

“Never Sweep at Night”: An Example of Igbo Traditional Children's Theatre in the Digital Era

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Abstract

Igbo Traditional Children's Theatre has long been a vital tool for entertainment, information, education, and cultural preservation within Igbo communities. It is rooted in music, dance, and dramatic performances and serves as a medium for imparting moral lessons, fostering communal identity and building strong social relationship among children. However, the rise of digital media presents serious challenges, as well as paradoxically creates opportunities for its survival. This paper explores how the digital era is reshaping Igbo traditional children's theatre, highlighting the decline of oral storytelling due to modern entertainment, urbanization, and globalization. It also examines the potential of using digital tools, such as animation, mobile apps, virtual reality, YouTube and social media to revitalize and sustain this cultural heritage. This study strongly argues that by integrating traditional performance elements into digital platforms, Igbo children's theatre can remain relevant, reaching wider audiences both in Nigeria and the diaspora. The study anchors on two theories: Walter Ong and Ruth Finnegan's Oral Traditional and Performance Theory and Marshal McLuhan and Neil Postman's Cultural Preservation and Media Ecology Theory. It concludes that strategic efforts from educators, cultural organizations, and digital content creators are essential in ensuring the continuity of Igbo traditional children's theatre in a rapidly evolving world.

I. Introduction

Traditional Igbo Children's Theatre, which comes in the collaborative form of folklore, music, dance, and masquerading, among others, has long been a medium through which Igbo people instill moral values, as well as educate and admonish their children before the invasion of Africa by the colonial masters in the Nineteenth Century. Igbo people adeptly deploy their oral traditions to transmit their history, beliefs, norms and values from one generation to another, hence they had no other means of documenting their history and inculcating their norms and values to their younger ones as they were not privileged to be exposed to writing early (Nnamezie, 2018). Oral traditions, therefore, became strong tools for the socialisation of their children.

But, unfortunately, today, those fascinating oral traditions which make Igbo children's theatre tick are facing serious threats of extinction in this modern age of technology. Modernity/globalization is fast eroding the existence of Igbo oral traditions which constitute the cornerstone of Igbo children's theatre because the world is going into digitalization. Therefore, this paper aims at examining the potential of using digital tools, such as animation mobile apps, virtual reality, YouTube and social media to revitalize and sustain this cultural heritage. It is envisaged that the findings and recommendations from this paper will be very useful to theatre scholars, enthusiasts of African theatre, content creators, filmmakers and animators, among others.

II. Conceptual Framework African Traditional Theatre

African Traditional Theatre refers to different ways through which Africans entertain themselves via story- telling, miming, drumming, dancing and acting before the coming of the colonial masters. It, sometimes, intermingles with rituals, thereby serving as a channel Africans use to communicate to their supreme being and their fellow Africans. Accordingly, Ilami Krama (2006) defines African traditional theatre as “an expression of the people, institutions and experience of the communal society” (p.3). Again, it is an indigenous form of performance that combines ritual, music dance, storytelling, and communal participation. It is deeply rooted in the cultural and religious practices of various African communities and often serves both spiritual and social functions. One notable fact about African traditional theatre is that it is participatory and non-scripted. It involves the entire community in ceremonies, festivals and storytelling sessions. According to Banham (2004), African traditional theatre is “a fusion of ritual, dance, music and drama used to express the values, beliefs and historical memory of African communities” (p.8). Banham's view aptly captures the highly collaborative nature of African theatre. Other forms of African traditional theatre include masquerades, festivals, initiation rites and folk performances that function as both entertainment and cultural transmission. These performances are not confined to a formal stage. They usually take place in open spaces, such as village squares or market places where the boundaries between the performer and the audience are fluid. It is unarguable that this theatre also serves educational, religious and political purposes.

Origins of African Traditional Theatre

African Traditional Theatre is as old as African society itself. It is a form of theatre that showcases African pattern of life which is highly rooted in rituals, festivals, myths, folklores, music and dance. As Ilami Krama (2006) rightly articulated the point: African traditional theatre has “no specific origin, but, however, thrives on the assemblage of the diverse components of communication, entertainment as well as integrate the various components of art” (p.5). Even though there is no known exact date of the origin of African traditional theatre, studies presume that African traditional theatre draws its origin from rituals just like the Greek theatre. African traditional theatre originated from secular and sacred rituals, storytelling oral traditions, music, dance and mime. Banham (2004) opined that “African traditional theatre originated in ritual performances and oral traditions that pre-date written records, serving as expressions of communal belief systems and social order” (p.10). These performances were not separated into distinct

artistic categories but combined dance, music, masquerade, mime and dialogue in service of religious or social functions.

The Concept of Igbo Traditional Children's Theatre

Igbo Traditional Children's Theatre is an aspect of African traditional theatre. This is the theatre where children are the performers or the adult and children co-perform for the children audience. This form of theatre is characterized by dance, drama, storytelling, music, songs and masquerade. It is used to entertain, instruct, correct and teach children their history, culture, values and norms. According to Ezechi (2020), "Igbo traditional children's theatre is a subset of Igbo indigenous performance arts, characterized by storytelling, masquerade performances, folk songs, and dramatization of historical events" (p. 63). The young audience receives this form of entertainment and education in a special season. Two seasons are very important to Igbo people: they are the dry season and the rainy season. The dry season starts from the month of October to the month of March, while the rainy season starts from the month of April to the month of September. In Igbo land, everybody looks forward to these two seasons, especially the dry season, because it is the time they engage themselves in so many activities, such as dance, moonlight play, storytelling, masquerading, folklore, wrestling, etc. These activities are usually done in the central place in the community mapped out by the village head. According to Dureke J. A., Achinivu K. and Igwe G. E. (1964), "Moonlight play is one of the plays that many youths look forward to because it makes them happy and equally makes the community lively" (p.4). It gives children the opportunity to play together and express themselves.

Before the coming of the colonial masters, the Igbo people used the moonlight plays to feel relax and entertain themselves after a long farming season during the rainy season which lasts between the month of April and September. In fact, Dureke, et al, (1964)) state that "Moonlight play is Igbo form of cinema" (p.4). A lot of things happen during moonlight play, for instance, it is during this period that the young boys engage themselves in wrestling as well as use the opportunity to coach the younger ones. The elders also sit at one corner of the centre together with the little ones watching and encouraging the performers. This was one of the ways Igbos entertained their children as well as inculcated in them some core moral values like courageousness, resourcefulness and patriotism before the Europeans came into Africa.

Importance of Traditional Children's Theatre in Igbo Culture

Traditional children's theatre is highly significant in Igbo culture. It serves as a key medium for intergenerational knowledge transfer, moral instruction and the preservation of indigenous identity and values. It is germane at this point to briefly illuminate some of these points raised above.

Cultural Preservation

Theatre has for long been the medium through which Igbo traditional society preserves its culture. Theatrical activities, such as dancing, music, folklore, masquerading, festivals and many more are the channels through which Igbo people transmit their history, customs, morals and values from one generation to another. Adichie, (2019) defines culture as "a unique way a set of individuals in a particular society lives their lives" (31). So, Igbo people are known for their rich and strong oral tradition.

Moral and Social Education

The Igbo rich and strong oral tradition serve as informal educational tools used to teach children moral values, such as honesty, respect for elders, communal living, customs and justice. Akachi Ezeigbo (2013) emphatically asserts that the proper education of Igbo children and youths lies in Igbo folklore. Hence, she calls for a return to Igbo core values through folklore (p.280). To add one more example, Mercy and Adaobi (2016) are of the view that Igbo oral literature and traditional performances play an indispensable role in the training and moral upbringing of Igbo children. In their own words: “They served as veritable means through which the Igbo inculcated their beliefs, norms, philosophy, worldview, etc. into their young ones in the society” (p.1). The characters and stories in the narrative often portray consequences for bad behaviour and rewards for good conducts. The purpose is to equip children with the tools to navigate complex social situations, make sound moral judgements and contribute to a just and compassionate society.

Entertainment and Creative Expression

The primary purpose of Igbo traditional children’s theatre is to entertain children and also engage them in creative self-expression through storytelling, music, dance and dramatic play, developing their artistic talent and fostering a sense of enjoyment and appreciation for the culture. In the early days in Igbo society, before the colonial masters came, children and youths were usually entertained during moonlight plays. Both children and youths looked forward to moonlight plays for entertainment. It creates the opportunity for them to come together to play, dance and express themselves and discover their hidden talents.

Communal Bonding and Identity Formation

Participation in communal performances, such as dancing, wrestling, music, masquerading and storytelling, especially during moonlight plays strengthen the communal bonds and shape individual and group identity. It also creates a shared experience that reinforces communal values and relationships. As children take on roles within these performances, they begin to understand their place within the larger social structure. They learn important cultural codes, ancestral histories and collective myths that define what it means to be Igbo. The immersive engagement helps children to internalize communal deals, such as solidarity, respect and co-operation. It also instills pride in their heritage, fostering a strong sense of identity and belonging that resist the erosion of traditional values in a rapidly globalizing world.

III. Theoretical Framework

Igbo Traditional Children's Theatre, rooted in oral storytelling, music, dance, and dramatization, has long served as a medium for cultural education and identity formation. However, in this era of digitalization, the survival of this theatrical tradition faces significant challenges and opportunities. To understand the dynamics at play, this essay applies two theoretical frameworks: Oral Tradition and Performance Theory and Media Ecology and Cultural Preservation Theory. These theories provide critical lenses through which the present researcher seeks to examine how digital technologies can help in the preservation, transmission, and performance of Igbo children's theatre.

Oral Tradition and Performance Theory

Oral tradition is not merely the verbal transmission of stories but a performative, communal act embedded in cultural context. According to Ruth Finnegan (2012), “oral literature is best understood through performance, where gestures, tone, rhythm, and audience interaction contribute to meaning-making” (p. 56). In the Igbo context, children's theatre during moonlight gatherings (egwu onwa) typically involves storytelling, mimicking, call-and-response, drumming, and dance. These performances are not static; rather, they are dynamic events that rely on real-time interaction and embodied participation. Richard Bauman (1986) emphasises that “oral performance is inherently contextual, relying on the performer-audience relationship and socio-cultural cues for full meaning” (p. 3). With digitalization, however, this live performance dynamic is altered. Theatre is increasingly mediated through screens, videos, animations, or mobile applications, reducing physical and spontaneous interaction. This shift may diminish the communal spirit and immediacy central to performance theory.

Nonetheless, digital media also offers new performative spaces. Digital storytelling platforms, YouTube dramatizations of folktales, and animated Igbo children's series can recreate elements of traditional performance, albeit in mediated form. These digitally reimagined performances can extend the life and reach of oral traditions (Finnegan, 2012, p. 112). For instance, digital avatars or characters may embody traditional narrative roles such as the wise tortoise or the cunning hare, preserving storytelling tropes in new formats.

Media Ecology and Cultural Preservation Theory

Media Ecology Theory, as proposed by Marshall McLuhan (1964), suggests that “the medium is the message” that is, the form of media itself shapes human behaviour, perception, and culture” (p. 8). In the digital era, children increasingly consume stories via television, tablets, and mobile phones. These digital environments shift the traditionalist modes of cultural learning and interaction. Unlike live theatre, which involves group participation and elder-to-child transmission, digital media often promotes individual and screen-centered engagement. This transformation raises concerns about cultural erosion. As Neil Postman (1993) argues, “new media environments can displace indigenous knowledge systems when not designed with cultural specificity” (p. 27). In the case of Igbo children's theatre, therefore, Okonkwo and Eze, (2020) are of the opinion that “the dominance of Western digital content has contributed to the marginalization of indigenous narratives and language use” (p. 98). Many Igbo children today are more familiar with foreign animated series than with “Nwa Mbe” (the tortoise) folktales.

However, media ecology also suggests that each medium creates opportunities for new forms of cultural preservation. When digital technologies are used intentionally, such as recording traditional plays, developing interactive Igbo storytelling apps, or incorporating Igbo language in children's games, they can become tools for sustaining culture. According to Uche-Okonkwo (2019), “digitizing Igbo oral theatre offers the potential for global dissemination, cultural continuity, and intergenerational communication” (p. 144). Digital archives, for instance, can preserve songs, proverbs, and dramatizations for future generations, ensuring that the performative elements of Igbo culture are not lost but transformed. Cultural preservation thus requires a strategic

integration of tradition into digital formats that align with children's changing media habits.

In summary, Oral Tradition and Performance Theory emphasise the importance of live, contextual and participatory storytelling in Igbo traditional children's theatre, while Media Ecology and Cultural Preservation Theory underscore how the changing technological environment affects the transmission and sustainability of culture. Together, these theories highlight both the risk of cultural loss and the potential for cultural revitalization through digital innovation. To ensure that Igbo traditional children's theatre remains relevant and impactful in the digital era, it is essential to adapt performative practices to digital media without losing the core cultural values they convey. By embedding Igbo narratives, language, and aesthetics into children's digital platforms, it becomes possible to foster cultural continuity while embracing the evolving media ecology.

The Advent of Digital Technology and Its Influence on Traditional Children's Theatre in Igbo Culture

The advent of digital technology has marked a significant turning point in the development and practice of traditional children's theatre in Igbo culture. Traditionally, children's theatre in Igbo land was a communal, oral, and performative medium used for storytelling, moral instruction, language development, and cultural transmission. It relied heavily on face-to-face interaction, music, dance, and oral narratives delivered in indigenous settings, such as village squares, moonlight gatherings, and festivals. However, with the rise of digital technology, driven by mobile devices, television, internet access, and social media, there has been a gradual shift in the cultural experiences of Igbo children. Exposure to digital platforms has introduced children to globalized forms of entertainment such as video games, cartoons, and virtual reality, many of which are rooted in Western ideologies. This technological shift has created a disconnection between the younger generation and traditional forms of theatre, leading to a decline in participation, appreciation of indigenous performance traditions and communal living.

On the positive side, digital technology also presents new opportunities for preservation and adaptation. Traditional children's performances can now be recorded, digitized, and shared widely through platforms like YouTube, social media, and educational websites. This allows for wider reach and continuity, especially for members of the Igbo diaspora or children living in urban settings who may not have direct access to traditional village life. Some cultural practitioners have begun to experiment with digital storytelling and animation to repackage folk tales and theatre content in ways that appeal to the digital generation (Obi and Umeh, 2022). A good example of this is African folktale's "Never Sweep at Night".

Synopsis of "Never Sweep at Night"

"Never Sweep at Night" is an Igbo folktale on YouTube channel. The writer/creator of the folktale used the channel to sound a very serious warning to Igbo children and Africa in general both at home and abroad on the danger of sweeping at night.

The story revolves around a 16-year-old girl, called Nene, who is living with her parents and siblings in a village in Igbo land. (Igbo land is located in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria). Nene never believed in superstitions and she thought that elders' stories meant nothing but to scare children away from doing certain things but one night she learnt the truth in a hard way.

It began with Nene forgetting to sweep the front yard in the day time and her mother, Mama Nnenna, who was cooking rice with Nene at the fire side, had reminded her that she must sweep the front yard before going to bed. Nene had begged her to allow her do it in the morning but her mother cast a very deep eye on her. Nene, feeling bad, picked up a broom made of palm frond, went out to sweep. The night was so cold and very quiet that you can even hear the sound of pin drop. Nene's father and siblings were already asleep. Nene bent down and started sweeping. Then she heard a low whispering, she froze, looked around but saw no one. She shook her head and began to imagine things but continued to sweep. As the broom swept and made some strokes on the ground, dust filled the air. A Black Hand print appeared in the dust. Nene became afraid because she did not put her hand there. She dropped the broom immediately. As soon as the broom hit the ground, the whispering became louder. She heard her name behind her. She turned slowly and saw nothing at first but darkness. As she continued to look, she saw a shadowy figure standing by the gate, tall, motionless, featureless except for its eyes too glowing hallow pit staring straight at her.

The shadow stepped forward; Nene opened her mouth to scream but no sound came out. Her legs began to shake. Immediately, she dropped the broom and the air around her grew ice cold. Then the whispering came again right by her side and said "Why did you wake me"? Nene's heart started pounding while the shadow continued watching her. She wanted to run but could not. The figure came a little closer and whispered "Why did you wake me"? Nene answered stammering, "I didn't mean to". Nene saw from the moonlight a long shadowy limp-like figure as the figure raised its hand. Now Nene finally found her voice, she screamed. Her mother rushed out of her hut and asked what the matter was. Immediately Nene's mother appeared, the figure disappeared. Nene knelt down shaking. Her mother grabbed her and asked what the matter was. Nene, still panting and gasping for air, pointed towards the gate. She told her mother that there was something that spoke to her and said that she woke it up. Mama's face changed; she knew what happened. She grabbed Nene's hand and took her inside and locked the door and then turned to Nene fixing her eyes on her and asked her "did you sweep the compound"? Nene nodded in affirmation. Mama exclaimed and said, "I knew it". We don't sweep at night in this village. Mama had forgotten that she was the one that told her to sweep the compound before sleeping that night.

Nene still crying and imagining what just happened behold she saw again a shadowy hand and say "what did I see"? Mama pretended not to see and hear her but rushed to the fire side, wrapped a small pot and began to mutter strange words Nene had not heard before. Mama dipped her hand inside the pot and take white powder mixed with herbs and sprinkled it on the floor of the room. The whole room filled with a strange scent. Mama's hand trembled as she dropped the pot on the ground and said to Nene "you have invited them". But Nene was confused; she asked Mama "I invited who"? Mama looked at her eyes and said "the spirit of the land"

Soon after, there was a loud knock at the door and the door opened slowly by no human. Mama and Nene were so afraid. Later, the door opened wide by itself without any wind. Nene held her mother's wrapper very tight trembling. The fire in the room cast shadow on the wall and the door opened wider this time. A cold voice whispered from the darkness outside "you called me". But they could not see anyone except the voice. Mama grabbed Nene's hand and held her tightly and whispered "do not respond". Nene nodded in affirmation as she pressed tighter to her mother's cloth. There was a heavy footstep moving inside, but there was no one there. Nene's heartbeat started pounding heavily, so much that she could hear it. She squeezed her eyes tightly, begging the spirit to leave. But Mama reached out to the clay pot, dipped her hand inside and took some of the white powder and threw it towards the door. There was a silence, then a loud bloody screaming and the door shut on its own. The fire in the pot blazed higher and suddenly quenched. The air felt lighter. Everything went back to normal and Mama told Nene that it was over. But Nene was still confused about the whole thing and asked Mama what they were. Mama told her that it was the spirit of the night that it does not like to be disturbed. Nene shed tears and said "but Mama, I didn't know". Mama turned to her and said, "That is why we do not sweep at night", that it is not just "a mere story but a warning" Nene though still confused about the whole experience, learnt her lesson not to sweep after sunset.

Moral Lesson from "Never Sweep at Night"

The writer of the story: "Never Sweep at Night" uses the YouTube channel to warn this new generation children who alienate themselves from their customs, the danger of sweeping at night. Of course, some people, just like Nene in the story, will say that it is a mere superstition. Be that as it may, stories, such as this, are used to caution children on how not be lazy and procrastinating, but to be responsive, focused and purposeful in life.

The story also shows the consequences of not abiding to the customs of the land. The spirit of the land in the story represents danger one will face when one fails to do what one is supposed to do at the appropriate time. When children procrastinate, become lazy or lack focus in life, the result is always negative. So, it is important to encourage children on the need to be productive in their dealings using this type of folklore as an example so that they can become responsible adults.

Inasmuch as stories like this are meant to caution and channel children's behaviour to positive ways, the transition from oral traditional method to digital tools is not without challenges. The individualized and screen-based nature of digital technology limits the communal and interactive essence of traditional Igbo theatre. Furthermore, the dominance of English and other global languages on digital platforms contributes to the erosion of the Igbo language; an essential component of theatre's authenticity and meaning (Okonkwo, 2020). The advent of digital technology has introduced both threats and possibilities to Igbo traditional children's theatre. While it risks displacing traditional practices, it also offers tools for cultural innovation, archiving, and revitalization, provided these tools are used consciously and culturally responsibly.

Challenges Facing Igbo Traditional Children's Theatre in the Digital Era **Cultural Preservation**

The growing influence of digital technology poses a serious threat to the preservation of Igbo traditional children's theatre. As children consume more globalized digital content, especially Western cartoons and media, there is a noticeable decline in their connection to indigenous stories, proverbs, idioms, language, and moral teachings traditionally conveyed through theatre. According to Okonkwo (2020), "The oral and performative nature of these traditional forms means that without consistent transmission, much of the cultural knowledge embedded in them is at risk of being lost" (p. 72). Additionally, as Eze (2018) states, "the gradual abandonment of Igbo language by younger generations due to digital media consumption further accelerates cultural erosion" (p. 88). This cultural shift is especially prevalent among urban and diaspora Igbo children, who grow up with more exposure to Western media than traditional performance.

Technical Challenges

Despite the potential of digital tools to preserve and promote traditional theatre, numerous technical obstacles exist in Igbo communities. Most rural and semi-urban areas lack stable electricity, reliable internet access, and affordable digital devices, making it difficult to record or access cultural content online. Moreover, as Edeh, (2021) puts it, "many traditional theatre practitioners lack the digital literacy required to effectively use these tools. This limits the documentation and dissemination of indigenous performances" (pp. 43). The absence of trained personnel and modern recording equipment also undermines efforts to create quality digital versions of traditional children's theatre. These views are in sync with that of Chidi-Ukagu (2021) which asserts that "many Nigerians are poor and cannot afford televisions, videos and smart cell phones needed for E-entertainment..." (p. 26). These and many more are the technical challenges Igbo traditional children's theatre face in this digital era.

Engaging Young Audiences

One of the most pressing challenges is how to capture the interest of young audiences who have grown up in the digital age. Traditional Igbo children's theatre often employs slower-paced storytelling and communal engagement, which may seem boring or outdated to children accustomed to fast, flashy, and interactive digital entertainment. As a result, many children as Nwosu, (2019) rightly states "prefer digital cartoons and games to participatory storytelling or folk drama" (p. 61). Even when digitized, traditional content must compete with global media productions that are often more visually stimulating and widely marketed.

Funding and Resources

Sustaining Igbo traditional children's theatre in the digital era requires adequate funding, infrastructure, and professional support, all of which are limited. Most cultural initiatives in Nigeria operate with little or no government funding, and traditional children's theatre is not prioritized in cultural or educational policies. As Mabel Segun (1992) rightly observes: "many people look down on children's literature because they think it is lower than adult literature" (p. 24). Unfortunately, this is the treatment often given to anything that pertains to children in Africa generally. Private sponsors also show limited interest in investing in non-commercial indigenous art forms. Moreover, as Edeh, (2021), rightly notes, "digitizing theatre content, including scripting, filming,

editing, archiving, and distributing, requires funding for technology, internet services, and training programs, which are often inaccessible to grassroots practitioners” (p. 46).

Limited Digital Content on Igbo Traditional Theatre

Despite advancements in technology, there remains a scarcity of high-quality digital content specifically dedicated to Igbo traditional children's theatre. Few platforms offer well-produced animations, audio stories, or interactive games based on Igbo folktales. Most existing content is poorly funded, lacks professional narration or artistic direction, and fails to compete with global entertainment in terms of production value.

Decline in Communal Engagement

Traditional children's theatre thrives on physical interaction and communal performance, but the individualistic nature of digital entertainment discourages face-to-face socialization. Virtual engagement through screens limits children's participation in real-world cultural events, reducing opportunities for community bonding and collective learning (Eze, 2018).

Prospects for Igbo Traditional Children's Theatre in the Digital Era

Despite the challenges posed by digital globalization, technology also offers valuable prospects for the revival, adaptation, and wider dissemination of Igbo traditional children's theatre. When approached with cultural sensitivity and creativity, digital platforms can be harnessed to preserve heritage and engage the younger generation in innovative ways.

Wider Accessibility

Digital technology provides a powerful means of widening access to Igbo traditional children's theatre. Through the internet, mobile apps, and video-sharing platforms like YouTube, performances can now be viewed by children and educators across geographical boundaries, including the Igbo diaspora and non-Igbo speakers. Recorded plays, animated folktales, and digital archives allow children to experience these performances at any time and in various formats—video, audio, or text. This accessibility is especially significant for urban and diaspora children who are distanced from rural communal life where traditional theatre naturally occurs. Digitization helps bridge this gap, offering them a virtual experience of their roots. It also ensures that rare stories, songs, and performances are preserved and made available beyond their original time and place.

Interactive Storytelling

Technology enables interactive storytelling, which is more engaging for the modern child. Through mobile apps, animations, gamified narratives, and even augmented reality (AR), traditional stories can be transformed into participatory experiences. Children can now make choices that affect the outcome of a story, hear voiceovers in both English and Igbo, or learn songs and dances through guided digital tutorials. This interactive approach revitalizes traditional theatre by combining cultural content with modern user experience. It retains the moral and educational essence of the stories while adapting their form to suit contemporary preferences. By involving children actively in the storytelling process, technology makes cultural learning both fun and memorable.

Cultural Exchange

Digital platforms encourage cultural exchange by making traditional Igbo performances accessible to a global audience. Igbo children's theatre, once confined to local settings, can now be shared with children from other cultures through subtitled videos, festivals, or digital collaborations. This not only promotes cultural pride and identity but also helps counter stereotypes and marginalization of African traditions in global media. Furthermore, online festivals, virtual theatre workshops, and cross-cultural storytelling projects allow Igbo content creators to collaborate with others globally, fostering mutual understanding and innovation. Such exchanges elevate the status of traditional Igbo theatre as a rich and valuable art form on the world stage.

Collaboration with Filmmakers and Animators

Collaborations between cultural scholars, filmmakers, and animators can lead to compelling content that blends traditional narratives with contemporary styles. Taking example from the case study: "Never Sweep at Night", the story demonstrates that there is a global appetite for authentic African stories when packaged creatively, and can transform folktales into cinematic experiences that the modern children will not be left out completely from their traditions and customs.

I. Conclusion

The study of Igbo traditional children's theatre in the digital era has highlighted both the cultural richness and the precarious state of this heritage in the face of modern technological advancement. Igbo traditional children's theatre, rooted in folklore, music, dance, masquerade, and communal storytelling, has historically served as a vital tool for moral instruction, entertainment, identity formation, and cultural preservation. It formed a core part of the oral tradition through which the Igbo people transmitted values, beliefs, and communal knowledge to the younger generation.

However, the research reveals that this art form is currently endangered by rapid globalization and the pervasive influence of digital media. Challenges such as cultural erosion, lack of technological infrastructure, disengagement of younger audiences, and limited funding have all contributed to the declining visibility and relevance of traditional performances in contemporary Igbo society. As children increasingly consume Westernized digital content, the transmission of indigenous stories and values has been significantly disrupted.

Despite these challenges, the digital era also presents immense opportunities for revitalization. By utilizing platforms such as YouTube, mobile storytelling apps, educational e-learning tools, and social media, Igbo traditional children's theatre can be reimagined for a global and technologically savvy audience. Innovations such as interactive storytelling, animation, and digital archiving can help bridge generational gaps and sustain the tradition in formats that appeal to contemporary children. The future of Igbo traditional children's theatre lies not in resisting digital technology but in strategically embracing it. Cultural stakeholders, including educators, content creators, digital developers, and government bodies, must collaborate to digitize and modernize traditional content while maintaining its cultural essence. With deliberate effort and creative adaptation, Igbo traditional children's theatre can not only survive but thrive in

the digital age, continuing its role as a powerful medium of education, identity, and cultural continuity for generations to come.

II. Summary of Findings

The study discovered that digital globalization has led to a significant decline in the use of the Igbo language, indigenous storytelling, and traditional theatre practices among children and many rural communities and traditional theatre practitioners lack access to digital infrastructure, equipment, and funding needed to digitize and sustain performances. Hence, the traditional theatre struggles to compete with fast-paced, highly interactive digital content that dominates the attention of children in the digital age. The good news is that platforms, such as YouTube, mobile apps, podcasts, and e-learning tools provide new avenues for documenting, distributing, and reimagining Igbo traditional children's theatre. So, the use of digitalization can promote intercultural dialogue and foster appreciation of Igbo heritage both within Nigeria and in the diaspora.

III. Recommendations

The study, therefore, recommends that:

Cultural agencies, educators, and developers should collaborate to create interactive digital content (e.g., apps, animations, and games) based on Igbo folktales, songs, and plays.

Workshop and training programs for traditional theatre practitioners, educators, and youth in digital media production, storytelling, and content creation should be organised.

Government and NGOs should provide funding and grants for digital preservation projects, community theatres, and educational institutions focused on indigenous arts and language promotion.

It is important to incorporate Igbo children's theatre and storytelling into school curricula using digital teaching aids to enhance cultural education and language learning.

The centralized platforms for the documentation, archiving, and distribution of traditional performances in ensuring cultural continuity should be established.

Youths should be encouraged to create and reinterpret traditional content using modern digital tools, thus maintaining cultural relevance and youth engagement.

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