

Nigerian Children's Theatre and the Dwindling Nigerian Economy: Challenges and Prospects

Nkem Godslove CHIDI-UKAGU PhD¹

¹Department of Theatre and Film Studies, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

nkemchidiukagu@gmail.com

nkem.ukagu@uniport.edu.ng

IJMER

Volume. 9, Issue. 3

September, 2026

e-ISSN: 6575-5565

p-ISSN: 3427-2556

© IJMER.

All rights reserved.

Abstract

This study examines the debilitating effects of the continually declining Nigerian economy on the development and sustainability of Nigerian children's theatre and the possible panacea to the problem. Historically rooted in indigenous storytelling and educational community practices, Nigerian children's theatre that boomed in the Pre-colonial era, currently faces several challenges, such as inadequate funding, limited audience engagement, poor infrastructure, and weak institutional support. Using Cultural Materialism Theory, which links material conditions to cultural production, this research analyses how economic forces shape production, distribution, and reception of children's theatre in Nigeria. The study adopts qualitative research design where journal articles, internet and books were used for the study. In the course of this research, the study reveals that economic hardship, high level of insecurity in Nigeria limits theatre practitioners' abilities to deliver quality performances, reduces patronage, and undermines theatre education. However, the research also reveals that there are prospects in community initiatives, school-based theatre, and digital strategies that can help sustain children's theatre. The paper concludes by advocating for policy reforms, increased investment, and collaborative frameworks to support theatre arts for children in Nigeria.

Keywords: Nigerian Children's Theatre, Economy, Cultural Materialism, Theatre Sustainability, Performance Education.

1. Introduction

The development of children's theatre in Nigeria is deeply intertwined with the nation's socio-economic realities. Nigerian children's theatre, which serves as a vital tool for education, cultural transmission, and socialization, operates within a broader theatrical ecosystem already constrained by economic instability. In recent years, the dwindling Nigerian economy, characterized by reduced public spending, declining purchasing power, and limited private investment, has significantly affected the growth and sustainability of theatre practice, particularly productions targeted at children. In addition, the growing dominance of digital entertainment and other commercial media has further marginalized children's theatre, reducing its visibility and relevance among young audiences. To clarify more on this, the World Bank (2025) states that "over 23% of Nigerians were living below the national poverty line in 2025, with an estimated 7 million additional Nigerians falling into poverty because inflation continued to erode household incomes" (Nigeria/World Bank Group). Another study from IMF (2026) affirms that "strong reforms... have yielded improved macroeconomic outcomes... still, conditions for many Nigerians remain difficult". To further highlight this point, below is the statistics of Nigerian dwindling economy from 2015 to 2026.

Indicator showing the dwindling Nigerian economy from (2015-2026)

Year	GDP Growth (%)	Inflation (%)	Exchange Rate (₦/US\$, approx.)	Major Economic Events
2015	2.7	9.0	197	Oil price crash: declining government revenue

2016	-1.6	15.7	305	Nigeria entered recession
2017	0.8	16.5	360	Slowly recovery from recession
2018	1.9	12.1	360	Weak economic growth
2019	2.2	11.4	306	Growth remained below population growth
2020	-1.8	13.2	380	COVID-19 pandemic and recession
2021	3.4	17.0	410	Economic recovery but rising prices
2022	3.3	18.8	460	Food and energy inflation worsened
2023	2.9	24.7	770-900	Fuel subsidy removal and naira float increased living costs
2024	4.1	33.2	1,400-1,600	Inflation reached multi-decade heights
2025	4.0	23.0	1,500 +	Inflation eased but poverty remained widespread
2026	4.1 (projected)	16-17 (projected)	About 1, 500	Recovery expected, but poverty and food insecurity remained major concerns

Source IMF Press Release No 26/190

Despite its significance in promoting creativity, cultural preservation, and moral development, children's theatre has not received sufficient scholarly and policy attention in relation to the country's economic realities.

Ogunleye (2023), observes that "inadequate funding remains a major challenge confronting theatre in Nigeria, as financial constraints limit production quality, access to materials, and opportunities for expansion" (p.14). Similarly, Oloko (2022) opines that "poor infrastructure and lack of functional performance spaces continue to hinder theatrical activities, restricting both practitioners and audiences" (p.22). These challenges are further compounded by weak government support and inconsistent cultural policies, which leave theatre practitioners, especially those in children's theatre, without institutional backing. In a depressed economy, reduced consumer purchasing power also affects audience turnout, as many families prioritize basic needs over theatrical engagement. Within this context, Olukitibi and Agbo (2022) opine that "children's theatre faces even greater marginalization. The low level of awareness and appreciation for children's theatre in Nigeria limits its audience base and financial viability" (p. 3).

Despite these constraints, children's theatre continues to demonstrate resilience and relevance by contributing to the cognitive, moral, and social development of young audiences, as well as preserving indigenous cultural values. This dual reality of challenges and potential underscores the need to critically examine both the limitations imposed by the dwindling economy and the prospects for revitalizing Nigerian children's theatre through innovation, policy support, and community engagement.

Therefore, this paper sets out to examine the impact of the dwindling Nigerian economy on children's theatre, with a focus on identifying the challenges faced by practitioners and exploring viable prospects for growth and sustainability. The objectives of the paper are to examine the effect of Nigeria's economic decline on the development of children's theatre; to identify the major challenges confronting children's theatre in Nigeria, particularly in relation to funding, infrastructure, and audience engagement as well as to evaluate the educational and socio-cultural relevance of children's theatre in contemporary Nigeria and finally, to explore possible strategies and prospects for revitalizing and sustaining children's theatre in a challenging economic environment. This paper adopts a qualitative analytical approach, synthesising existing academic literature, industry reports, and online sources related to theatre in Nigeria. Content analysis is employed to identify key economic challenges affecting children's theatre, with Cultural Materialism guiding the interpretive process. The Nigerian dwindling economy. This is the foundational theoretical framework.

2. Cultural Materialism Theory

Cultural Materialism is a theoretical approach that examines the relationship between culture and material conditions within society. The theory argues that cultural practices, beliefs, and artistic productions are deeply influenced by economic structures, social relations, and political systems. Rather than viewing culture as separate from society's material realities, Cultural Materialism sees

culture as both a product of and a response to economic and social conditions. It is germane to look at the meaning of cultural materialism from different scholars.

2.1. Raymond Williams' View of Cultural Materialism

Raymond Williams is widely regarded as the major proponent of Cultural Materialism. Williams (1977) argues that "culture should not be seen merely as art, literature, or intellectual activity, but as "a whole way of life" shaped by social and economic experiences" (p. 19). To him, cultural activities, such as theatre are influenced by the dominant economic system and class structures within society. He further explains that "culture exists in three forms: dominant, residual, and emergent cultures. Dominant culture refers to the prevailing cultural values supported by political and economic power, while residual culture represents traditions inherited from the past. Emergent culture, on the other hand, refers to new cultural practices struggling to gain recognition" (p. 121). This perspective is useful in analyzing Nigerian children's theatre, which can be seen as an emergent cultural form struggling within a harsh economic environment.

In addition, Williams (1981) emphasizes that "cultural production is closely tied to institutions such as schools, governments, and media organizations. These institutions determine which cultural activities receive support and visibility" (p. 43). Therefore, the neglect of children's theatre in Nigeria can be linked to inadequate institutional and economic support.

2.2. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' Contribution

Although the term "Cultural Materialism" was popularized by Williams, its foundations are rooted in the ideas of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Engels (1970) argue that "the economic base of society determines its cultural and ideological superstructure" (p. 47). According to them, the way wealth is produced and distributed influences social institutions, beliefs, and artistic expressions. This idea suggests that theatre and other cultural productions are shaped by economic realities. In societies facing economic hardship, artistic sectors such as children's theatre are likely to experience underfunding, reduced patronage, and limited development opportunities.

2.3. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield's Perspective

Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (1985) expanded Cultural Materialism by applying it to literary and performance studies. They argue that "cultural texts and performances are sites of ideological struggle where power relations are reinforced or challenged" (p. viii). To these scholars, theatre can function both as a tool of social control and as a medium for resistance. In the context of Nigerian children's theatre, performances can challenge societal neglect of children's welfare, advocate for educational development, and preserve cultural identity despite economic challenges.

2.4. Marvin Harris' Anthropological Perspective

Marvin Harris (1979) approached Cultural Materialism from an anthropological perspective. Harris argues that "cultural practices develop primarily in response to practical and material needs, such as survival, economy, and environmental conditions" (p. 56). He believes that social institutions and cultural behaviors are largely determined by material realities rather than abstract ideas. This perspective supports the argument that the state of Nigeria's economy directly affects cultural sectors like children's theatre. Economic instability shapes audience behavior, government priorities, and the availability of resources for theatre production.

3. Relevance of Cultural Materialism to Nigerian Children's Theatre

Cultural Materialism is highly relevant to the study of Nigerian children's theatre because it explains how economic conditions influence cultural production and sustainability. The dwindling Nigerian economy has affected theatre funding, infrastructure, and audience participation, thereby shaping the development of children's theatre. The theory also helps explain why commercially profitable entertainment sectors, such as film and digital media receive more attention than children's theatre. Since cultural production is tied to economic value and institutional support, less profitable forms of art are often marginalized. Furthermore, Cultural Materialism highlights the role of theatre as a medium for social awareness, cultural preservation, and resistance against societal neglect.

In summary, Cultural Materialism provides a strong framework for understanding the

interaction between economy and culture. Through the views of Williams, Marx, Engels, Dollimore, Sinfield, and Harris, the theory demonstrates that cultural activities such as children's theatre cannot be separated from the material realities of society.

3.1. Children's Theatre in Nigeria: Conceptual Overview

Children's theatre refers to theatrical performances created specifically for children or performed by children under adult guidance. Clark (1981) states that "In Nigeria, children's theatre has its roots in indigenous storytelling traditions, folktales, festivals, and communal performances that involved children either as participants or primary audiences. These traditional forms served educational purposes, teaching moral lessons, communal values, and cultural identity" (p. 22). Again, Chidi-Ukagu (2022) contends that "children's theatre is that aspect of child drama that is performed by professional actors or actors with children or children alone before children audience" (p. 430). To add one more example, Emasealu (2026) affirms that children's theatre "entertains, educates and inspires through stories that reflect children's experiences and imagination" (p. 37). All what these scholars are saying is that children's theatre is child-centred drama that combines teaching and learning with entertainment. In Nigeria, during the earlier post-colonial era, children's theatre evolved within schools, churches, and cultural centres, often integrated into educational curricula. Despite its development on children's importance, Yerima, (2015) posits that, "children's theatre has remained marginal compared to adult theatre forms. This marginalization has been intensified by economic pressures that limit resources for artistic and educational programmes" (p. 67). This point raises the need, for us to examines the significance of children's theatre as well as the challenges militating against the development of children's theatre.

3.2. Economic Factors and Theatre Production in Nigeria

Theatre production is closely linked to the economic realities of the society in which it operates. As a cultural enterprise, theatre requires substantial financial, material, and human resources for its successful execution. These resources include funding for script development, rehearsals, costumes, stage design, technical equipment, publicity, transportation, and remuneration for performers and production personnel. Consequently, the economic health of a nation significantly influences the quality, frequency, and sustainability of theatrical productions. According to Williams (1980), cultural production is inseparable from the material conditions that shape society, as economic structures determine access to resources necessary for artistic creation (p. 38).

In Nigeria, economic instability has had considerable effects on theatre practice. Rising inflation, unemployment, currency depreciation, and increasing production costs have created challenges for theatre practitioners and cultural institutions. Osofisan (2011) observes that "the survival of theatre in Nigeria is largely dependent on the availability of economic resources and institutional support, both of which have declined significantly in recent years" (p. 45). The reduction in public funding for cultural activities has further limited opportunities for theatrical production and audience development.

The high cost of production materials has become a major concern for theatre practitioners. Items such as costumes, stage properties, lighting equipment, sound systems, and transportation have become increasingly expensive due to economic fluctuations. This situation often compels producers to reduce production quality or cancel planned performances altogether. Adedeji (2007) notes that "financial limitations frequently affect the artistic and technical standards of theatre productions in Nigeria" (p. 94).

Audience patronage is another area affected by economic conditions. Theatre depends on audience participation for both cultural relevance and financial sustainability. However, during periods of economic hardship, individuals and families tend to prioritize essential needs over recreational and cultural activities. As a result, attendance at theatrical performances often declines. This challenge is particularly evident in children's theatre, where parents and educational institutions may be unable to allocate resources for theatre-related activities. Yerima (2015) argues that "economic difficulties have contributed to shrinking theatre audiences and reduced opportunities for artistic engagement" (p. 72). Despite these challenges, economic constraints have encouraged innovation within the Nigerian theatre industry. Practitioners have increasingly adopted cost-effective

production methods, community-based performance approaches, and digital technologies to sustain theatrical activities. These adaptive strategies demonstrate the resilience of theatre practitioners and their ability to respond creatively to changing economic realities.

Therefore, economic factors remain critical determinants of theatre production in Nigeria. Understanding the relationship between economic conditions and theatrical practice is essential for addressing the challenges confronting children's theatre and identifying sustainable pathways for its development and growth. Theatre production is closely linked to the economic realities of the society in which it operates. As a cultural enterprise, theatre requires substantial financial, material, and human resources for its successful execution. These resources include funding for script development, rehearsals, costumes, stage design, technical equipment, publicity, transportation, and remuneration for performers and production personnel. Consequently, the economic health of a nation significantly influences the quality, frequency, and sustainability of theatrical productions. According to Williams (1980), "cultural production is inseparable from the material conditions that shape society, as economic structures determine access to resources necessary for artistic creation" (p. 38).

4. Significance of Children's Theatre

4.1. Educational Development

Children's theatre plays a major role in the educational development of children. Through dramatization, storytelling, and role-play, children learn communication skills, vocabulary, and problem-solving techniques in an interactive manner. Theatre encourages experiential learning, allowing children to understand concepts more effectively than through conventional teaching methods alone. Creative dramatics helps children develop imagination, concentration, and self-expression, which are essential for intellectual growth. Emasealu (2026) adds that creative dramatics "enhances personal development and self-confidence for children...and it strengthens children's communication skills" (pp. 33-34 my emphasis). Ken-Aminikpo (2026), on the other hand, stresses that "education thrives when infused with creativity and performative expression, transforming abstract or "dry" pedagogy into a dynamic organization". (p. 11) This implies that education through theatre makes learning fun, enjoyable and memorable. Furthermore, children's theatre enhances critical thinking by encouraging children to interpret situations, make decisions, and respond creatively to dramatic activities. This educational significance makes theatre an important complement to classroom learning.

4.2. Emotional and Psychological Development

Children's theatre contributes significantly to emotional growth and psychological well-being of children. Participation in drama activities allows children to express feelings, fears, and aspirations in a safe and supportive environment. Through role-playing, children learn empathy by understanding the emotions and perspectives of different characters. Theatre also helps in building self-confidence and reducing shyness. Children who participate in performances often develop stronger interpersonal skills and emotional resilience. These benefits are especially important during childhood, which is a critical stage for personality formation and emotional adjustment.

4.3. Social Development and Teamwork

Another significance of children's theatre is its contribution to social development. Theatre activities involve cooperation, interaction, and collaboration, teaching children how to work effectively with others. The group rehearsals and performances that children involve in promote teamwork, discipline, and mutual respect among participants. Children also learn leadership and responsibility through theatre participation, as each performer contributes to the success of the production. These social skills are valuable for personal growth and future societal engagement.

4.4. Cultural Preservation and Identity Formation

Children's theatre serves as a medium for preserving and transmitting cultural heritage. Daniel-Inim (2025), opines that "Through the dramatization of folktales, myths, legends, and indigenous traditions, children gain knowledge of their cultural background and values" (p. 5). In Nigeria, children's theatre helps sustain indigenous languages and customs that may otherwise decline due to globalization. By exposing children to traditional stories and performances, theatre strengthens

cultural identity and promotes pride in local heritage. This cultural significance makes children's theatre an important tool for national identity formation.

4.5. Moral and Character Development

Children's theatre often communicates moral lessons and positive social values. Stories presented through theatre teach honesty, respect, courage, cooperation, and responsibility. Through observation and participation, children internalize these values and apply them in their daily lives. Again, theatre can address social issues such as bullying, discrimination, and child abuse in ways that children can easily understand. This moral function contributes to the development of responsible and socially conscious individuals.

4.6. Creativity and Imagination

Theatre stimulates creativity and imaginative thinking among children. Through improvisation, storytelling, and dramatic play, children learn to create characters, situations, and solutions imaginatively. This process enhances innovation and originality, which are important skills in both academic and everyday life. Creative engagement through theatre also allows children to explore possibilities beyond their immediate environment, broadening their understanding of the world around them.

4.7. Entertainment and Recreation

Children's theatre provides healthy entertainment and recreational opportunities for children. It creates enjoyable experiences that combine learning with fun, making it an effective medium for engagement. Unlike passive entertainment, theatre encourages active participation and interaction, which contribute positively to children's mental and social well-being. In a rapidly digitalized world, live theatre also offers children opportunities for direct human interaction and communal experience.

5. Challenges

5.1. Funding Constraints and Economic Challenges

A dominant theme in the literature is the persistent problem of inadequate funding in Nigerian theatre, which is further aggravated by the country's declining economic conditions. Theatre production involves significant financial commitments, including costs for rehearsal spaces, costumes, stage design, technical equipment, and personnel. However, most practitioners operate with limited or irregular funding, making it difficult to sustain high-quality productions (Okeoghene, 2026, p. 12). The economic downturn has also reduced government subventions to the arts and limited private sector investment, leaving theatre practitioners to rely heavily on personal resources and inconsistent sponsorship.

In addition, the dwindling purchasing power of Nigerians directly affects audience turnout. According to Akpodiete (2020), "families facing economic hardship are less likely to spend money on theatre outings, particularly children's theatre, which is often viewed as non-essential entertainment" (p. 5). This creates a cycle where low revenue discourages further investment, thereby stunting the growth of the sector. Consequently, children's theatre remains underfunded and marginalized within the broader creative industry.

5.2. Infrastructural Deficits and Limited Performance Spaces

The acute shortage of functional theatre infrastructure in Nigeria constitutes another major challenge to the development of children's theatre in Nigeria. Many existing performance venues are dilapidated, poorly equipped, or inaccessible to practitioners due to high rental costs or bureaucratic constraints (Independent Newspaper, 2024, p. 3). The decline of major national cultural institutions has significantly reduced the availability of standard performance spaces, forcing theatre practitioners to resort to improvised venues such as school halls and open fields.

For children's theatre, the absence of purpose-built, child-friendly performance environments further limits its effectiveness. Suitable spaces for children's theatre should incorporate interactive and safe environments that enhance engagement, yet such facilities are largely unavailable. This infrastructural deficiency not only affects the quality of productions, but also restricts audience reach and participation, thereby limiting the overall impact of children's theatre in Nigeria.

5.3. Low Awareness and Audience Engagement

Another critical factor that militates against the development of children's theatre in Nigeria is the low level of awareness and appreciation for children's theatre. Unlike in some developed countries where children's theatre is institutionalized and supported, in Nigeria it remains underdeveloped and often overlooked. Segun (1992), highlights more on the condescending attitude of the public towards children things though she speaks in line of children's literature by stating that "Many people look down on children's literature because they think it's lower than adult literature" (p. 24). This makes children's theatre not to thrive and also many parents and guardians do not fully recognize the educational and developmental benefits of theatre for children, leading to low patronage.

Furthermore, there is limited marketing and publicity for children's theatre productions, which reduces visibility and audience engagement. Adichie (2013) observes that schools, which could serve as primary platforms for children's theatre, often lack structured programmes that integrate theatre into their curricula. As a result, practitioners struggle to build a consistent audience base. This weak audience engagement not only affects financial returns but also diminishes the cultural relevance of children's theatre in contemporary Nigerian society.

5.4. Competition from Commercial Entertainment Industries

The growth of more commercially viable entertainment sectors, such as film, television, and digital media, has intensified competition for limited financial resources and audience attention. Essien (2020) is of the view that "investors and sponsors are more inclined to support industries that promise higher financial returns, leaving children's theatre underfunded and marginalized" (p. 18). Moreover, digital entertainment platforms are more accessible and affordable for many families, making them a preferred alternative to live theatre. This shift in consumption patterns further reduces the relevance and visibility of children's theatre, particularly among younger audiences who are increasingly exposed to screen-based content. In spite of the above highlighted problems, there are still prospects for the development of children's theatre in Nigeria.

6. Prospects and Opportunities

6.1. Community-Based Theatre and Grassroots Engagement

Community-based theatre presents a sustainable pathway for the growth of children's theatre in Nigeria, especially within a challenging economic climate. This approach emphasizes local participation, indigenous storytelling, and the use of readily available resources, making it less dependent on large financial investments. By involving children, parents, and community members in the creative process, theatre becomes more accessible and relevant. Such grassroots engagement not only reduces production costs but also strengthens community ownership and cultural continuity (Daniel-Inim, 2025, p. 6). In economically-constrained settings, this model ensures that children's theatre remains active and impactful at the local level.

6.2. Integration with Educational Systems

The incorporation of children's theatre into educational systems offers significant opportunities for sustainability and expansion. Schools provide a ready-made audience and structured environment for theatre activities such as drama clubs, classroom dramatization, and staged performances. Daniel-Inim (2025) opines that "this integration supports experiential learning, enhances creativity, and improves communication skills among children" (p. 4). Furthermore, aligning theatre with educational objectives increases its perceived value, making it easier to attract institutional support and funding. In a dwindling economy, positioning theatre as an educational tool rather than mere entertainment ensures its continued relevance and utilization.

6.3. Adoption of Low-Cost and Innovative Production Techniques

Economic challenges have driven innovation within Nigerian children's theatre, encouraging practitioners to adopt cost-effective production methods. Techniques such as minimalistic staging, improvisation, and the use of locally-sourced or recycled materials help reduce expenses while

maintaining artistic quality. As Okeoghene (2026) reverberates, “these adaptive strategies promote creativity and resourcefulness, allowing practitioners to produce engaging performances despite limited funding (p. 14). Additionally, smaller-scale productions and mobile theatre formats enable practitioners to reach diverse audiences without the need for expensive infrastructure.

6.4. Digital and Media Expansion

The increasing accessibility of digital technology provides a valuable opportunity for expanding the reach of children’s theatre. Online platforms, including social media and video-sharing services, allow practitioners to record and distribute performances to wider audiences beyond physical locations. According to Essien (2020), “this reduces reliance on traditional performance spaces (even though it has its negative impact on children my emphasis) and lowers production and distribution costs” (p. 19). Digital theatre also appeals to contemporary children who are more engaged with multimedia content. In this way, technology not only enhances visibility but also opens up new revenue streams through online viewership and partnerships. Chidi-Ukagu (2021) adds that “the major strategy for sustaining Nigerian children’s theatre ... is for Nigerian children to join the rest of the world and embrace social entertainment which.... Involves the use of online concert, e-games, movies and animations” (p. 26). With that, children’s theatre will still survive even in the harsh Nigerian economy.

6.5. Educational and Socio-Cultural Relevance

Despite the numerous challenges, scholars such as Chidi-Ukagu [2022, p. 434] & Daniel-Inim [2025 p. 4] strongly affirm the educational and socio-cultural significance of children’s theatre. It is widely regarded as a powerful medium for cognitive, emotional, and social development. Through role-playing, storytelling, and performance, children are able to develop creativity, communication skills, and critical thinking abilities.

In addition, children’s theatre serves as a vehicle for cultural transmission. It helps preserve indigenous languages, folklore, and traditions by presenting them in engaging and accessible formats for young audiences. This is particularly important in a globalized world where local cultures are increasingly threatened. Theatre also provides a platform for moral instruction, teaching values such as honesty, cooperation, and respect. Therefore, even within a struggling economy, children’s theatre remains an essential tool for holistic child development and cultural continuity.

6.6. Policy Development and Institutional Support

The prospects for children’s theatre can be significantly enhanced through improved policy frameworks and institutional backing. Government recognition of the creative industry as a driver of economic and social development can lead to increased funding, infrastructure development, and capacity-building initiatives. Policies that promote arts education and cultural participation can create an enabling environment for children’s theatre to thrive. Additionally, partnerships between government agencies, private organizations, and educational institutions can provide the necessary support for large-scale development (BusinessDay, 2025, p. 6). In a dwindling economy, such strategic interventions are essential for sustainability.

7. Conclusion

This study examined Nigerian children’s theatre within the context of the dwindling Nigerian economy, highlighting its key challenges and prospects. It established that economic decline has significantly affected the growth of children’s theatre through inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, low audience patronage, and limited institutional support. These challenges have restricted production quality, reduced accessibility, and weakened the overall sustainability of the practice.

Despite these constraints, the study also revealed that children’s theatre remains a vital instrument for education, cultural preservation, and social development. Its relevance is sustained through its ability to shape children’s creativity, moral values, and cultural identity. Furthermore, emerging opportunities such as community-based theatre, integration into education, digital platforms, and Theatre for Development demonstrate that the field still holds strong potential for growth. The study also concludes that, while Nigerian children’s theatre is currently constrained by economic hardship, it is not without prospects. With strategic investment, policy support, innovation, and

increased awareness, it can be revitalized to play a more impactful role in both cultural and educational development in Nigeria.

8. Recommendations

The government should increase funding and policy support for children's theatre through dedicated cultural grants and subsidies to improve production quality and sustainability.

Theatre should be integrated more strongly into the school curriculum to ensure regular exposure, participation, and audience development among children.

Practitioners should adopt low-cost and innovative production methods, including community-based theatre and use of locally available materials, to reduce financial burden.

Stakeholders in the creative industry should invest in digital platforms to promote and distribute children's theatre productions to wider audiences.

Partnerships between government, NGOs, and private organizations should be strengthened to provide financial and infrastructural support for children's theatre development.

The government should reduce the cost of data to enable children and adult to have maximum access to internet.

The government should provide adequate security to all nations so that children's theatre can be fully patronized without any fear of kidnapping or adoption.

References

- Adediji, J. (2007). *Nigerian theatre: Dynamics of production and performance*. Ibadan: University Press.
- Adichie, Nkem Godslove. (2013). "Challenges of sustaining the child's interest in UNIPORT children's theatre". *International journal of research, innovation and development*. Vol. 1. No.2 pp. 81-88.
- Agoma, A. (2023). *Old Stand-up Comedy, Orality, Subject Matter and the New Media: A Study of Alibaba's 2016 January 1st Concert Performance*. Ama: *Journal Of Theatre And Cultural Studies*, 14(1).
- Agoma, A. (2023). *SOLO PERFORMANCE AND THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE THEATRE CURRICULUM: A STUDY OF TUNJI SOTIMIRIN'S PERFORMANCE IN SOLO AFRICA*. Ama: *Journal Of Theatre And Cultural Studies*, 15(1).
- Agoma, A. (2025). *Writing Solo Plays in Nigerian Theatre: Using Sotimirin's Molue, Mbajiorgu's The Prime Minister's Son, and Binebai's Karina's Cross as Paradigms*. Abuja *Journal of Humanities*, 6(2), 370-384.
- Agoma, A. (2026). *Solo Performance and the Superfluity of Facial Make-Up: A Study of Ipe, as Performed by Daniel Olamide, and Molue, as Performed by Tunji Sotimirin*. Abuja *Journal of Humanities*, 7(1), 211-223.
- Akpodiete, H. M. (2020). "Challenges facing publicity and marketing of Nigeria commercial theatre in a depressed economy". *Journal of advance research in social science and humanities*, 6(12), 1-10.
- Awaritoma, A. (2009). *Stand-up Comedy in Nigeria*.
- Baba, A. A. *Current Development*.
- BusinessDay. (2025). *National theatre and creative sector development in Nigeria*.
- Chidi-Ukagu, N. G. (2021). "Challenges and strategies for sustaining Nigerian children's theatre in the COVID-19 Era" *Helsinki journal of social science and humanities*. (JSSH). Vol. 6. No.5. pp. 19-30.
- Chidi-Ukagu, N. G. (2022). *Myth, misconception and facts about children's theatre*. South-South *journal of humanities & international studies*. Vol. 5. No. 2. Pp.427-440.
- Clark, E. (1981). *Theatre in society*. Ibadan: University Press

- Daniel-Inim, P. C. (2025). "Community children's theatre as a stimulus for the development of the 21st century Nigerian child". *Ibadan journal of theatre arts*, 5(1), 1–10.
- Dollimore, J., & Sinfield, A. (1985). *Political Shakespeare: New essays in cultural materialism*. Manchester University Press.
- Emasealu, E. C. (2026). "Let us play". University of Port Harcourt: Inaugural lecture. No. 212. 26th May.
- Engels, F. (1970). *The German ideology* (C. J. Arthur, Ed.). International publishers.
- Essien, E. O. (2020). Theatre for development in contemporary Nigeria: Problems and prospects. *International journal of humanities and innovation*, 3(1), 17–21.
- Harris, M. (1979). *Cultural materialism: The struggle for a science of culture*. Random House.
- Independent Newspaper. (2024). The national theatre and the cultural strangulation of Nigeria's creative sector.
- International Monetary Fund. (2026). Nigeria: 2026 article IV consultation—press release and staff report.
- Ismail, N. A., & Ali, B. A. (2026). Teaching Classical Arabic (Fuṣḥā) Beyond Grammar: Language, Culture, and Pedagogical Meaning-Making in Nigeria. *Abuja Journal of Humanities*, 7(1), 161-176.
- Jajere, Z. M. (2009). Family Planning and Abortion in the Face of the Shari'ah. *Unimaid Journal of Women Studies*, 2, 85.
- Jajere, Z. M. (2026). FAITH-BASED RESOURCES AND DURABLE SOLUTIONS: ISLAMIC SOCIAL FINANCE AND THE PROTECTION OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN BORNO STATE, NIGERIA. *Multi-Disciplinary Research and Development Journals Int'l*, 8(2), 1-36.
- Jajere, Z. M. (2026). Gender Inequality in Maiduguri: An Islamic Perspective. *Spanish Journal of Innovation and Integrity*, 51, 23-29.
- Jajere, Z. M., & Abdullahi, A. S. (2025). Muslim Women in Environmental Stewardship: Afforestation Initiatives and Socioeconomic Impact in Muslim-Majority Regions Sahel Region of Africa. *African Journal of Earth and Environmental Science*, 7(1).
- Jajere, Z. M., & ISHAQ, R. N. (2024). ISLAMIC VIEW ON ORPHANS, WIDOWS AND LESS PRIVILEGE IN ECONOMIC HARDSHIP. *EKERE JOURNAL OF RELIGION (EJR)*, 2(1), 71-86.
- Jajere, Z. M., & ISHAQ, R. N. ISLAMIC VIEW ON ORPHANS, WIDOWS AND LESS PRIVILEGE IN ECONOMIC HARDSHIP. *EKERE JOURNAL OF RELIGION (EJR)*, 85.
- Ken-Aminikpo. F. I. (2026). "Playing and learning: The Siamese twins of the theatre". University of Port Harcourt: Inaugural lecture. No. 211. 30th April.
- Ogunleye, A. (2023). *Financial constraints and theatre development in Nigeria*. Lagos: Arts Press.
- Okeoghene, O. M. (2026). *Challenges and opportunities facing Nigeria theatre*. University of Benin Repository
- Oloko, M. (2022). *Infrastructure and performance in Nigerian theatre*. Ibadan: Cultural Studies Review.
- Olukitibi, O., & Agbo, K. J. (2022). "Challenges of children's theatre practice in Nigeria". *Leadership newspaper*.
- Olukitibi, O., & Agbo, K. J. (2024). "Young theatre makers and children's theatre challenges in Nigeria". *Leadership newspaper*.

- Osofisan, F. (2011). *Insidious treasons: Drama in a post-colonial state*. Ibadan: Opon Ifa Publishers.
- Segun, M. (1992). "Childrsn's literature in Africa: problems and prospects". In Chidi Ikonne, Emelia Oko and Peter Onwudinjo. (Eds.). *Children and literature in Africa*. Pp. 24-42.
- Williams, R. (1977). *Marxism and literature*. Oxford University Press.
- Williams, R. (1980). *Culture and materialism*. London: Verso.
- Williams, R. (1981). *Culture*. Fontana Press
- World Bank. (2025). *Nigeria development update: from policy to people- bringing the reform gains home*.
- Yerima, A. (2015). *Basic techniques in playwriting*. Ibadan: Kraft Books.