour; that is, it is the product of people living within the society and the primary function of music is to aid in the integration of society. Adejumo (2008) noted further that the norms and value of any African or Yoruba society are transmitted and internalized into the audience or citizens through literary genres that exists society.

The functionality theory on the other hand, stressed the role of music in promulgating positive change in the society. Among the Yoruba, the aesthetics of any music genre is predominantly rooted in the relevance and functionality of such music within the society and it had been advanced that no music is or should be without a purpose. Therefore, on this note, music is clearly indispensable to the proper promulgation of the activities that constitute a society; it is a universal human behaviour— without it, it is questionable that man could truly be called man, with all that implies (Merriam. 1964).

By implication, music being a daily phenomenon and indispensable institution in any African society, is saddled with the overall responsibility of propagating the societal ethics, norms, cultural and moral values in the society from childhood to adulthood. Child's development and training involves both informal education from infant by the parents as well as the formal education in established schools within the society. Since music is an inseparable element in the Nigerian culture and daily activities, it forms part of the weapon used by the Elementary of Primary School teachers in imparting literacy and moral education in children. Primary school pupils comprise pupils from different homes and different parental backgrounds and upbringing. Therefore, it is expected to observe diverse behavioral patterns and characters inherent in these children. These behaviour could be permanently or occasionally positive or negative. The school teachers are saddled with the responsibilities of applying workable corrective methods in condemning these behaviours through application of deserved and effective punishment methods in line with the school regulations. This also depends on the gravity of offence, situation and the child involved.

Lawrent (2012) asserts that teachers in schools and parents in homes use punishment as one of the most important tool for controlling student's behavior and discipline. Form the psychological point of view, punishment is defined as anything that decreases the occurrence of a behavior; physical pain, withdraw of attention, loss of tangibles or activities, a reprimand or even something others would find rewarding, but the particular individual does not like. Lawrent stated further that:

'One of the main goals of punishment is to invoke fear in the student, so that the behavior does not occur again. In the school, teachers punish students for being late to school, for not following

K. Olusola & F. Onyesiku: *Children's Satirical Songs as Alternatives to Corporal... the school rules, for not doing classroom assignment and for failure to perform better in tests and examinations and the like'* (Lawrnt: 2012, p. 69)

However, Ajibade (2005) observed that satire serves as corrective measure for people who are in dire straits of social misbehaviour. It improves the moral standard that sustains the society. It expresses dislike for a particular deviant behaviour in a person, group of people, idea, opinion and institution. This is concomitant to Gilbert (1962: 231) who maintain that satire "wounds and destroys individuals and groups in order to benefit society as a whole" Therefore, satires used for positive purposes in order to promote the societal moral values and norms among all categories of people in the society is more acceptable than corporal punishments or violence.

Okoh (2018) asserts that the role of children in any society cannot be over-emphasized. Every culture in its own peculiar way, with or without laws, by default, protects the young. The fact that the present young population are going to be responsible for running society in the next twenty to forty years, means that much attention should be paid to children's development. As expected, each society's culture determines how its children are treated. She explained further that what might be acceptable to one society, might be completely abhorrent to another. Two decades ago, flogging children in primary and secondary schools in Nigeria was widely acceptable. According to her:

"this was irrespective of whether the school was public, private or a missionary school. Today, the narrative is different. Even without the prompting of the government, most private schools in Nigeria have already banned all forms of flogging or hitting by teachers or other staff. In response, some teachers have lamented that the absence of corporal punishment encourages pupils to be rude to them.' (Okoh 2020)

Straus, & Mouradian, (1998) in Ojo (2018) described corporal as intentional application of physical pain as a method of changing of behaviour. It includes a wide variety of methods such as hitting, slapping, spanking, punching, kicking, pinching, shaking, shoving, choking, use of various objects (i.e. wooden paddles, belts, sticks, pins, or others), painful body postures (such as placing in closed space), use of

electric shock, use of excessive exercise drills, or prevention of urine or stool elimination (Gershoff, & Bitensky, 2007). However, corporal punishment in schools does not refer to the occasional need of a school official to restrain dangerous students or use of physical force as a means of protecting members of the school community subject to imminent danger (Human Rights Watch, 1999).

Maurer (1974) stressed that while the word "corporal" derived from the Latin "corpus" meaning a body, the term "punishment" comes from the same root (Latin poena) as do the words "penalty" and "pain". Sequel to the above assertion, Ojo (2018), recorded that corporal punishment unmistakably means inflicting pain upon the body of the person, usually by some instrument such as a cane, strap or other object by parents, by school personnel or by judicial officers. The aim is to award punishment in the hope of guiding recipients away from error, effecting a reformation, or performing an action in the interest of order, rule, or control by authority.

Since it is expected that children in Primary Schools will at some point, exhibit different deviant behaviours towards teachers, peers and towards their studies, it is the responsibility of the school teachers to award appropriate punishment within to the school's code of conducts and regulations, to correct the child and that action, to serve as deterrent to the other pupils about the consequent of unethical behaviours in schools. This could be corporal punishment which is usually in form of flogging the child or other forms of physical discomfort like keeling down, raising of hands up and others. However, some teachers make use of satirical songs as an alternative to corporal punishment to lampoon any child that misbehave in the school.

Context of Performance and Practice of Satirical Songs in Primary Schools

In 1991, Nigeria ratified the Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC). With the exception of some northern states, many states have domesticated the CRC as state laws. The CRC in Article 28 (2) stipulates that:

"States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the

K. Olusola & F. Onyesiku: *Children's Satirical Songs as Alternatives to Corporal... child's human dignity and in conformity with the present convention."*

It is also notable that the Nigerian government is committed under the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 and Africa's Agenda for Children 2040. In 2019, the Global Initiative together with Amnesty International Nigeria, is worked on a project to bring law reform on corporal punishment to the forefront of the Nigerian Government's agenda.

Before the Nigerian government and the Amnesty international's position on the use of corporal punishment in Nigeria, Schools, especially the Private Nursery and Primary institutions in Nigeria have been notice to have discouraged the use of corporal punishments in their schools for over three decades due to high status of the parents and the up-bringing of the kinds of children admitted in their schools. The owners and management of the Private schools have had bitter experience as a result of the reaction and responses of parents toward the use of corporal punishment on their wards. Also, cases of physical accidents have recorded in Public Primary Schools as a result of the use of corporal punishments against the children which has led to conflict between the parent and the teachers or the school management. This has prompted the use of satirical songs as an alternative corrective measure to scold or punish any child who exhibits un-ethical behaviour in the school.



Fig. 1: Corporal punishment on pupils on the Assembly ground

According to Shobande (Oral interview: 2021), the performance practice of satirical songs in Primary Schools could be organized or unorganized depending on the context of performance. The organized performance is coordinated by the teachers in classrooms usually when an offence like stealing, bullying, fighting, noise-making or bad attitudes to study, is committed by a child during lessons. In this context, the teacher usually instructs the offender to stand the front of the classroom and introduce and lead the satirical song for other students to sing in response.

Akanbi (oral interview: 2021) gave another instances where an organized performance could be observed. According to him, during morning devotion on the school assembly ground, a child could be found guilty of offences like bad dressing, parent's report of refusal to take birth at home before coming to school or disobedience. In this context, the child is brought forward and the headmaster/headmistress or the coordinator of the assembly will initiate a related satirical song to lampoon the child.

Adewale (oral interview 2021) explained that another context of performance is in a situation where a child committed an offence outside the classroom. This could be on the playground or at the corridor of the school buildings. In this context, one of the other pupils at the venue will spontaneously introduce a satirical song to mock the child while other pupils' respond in chorus. This type of performance is an un-organized performance which is open to all other children irrespective of age, gender and grade in the school. The performance in this context give no room for a particular lead-singer and no qualification is required to be the lead-singer or partake in the performance.

Performance of satirical songs as punishment in schools is accompanied with hand-clap, dance and laughter by the performers. This at time, leads to out-burst of cry from the offender, Adeleke (oral interview: 2021) asserts that some teachers endeavor to address the pupils about the magnitude and the negativity of the offence committed by an offender and the need to exhibit good moral behaviour in school before he or she introduce the performance of satirical songs to scold the offender. This therefore, provides justification for the action taken against the offender.

Textual and Musical Content of Children Satirical Songs in Primary Schools

The children's satirical songs which are used as an alternative to corporal punishments in Public Primary Schools in Nigeria contain text that are used to mock or provoke a child who is found guilty of immoral acts that are against the rules and regulations or code of conducts for pupils in a particular school. The text content of each song is germane to the type of offence committed by the child. This is because the text content signifies the type of offence a child has committed. The texts are observed to have different themes and this shall be identified and discussed below.

Satirical Songs for Negative Attitude of a Child to Study

In a situation when a child continuously performs poorly in his or her academics as a result of bad attitude to learning, the class-teacher may decide to reward the child for this negative attitude. This includes un-willingness to learn or refusal by the pupil to concentrate during classes which has resulted in the child getting zero in the exercises or assignments given at school. The other pupils in school sing these songs to ridicule the child as a corrective measure for the bad attitude.

Song No 1 below is an example of such songs.

Olodo Rabata

Call

Ol-o-do ra-ba-ta O- ni lo pe-pa

Response

O-ju e-ja lo mo o je Si- le-ti lo o ma

Yoruba

Call: *Olodo rabata*

Response: *Oju eja lo mo o je*

Call: *O ko ni lo pepa*

Response: *Sileeti lo o ma maa lo*

Translation.

You got zero in your work

You are only fond of eating

You won't use exercise books to write

You shall continue to use slate to write

Satirical Songs for the Offence of Stealing

Satirical songs for a child who steal in school contain text that condemn stealing another person's belonging. It is one of the most disgraceful and condemnable offence a child commits in school because teachers believe that this habit can lead to the child destruction in life. Whenever this offence is committed, the other pupils around unanimously and spontaneously shout in chorus thus:

Oleeeee!!!! Meaning Thief!!!!

This is usually followed by a satirical song to condemn the act. The song No 2 below is an example of the song in that category.

Song No.2

E Wa W'ole

Lead singer

E waw'o - le E wa w'o -le o-gbo- wo o - lo-wo

Chorus

O - le!! O - le!! O -

Lead singer

O-gbo-un o - lo-un

Chorus

le!! O - le!!

Yoruba Language

Lead: E wa w'ole

Chorus: Ole!!!

Lead: E wa w'ole!!!

Chorus: Ole!!!

Lead: Ogbowo olowo

Translation

Coma and see a thief

Thief!!!

Come and see a thief

Thief!!!

He stole another person's money

Chorus: Ole!!!

Lead: Ogboun oloun

Chorus: Ole!!!

Thief!!!

He stole another person's belonging

Thief!!!

Satirical Songs for the Offence of Fighting

Fighting is another offence committed by pupils in the Primary school. The school management and teachers usually detest pupils that are fond of fighting with other children in the school because it can lead to physical wound inflicted upon other children. When a child commits an offence of fighting, teachers do organize other pupils in class to sing satirical songs that contain text that condemn the act. The Song No. 3 below is an example of songs in that category.

Song No.3

Jagidijagan

Lead singer

Ja - gi - di - ja - gan

o - mo E - su lo 'n - ja

Chorus

O - mo E - su lo 'n - ja

Lead singer

Chorus

Ja - gi - di - ja - gan

Yoruba Language

Lead: Jagidijagan

Chorus: Omo esu lo nja

Lead: Jagidijagan

Chorus: Omo esu lo nja

Lead: Omo Esu loje

Chorus: Jagidijagan

Translation

You are fond of fighting

Fighters are devilish

You are fond of fighting

Fighters are devilish

Fighters are devilish

You are fond of fighting

Satirical Songs for the Offence of Truancy

Oral interview with Osibanjo (an informant) revealed that some pupils are of the habits of truancy. Instead of coming to school, they decided to go and hide somewhere with other children who are of the same habits or those who do not attend classes at all. When this is discovered by the school, teachers do publicly report this to other pupils and condemn the act. This bad behaviour is also lampooned with satirical songs that contain lyrics which bring insults and embarrassment to the child before other pupils in the school. The song below is an example of songs in that category.

Song No. 4

Isansa Ma Tun De O

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Isansa Ma Tun De O'. It consists of two staves of music in 12/8 time, with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The melody is written on a treble clef staff. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first line of lyrics is 'I sa n sa ma tun de o' and the second line is 'A le ko lo ko le lo'. There is a first ending bracket over the final measure of the first line.

'Isansa ma tun de o'

Yoruba

Call: *Isansa ma tun de o*

Response: *A le e ko lo ko le lo*

Translation

The truant has started as usual

We persuaded him to go to school but he refused.

It is therefore evident that the text content of the children satirical songs used as an alternative to corporate punishment in primary schools for different unruly behaviours is determined by the nature or type of the offence. The performances of these satirical songs also serves as announcement and invitation to other children in the school that an offence have been committed. The greater the number of participant also make the song more affective because the offender is being disgraced before larger number of his or her peers and other members of the school.

Description of Musical Structure

The analysis of the musical data collected revealed that children satirical songs used as an alternative to corporal punishments in Nigerian primary schools are mainly vocal music unaccompanied or sometimes accompanied with hand-claps. The performance is spontaneous because the performance is open to all children and it requires no specific lead vocalist, chorus singers or special musical training or skills to perform the music. They also comprise songs in spoken-verse and song forms that are mostly in short poetic formation. The text contains lyrics in simple Yoruba language that specifically condemn bad behaviours and other unethical conducts in the school. These lyrics contain words that could have effects on the emotion of the child either positively or negatively. The performance style of these songs are usually in call and response form between any pupil acting as a temporary or a spontaneous lead-singer and chorus response by other pupils. Children satirical songs are structured in monostrophic form, which are repeatedly performed with monophonic texture.

However, it is a common practice to find some children singing out-of-tune during the performance due to their different level of musical background. Also, the choice of song to be performed is also determined by the nature of the offence. Each song has its own theme which is related to one offence or the other.

Conclusion

As a result of modernization and other school administrative experience, the management of public Primary Schools in Nigeria have come to realize that the use of corporal punishments in schools may not be the most appropriate approach to solving the problem of indiscipline in schools. Apart from this, it has also been found out that some parents prefer private schools to public school due to the use of corporal punishment by the public schools, which most of them perceived to be an abuse and unfair to their children. The use of satirical songs in Primary Schools have provided an alternative and efficacious measures to rewarding and correcting immoral behaviour or negative attitudes to learning among the primary school pupils.

Apart from the emotional punishment, satirical songs have also act as a check against any physical abuse on the child by the teachers during the school period. This paper therefore, recommend that the use of children satirical songs

should be encouraged by the school authorities as an alternative to corporal punishment, which could inflict wounds or permanent disability in a child.

References

- Curthrow, J. (2002). *Correlation between high rates of corporal punishment in public schools and pathologies*. Paris: UNESCO
- Coon, D. (2001). *Introduction to psychology: Gateways to mind and behavior* (9th Ed). London: Wadsworth.
- Gershoff, E.T. (2002). Corporal punishment by parents and associated child behavior. *Psychological bulletin*, 128 (4), 539-579
- Global Initiative to end all Corporal Punishment to Children. (2009). *Ensuring the dignity of the child prohibiting all corporal punishment*. 20th Anniversary of the Adoption of the Convention on the Right to the Child. Geneva
- Godlove Lawrent (2012) 'The impact of punishment on student learning: experiences from basic and secondary education in Tanzania' <https://www.grin.com/document/192155>
- Ojo, F. Y. (2018) Corporal punishment in Nigerian schools from psychological perspective: issues and recommendations' *Journal of Education and Practice* www.iiste.org ISSN 2222-1735 (Paper) ISSN 2222-288X (Online) Vol.9, No.5,
- Okoh E. M. (2018) "Disciplining Children In Nigerian Schools: To Flog or Not To Flog?; hello@legalnaija.com.
- Kosslyn, S. M., & Rosenberg, R. S. (2002). *Fundamentals of psychology: the brain, the person, The World*: New York: Person Education, Inc.
- Lefton, L.A (2002) *Psychology* (7th ed). Boston: A Pearson education company.
- UNICEF. (2001). *Corporal Punishment in Schools in South Asia*. Day on Violence against Children.

Interviews

S/N	Name of Informant	Age	Occupation	Address	Date of interview
1.	Mr Ganiyu Shobande	58	Teacher	Egbe-Ijebu Community Pry School	16/01/2021
2.	Mr Segun Akanbi	60	Teacher	St Thomas Catholic Primary Sch. Ososa-Ijebu	23/01/2021
3.	Mrs J.A Adewale	57	Teacher	Ansar-ud-deen Pry School, Ago-Iwoye.	04/02/2021
4.	Mrs Bola Adeleke	55	Teacher	Ibefun/Ilado CommunityPry. School	16/02/2021
5.	Mr S.A Talabi	60	Teacher	Methodist Pry. School, Ago-Iwoye	22/02/2021
6.	Mrs F.O Odulate	59	Teacher	Imodi-Ijasi Community Pry School. Imodi Ijasi Ijebu	23/02/2021