

Nigeria Women and Mental Health Challenges: Causes, Cultural Models and Mitigation Through Music Therapy

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Abstract

Nigerian women, by the roles they play and their innate qualities, express life and life processes in very deep, mysterious, and mystical ways. To a huge extent, their affective domain is involved in the creation, manipulation, and propagation of cultural demands, normal life processes, and personal goals. Their interactions with nature, their spouses, their children, and themselves evoke unique emotional qualities, which they express and handle in various ways. Also, pregnancy and childbirth stand as part of the points in women's biological life where their mental state is engaged and vigorously altered by their hormone levels. Do these engagements affect and consequently alter the mental state of women? Therefore, the focus of this paper is on how to mitigate and harness altered mental states to enhance women's mental health. The researchers used a qualitative analytical design to look at the cultural, musical, and poetic parts of some songs and texts, with the main goal of finding out how they could improve therapy for mental health. A set of 1–7 Igbo songs and cultural texts was chosen for their relevance to therapeutic goals and cultural significance. The Igbo song was selected for its emotional and spiritual relevance to grieving women, conveying themes of solace and contemplation, making it a potential tool for music therapy. The study used Sonic Visualiser to analyse the musical structure, melody, harmony, tempo, and rhythm of the songs, assessing their potential to induce relaxation, positive emotions, or mental clarity. Thematic analysis revealed recurring themes such as gratitude, positivity, emotional resilience, and healing, particularly for women in vulnerable situations. The research demonstrates that Nigerian women can achieve significant mental stability using music and music therapy interventions. Nigerian cultural models are evident in this process.

Keywords: *Mental Health Challenge, Cultural Models, Mitigation, Music Therapy.*

INTRODUCTION

Mental health is central to nearly every human endeavor. Mental health is a fundamental asset, serving as the psychological foundation for pursuing any notion of the good life, including well-being, while being distinct from well-being (Wren-Lewis & Alexandrova, 2021). Mental health issues fluctuate over the lifecycle, particularly during adolescence, which is characterised by both biological changes and evolving life-role expectations that heighten the risk of such difficulties (Granlund et al., 2021). Coordination in the mind is essential for the proper organisation of thoughts, feelings, emotions, behaviours, and instincts towards any meaningful objective. Consequently, significant criticism has been directed at the notion that mental health issues might be seen as illnesses or disorders inherent to the person (Rølvsjød & Stige, 2015). Likewise, other writers have articulated the importance, influence, and

inadequate support of mental health as an essential element of overall well-being (Layard, 2014; Layard & Clark, 2015; Chisholm et al., 2016; Patel et al., 2018). From time immemorial, man has been involved in and developed several adaptive measures to ensure that mental well-being and wellness are optimally controlled or maintained. Life activities and processes constantly engage and challenge our mental state, making this necessary. Thus, a mental health challenge is a state during which a man or woman experiences an abnormality in cognition and functionality. Women with serious mental disorders are influenced by several variables, including their familial and societal positions, gender roles, and gender inequality (Tuncer, Sarı, Çetinkaya Duman, & Taşkın, 2024). Women confront a multitude of emotional concerns related to their femininity, societal roles, emotional stress, financial constraints, innate instincts, and personal goals. An average Nigerian mother is saddled with the responsibility of multi-tasking in areas such as bathing and dressing up the children, cooking for the whole family, attending to her husband, attending to her business/career, scheduling for making her hair, attending to women's meetings, attending to religious obligations, and so on. These inevitably engage her mental state and mind in deep ways.

This implies that a wide range of duties may result in physical and mental fatigue, since these obligations often surpass what an individual can feasibly do in a single day. It constrains the time mothers may allocate to self-care, personal development, or recreation, resulting in stress. Consequently, the strain of managing several duties may result in mental health disorders, including anxiety, despair, and a sense of inadequacy. Many women may refrain from seeking assistance owing to stigma or insufficient access to mental health services. The mental health of women is affected by proactive measures, support networks, and treatments that significantly impact their emotional well-being, especially for those encumbered by social norms and juggling obligations via mental mitigation.

Mental mitigation is the reduction or minimisation of mental disorder or pain arising from certain challenges adversely affecting the mental wellness of any child or adult. In this context, mitigation or mitigating can be referred to as the process of making something less painful or severe. Consequently, mental health control is the concern of well-meaning individuals and is inherently part of the Nigerian/African cultural system. It is mainly a state of well-being, and efforts to improve it will probably use different methods for measuring success and managing people, showing different levels of faith in common psychiatric treatments (Wren-Lewis & Alexandrova, 2021). Mental health control helps to regulate the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains of the life of the average Nigerian woman. Igbos regulate their calendar in such a way that festivals, ceremonies, and most other events where people gather to felicitate or socialise are stationed during the dry season when farm work is relatively reduced. This produces therapeutic effects on the inhabitants after a long period of strenuous work.

Nzewi (2007) said that the cultural calendar plans a time for mass or group psychotherapy and rejuvenation, which forces people to stop worrying about money. "Festivals and other elaborate ceremonies are, therefore, prescribed vacation programmes conceived to promote mass mental and physical health therapy through the year (p. 123). Music enhances cognitive function, facilitates brain restoration, strengthens the immune system, lowers stress levels, and supports stroke recovery (Nwobu, 2018). However, Agu (2006) defines music as "an artistic form of arranging sounds that are pleasing to the ear. Individuals would receive different types of music based on their emotional state. Nnamani (2019) asserts that music operates at several cultural levels, from simple folk expressions like children's games to elaborate ceremonies. The

author has stated that music is of considerable importance in all communities and exists within a historical context. Subsequently, it is founded on the use of music as a therapeutic modality that addresses the physical, emotional, and social requirements of people across all age groups (Yücesan & Şendurur, 2017). Regardless of age or health status, music can elevate living standards and fulfil the demands of all individuals (Gooding, 2008, p. 220). An adequate examination of music must include the musical sound itself while also addressing the ideas that contribute to its existence, its specific forms and roles within each culture, and the human behaviour that generates the sound (Nnamani, 2019). Additionally, some scholars contend that the musical and cultural context is crucial for comprehending music therapy (Rolvjord & Stige, 2015). The authors further emphasize that a significant aspect of this is its integration into individuals' belief systems about the impact of music therapy on their lives. However, various conditions may account for the choice of music, including loss of human life, illness, mental illness, childbirth, social conditions, spiritual issues, and many others. Nigerian, nay, African cultural models imply those patterns that reflect the ideals and conditions of an African (Nwankpa & Nwankpa, 2020). The authors explicated this concept of African cultural models (in music) and the elements that constitute the cultural models in African music. According to the authors:

African cultural models imply those patterns that reflect the ideals of an African. African cultural models are those that are uniquely African and have characteristics that reflect African philosophy, idioms, values, and ways of life. These models can be viewed in terms of behaviour, emotional reaction, psychological impact, resiliency, conduct, and the general way of life. There are cultural models in African music that include folklore, idiomatic phrases, African folksongs, polyrhythmic features, text-tone relationships, and tonal-rhythmic patterns that are based on the native language. There are also ways of communicating—historical stories, sociocultural issues, emotional paths in music performance, the use of native instruments, repetitive patterns, and short, easy-to-learn musical patterns and refrains that allow the audience to take part. Something that makes people want to dance, the "feminine" use of metric patterns in 6/8 and 12/8, which are usually called compound duple and compound quadruple, the ability to improvise, and the desire to turn anything into a musical instrument are some of the cultural items that are talked about (pp. 80–81).

These cultural models are peculiar to Africans in line with their thought processes, cosmology, value system, and general cultural tenets. Dancing and drumming have functioned as forms of collective expression since the dawn of mankind (Bensimon, Amir, & Wolf, 2008). When Africans perform music, they do so bearing the cultural tolerance, implications, and impact in mind. Africans and Nigerians use music as a form of therapy, whether they are aware of it or not. They do this in ways that are expected to work within the context of their cultural worldview and continuity. In line with this, Nzewi (2007) says that music that leads to group therapeutic dancing is usually emotionally compelling because of how fast the beats are. He also says that music used for relaxing or soothing therapy would be calmer or played on a softer instrument (p. 52). No doubt, African musical therapy follows laid-down cultural models that ensure success, progress, and stability. By definition, Nwankpa (2023) states that,

Music Therapy is the use of music, instrumental and/or vocal, for the treatment of people with emotional, mental and physical disorders, and other traumatic challenges. Put differently, Music Therapy is a systematic and scientific method of providing

healing or rehabilitation, by a trained music therapist, on a person suffering from mental, physical, emotional, or traumatic conditions using the medium of music (p. 270).

Music therapy, administered by a qualified practitioner in a non-clinical environment, fosters a cheerful, supportive, and proactive attitude while using non-invasive techniques to alleviate symptoms related to different ailments and perhaps bolster the body's defences (Rebecchini, 2021). Recent focus has been on the capacity of general music activities, without therapist guidance, to enhance the mental health and well-being of service users (Fancourt et al., 2016; de Witte et al., 2019). Music therapy techniques in mental health are used in both medical and non-medical institutions, as well as in community environments (Rolvsjord & Stige, 2015). Music therapy constitute an allied health profession that employs musical interventions to enhance the therapeutic relationship between a board-certified music therapist and a patient, aiming to achieve physical, psychological, cognitive, social, and other non-musical objectives through the clinical application of music (American Music Therapy Association (AMTA) 2018; Aalbers et al., 2019; Agres et al., 2020; de Witte et al., 2020). Studies on individuals with mental problems have shown a significant improvement in their mental health after therapies that included music as the major method (Rebecchini, 2021). Numerous studies have illustrated the advantages of music, such as enhanced heart rate, motor skills, cognitive stimulation, and immune system improvement (Krout, 2007; Trappe, 2010; Goyal, Yadav, & Yadav, 2012; Brancatisano, Baird, & Thompson, 2020; Rebecchini, 2021).

Music therapy has become an important part of international therapeutic and healthcare settings (Greenberg & Rentfrow, 2017). Music therapy interventions involve a therapeutic process developed between the patient (or client) and therapist through the use of personally tailored music experiences (de Witte et al., 2019). The intervention process provides a sure relief from mental, physical, and emotional disorders and traumatic challenges associated with the varying conditions of people, men, and women. In fact, music can be utilised not only through a setting led by a professional music therapist but also with individuals and groups in a variety of settings. A wide range of musical styles and instruments can be used, including the voice, enabling people to create their unique musical language to explore and connect with the world and express themselves. Utilising verbal and nonverbal representation and exploration tactics—such as dance, physical movement, music, and art (Havsteen-Franklin, 2019)—can hinder aversion strategies and facilitate the expression of emotions and pain.

However, receptive methods of music therapy positively influence the mental health conditions of women in their hormonal levels and balance, especially during daily chores, bereavement, and labor (Nwankpa, 2023a). During periods of pregnancy, childbirth, menopause, bereavement, family and spousal responsibilities, domestic chores, and protests, women find music therapy to be a valuable tool in promoting their mental health. Several authors have demonstrated that a two-week music therapy program during pregnancy offers measurable psychological benefits, encouraging its adoption as a cost-effective method to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression (Chang, Chen, & Huang, 2008; Perkovic, Tustonja, Devic, & Kristo, 2021; Ji, Zhao, Nie, & Wang, 2024).

African Women and Mental Health Challenges

African women face numerous challenges and emotional engagements in their daily life endeavours. Generally, women have peculiar needs when it comes to their life journeys. At various stages in life, certain expectations come up. For instance, a young girl who has come

of age wants to get married, a married young girl wants to have a child, a nursing mother is concerned about the health, growth, and success of the child, and a mother whose child is of age wants to have a grandchild. Failure to have these accomplishments at the expected periods and in conventionally accepted ways leads to frustration, depression, and even trauma. These conditions punctuate a typical life of a Nigerian woman with stresses during which various kinds of mood-enhancing music and musical performances are used to ameliorate and alleviate her woes, mood swings, and trauma, whether the music is self-administered or administered by other persons in her cultural group. They make use of music to ameliorate and extenuate the adverse effects of such responsibilities on their mental health. Obviously, this is partly the reason why music is generally and robustly used to punctuate the activities of African women, bringing strength, brevity, and sometimes succour, soothing, and calming effects to their cognitive engagements. Music has such powers that it engages the entire being of a human and fully permeates their tripartite nature. According to Basden (1983), who was referring to Igbo music,

The more one listens to native music, the more one is conscious of its vital power. It touches the chords of man's inmost being, and stirs his primal instincts. It demands the performer's whole attention and so sways the individual as almost to divide asunder, for the time being, mind and body. It is intensely passionate, and no great effort of the imagination is required to realise that such music could only have originated with the son of Cain! Under its influence, and that of the accompanying dance, one has seen men and women pass into a completely dazed condition, oblivious and apparently unconscious of the world around them. Both sexes are drawn under its spell and lose themselves in it. It is savage; the instruments are barbaric; but it pulsates with the spirit of the thing in its most potent forms. It lifts men and women out of themselves; it may leave them almost prostrated with exhaustion; it may bring into activity all the baser instincts (p.192).

This is done both in groups and as individuals, although the former is usually more therapeutically effective. Women are better encouraged, motivated and stimulated to join group actions or movements driven by music, and the consequence is therapeutic. The research aims to examine the contribution of Igbo folk songs to therapeutic techniques for enhancing mental health, specifically investigating the song's capacity to alleviate stress, anxiety, or depression via its cultural and musical components. Let us briefly look at the following parameters and settings in consideration of women and/or mental health challenges:

- (a) Funeral songs as therapy for bereaved women
- (b) Protest songs as music therapy for aggrieved women
- (c) Domestic songs as music therapy for chore-laden women
- (d) Music therapy for prenatal, natal and postnatal mothers.

METHODOLOGY

The researchers used a qualitative analytical design to look at the cultural, musical, and poetic parts of some songs and texts, with the main goal of finding out how they could improve therapy for mental health. A set of 1–7 songs and cultural texts, including an Igbo song, was chosen for their relevance to therapeutic goals and cultural significance. The Igbo song was selected for its emotional and spiritual relevance to grieving women, conveying themes of solace and contemplation, making it a potential tool for music therapy. The selection

emphasised songs and texts with positive healing messages and cultural significance, such as the Igbo text's focus on blessings and gratitude, which promote well-being. Primary data was collected through the selection of culturally and therapeutically relevant songs and texts, with secondary data from literature on music therapy, mental health, and cultural studies. The study used Sonic Visualiser to analyse the musical structure, melody, harmony, tempo, and rhythm of the songs, assessing their potential to induce relaxation, positive emotions, or mental clarity. Thematic analysis identified recurring themes like gratitude, positivity, emotional resilience, and healing, particularly for women in vulnerable situations. The study also examined the Igbo text's cultural and emotional significance, focusing on its therapeutic potential across different cultural settings. A cultural contextual analysis, based on a literature review and secondary sources, was conducted to understand the cultural norms and values related to woman-centered music therapy in Igbo Land. Sentiment analysis tools assessed the text's emotional tone, while **Sonic Visualiser** was used to explore musical features like pitch and rhythm. Lastly, an interpretive and comparative analysis was done by hand-comparing the Igbo text with its English translation to find subtle differences in meaning, especially when the text was written in two languages.

Funeral songs as therapy for bereaved women

In most African societies, especially in Nigeria, funeral music and songs serve as therapy for the bereaved woman in particular and for the family in general. From the time a woman is bereaved (especially her husband) until the funeral proceedings, copious amounts of music are performed, both in honor of the deceased and in consolation for the bereaved woman and her family. Each differs according to the sex, gender, and social standing of the dead (Kuwabong, 2024). It is fascinating to see how some cultural aspects, like the relationship between men and women, the importance of community, and the link between music and the spiritual world, have stayed mostly the same over the last forty years (Giorgio, 2019). Music, frequently manifested as songs, may express emotions and provide symbols that assist bereaved individuals in managing their grief (Parkinson, 2009) and is present in both religious and secular settings. Bruin-Mollenhorst (2018) emphasised the significance of lyrical substances in relation to the identities and feelings of departed individuals. This music can take the form of live performances or recorded music, providing platforms and methods for active, semi-active, and passive/receptive music therapy (Grocke & Wigram, 2007). Thus, Bruin-Mollenhorst (2018) investigated the significance of lyrical content in relation to the identities and emotions of deceased individuals. Den (1983) asserted, while referring to condolences, that

At intervals during the twenty-eight days of retreat, crowds of friends and relatives visit the house, and a general time of excitement prevails, with singing and dancing, drum-beating and other forms of music, and the inevitable consumption of palm wine and gin. Some of these gatherings involve the consumption of enormous quantities of food and liquor. All of this is done to distract the bereaved from his great loss; he should not worry about it.

In Igboland, it is a common observation that the women in the same age grade with the bereaved woman, her close neighbours, her friends, and members of the women's "judicial council" (called umuokpu in Igboland). Furthermore, various organisations to which the woman may belong arrive at various points and dates, and all they do is mostly administer consolation and solidarity through music, singing soothing songs, and playing their musical instruments. The organisations specifically churn out well-chosen music suitable for soothing the bereaved's emotions. The texts of the music are filled with deep emotions, encouragement,

and hope. These therapeutic ceremonies engage the mental state of the patient (the bereaved) and take her mind off the pains and pressures that come with bereavement. In Igbo society, attending to the music therapy needs of the bereaved is of utmost importance, whether or not the person is in a good financial position with the group. It is considered a major sign of cruelty not to attend to someone who is bereaved. Below are some of the music performed for the bereaved:

Song 1: O NaaN'udo

O NAA N'UDO

Igbo folk song

O naa, o naa, o naa n'u - do, O na-ba-go n'e-b'o - si-ri bia n'u-wa, Chu-kwu na-ra

9
nwa Gi, O na-ba-go e-b'o - si-ri bia n'u-wa, Chu-kwu na ra m-muo ya.

Text in Igbo: O naan'udo, O naan'udo, O nabago n'ebe osiri bia n'uwa Chukwu nara mmuo ya, O nabago n'ebe osiri bia n'uwa, Chukwu nara mmuo ya.

Translation: He/She is gone to where he/she came to this earth from. God receive your child. He/She is gone to where he came to this earth from. May God receive his/her spirit.

Song 2: Anyi Biara K'anyi Si Nwanne Anyi Ndo

ANYI BIARA K'ANYI SI NWANNE ANYI NDO

Igbo folk song

A-nyi bia-ra k'anyi si nwa-nne a-nyi n - do, Anyibiarak'anyi si nwa-nne a-nyi n - do,

7
A - nyi bia - ra k'anyi si nwa - nne a-nyi n - do,

10
O - nye a - nyi na ya di n'o - fu o - tu.

Text in Igbo: Anyibiarak'anyisinwanne anyi ndo. Onyeanyi nay a di n'ofu out.

Translation: We have come to console our brother/sister who is part of our group.

Traditionally, the Niger Delta region of Nigeria conducts extensive celebrations with music for the deceased, particularly during the burial rites. Bereaved members adorn themselves with colourful, highly decorated regalia. Members danced around in honour of the deceased, accompanied by appropriate music.

Song3: MGBE**Mgbe**

Igbo Folk Song

Allegro

Call: M-gbe, m-gbe o, M-gbe, m-gbe o e-ze o vu ru o-ku-ko

Response: M - gbe M - gbe M -

7

Call: ma no ye go-nu ma no ko g'o-kwu ma no gbu g'o-tu.

Resp.: gbe M - gbe M - gbe M -

13

Call: M-gbe, m-gbe o, M-gbe, m-gbe o, e-ze o vu ru o-ku-ko

Resp.: gbe M - gbe M - gbe M -

19

Call: ma no ku g'o-kwu ma no ye go - nu gbe to

Resp.: gbe M - gbe M - gbe

24

Call: gbu gu - tu m-gbe, m - gbe, m-gbe m-gbe, m -

Resp.: M - gbe M - gbe

*Mgbe, Mgbe o o – Mgbe -**Lamentation**Egbeevuruokuko – Mgbe**The kite has taken the chicken**Ma n'okwug'okwu -Mgbe**But it cannot say anything***Protest songs as music therapy for aggrieved women**

Women in Nigerian societies, tracing back to centuries before now, are not fully involved in many decision-making processes, lawmaking, law execution, and law regulation. Men played a primary role in all these processes. Men engaged in warfare and determined the events before and after the conflict. Men headed households and expected women to follow their lead. In the majority of civilisations, men dominated or formed the ruling bodies responsible for decision-making. Males received the majority of spiritual authority. Many of these traditions are still very effective today. Consequently, these traditions often place women in a vulnerable position. Once in a while, women have no option but to protest around the community, village square, or home of the aggressor. Crimes committed against their fellow females usually carry greater seriousness. The crime can involve death, rape, battering, and other injustices perpetrated against their fellow women. While this is a call for justice, the protest song has a deep therapeutic effect on the aggrieved women. They have to express themselves, as opposed

to harbouring grievances in their hearts. As women vocalize, music provides solace, as they express hope via song.. Their capacity for self-expression offers solace. They reawaken society's awareness of their existence, significance, and power. People widely accept that males possess more physical strength than women. Certain crimes perpetrated against women, such as physical violence, occur on such grounds. When women protest with songs, they assert their own power in return. Iniobong (n.d.) agreed that:

Society evolves strict codes of behaviour for women in different cultures and the women are expected to comply unquestioningly with them. However, since some of those codes usually impinge on and actually threaten the humanity of women, some women raise questions and protest against them, as ways of liberating themselves from them (p. 174).

The women emphasize that even though they may be unable to retaliate with physical strength, they have the power of music at their disposal. This strategy produces deep therapeutic effects in them. They return to their homes after the protest, relieved and feeling empowered. Many times, the issues they raise get addressed or attract the necessary authorities or persons. The Aba women's riot of 1929 remains a historic women's protest that shook the colonial administration in Nigeria. Another instance is the protest led by the late Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti.

Song 4: Ndiom Bu Ochu

Ndio mu bochu

Igbo Folk Song

Andante

Call: N-dio mu bo-chu o N-dio mu bo-chu o Ndi u

Response: N-dio mu bo-chu N-dio mu bo-chu

5 Call: be ku bo chu o N-dio-gwo za-ra bo-chu o N-di di bo-chu o

Resp.: N-dio mu bo-chu N-dio mu bo-chu

10 Call: o-chu o-chu o-chu o-chu

Resp.: N-dio mu bo-chu N-dio mu bo-chu N-dio mu bo-chu

15 Call: N-dio mu bu-chu o N-dio mu bu-chu o Ndi u

Resp.: N-dio mu bo-chu N-dio mu bo-chu

19 Call: be ku bo-chu o N-dio-gwo za-ra bo-chu o N - di di bo-chu o

Resp.: N-dio mu bo-chu N-dio mu bo-chu

Ndiombuochu, Ndiombuochu

Women are sacred – Women are sacred

Nd'Idibuochu

Those from Idi are sacred

Nd'Ibekubuochu-Ndiombuochu

Those from Ibeku are sacred – Women are sacred

Nd'Ogbozarabuochu-Ndiombuochu

Those from Ogbozara are sacred – Women are sacred

Song 5: Obodo Emebigo

Obodo Emebigo

Igbo native Folk

Transcribed: Felicia O. Ezeuwgu

Allegro

The musical score is written for Treble Solo and Treble parts. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 8/8. The tempo is marked 'Allegro'. The lyrics are in Igbo and English. The score is divided into systems, with measures 6, 12, 17, and 22 marked at the beginning of each system.

System 1 (Measures 1-5):

Treble Solo: O - bo-do e-me-bi go, O - bo-do e-me-bi

Treble: O - bo-do e-me-bi go,

System 2 (Measures 6-11):

Tr. Solo: go, le ndie na chi a-nyi ku-ru-ku

Tr.: O - bo-do e-me-bi go, O - bo-do e-me-bi

System 3 (Measures 12-16):

Tr. Solo: le ndie le le a-nyi ku-ru-ku le ndie mu

Tr.: go, O - bo-do e-me-bi go,

System 4 (Measures 17-21):

Tr. Solo: ra a-nyi ku-ru-ku le e ndie nna nye a-nyi

Tr.: O - bo-do e-me-bi go,

System 5 (Measures 22-26):

Tr. Solo: ku-ru-ku ni i-gwe ye g'o nu

Tr.: O - bo-do e-me-bi go, O - bo-do e-me-bi

Obodoemebigoo – Obodoemebigo The land is desecrated – The land is desecrated (twice)

Obodoemebigo me The land is desecrated and our leaders are not
nd'nachianyiekwug'okwu saying anything

Obodoemebigo The land is desecrated

Me nd'umunnedianyiekwug'okwu Even our husband's relations kept mute

Met'Igweeyeg'onu Even our king could not open his mouth

Most songs in Igbo culture are in call-and-response form. In this form, the chorus responds to the lead singer's phrase with a predetermined answer. This response remains the same until the lead singer changes to another song, usually by introducing the chorus line to the group. She sings a short solo phrase, which the other women immediately respond to and continue to repeat the same phrase until the lead singer changes to a new song. It is observed that the lead singer makes use of a lot of improvisation each time with a substantial textual variation in the lead section, which often arises from an effort to drive home the message.

Mgbe is a song of lamentation depicting hopelessness. The women explain that the kite and chicken show how helpless a chicken is when taken by a kite. Those who sing this type of song would want help, just like the chicken shouts for it. Any Igbo community that hears this song usually approaches the singer(s) to offer assistance.

Ndiom Bu Ochu is re-echoing the fact that women are sacred and should not be violated, subordinated, or suppressed in any form.

ObodoEmebigo is a song meant to bring to the notice of the public abomination that is going on in the land, yet those who are supposed to put a stop to it are looking the other way. The women sing, dance, tie their clothes in a way that attracts passersby and demonstrate to show disapproval of the abomination going on in their land. This kind of performance attracts people who help to solve their problems. Each of these songs is repeated several times before the next one is intoned by the soloist.

Domestic songs as music therapy for chore-laden women

Women draw from the power of music to energize themselves from the numerous chores reserved for them and also strengthens consoles them through the various unpleasant experiences they may have in their homes. This can come in the form of work songs or consoling songs. Women do a lot of singing around their homes. This helps to minimize the effect of their hard work and the strenuous effect of raising children. Many times, these women have to multi-task. They employ various songs in the process. The changes in songs help them to gain sense of motion, direction and success as the work progresses. This is also applicable when wives (or women) work together. In this case, they also employ songs in antiphonal structures which help to get them connected as a group as they share the melodies or sing in call-and-response pattern. This gives them spirit of teamwork, unity and cohesion. In this way, the mind is thoroughly engaged against distraction and in another way builds their mind against the harsh effect of the work at hand.

Music therapy for prenatal, natal and post-natal mothers

Pregnancy and childbirth stand as part of the points in women's biological life where their mental state is engaged and vigorously altered by their hormone levels. Stress significantly impacts pregnant women during pregnancy, labour, and the postpartum period (Shimada, Cabral, Silva, & Vagetti, 2021). Do these engagements affect and consequently alter the mental state of women? The periods of pregnancy, delivery, and post-delivery are unique times in the lives of women. Female parents often remind their children of the immense sacrifice they made nine months ago for their birth, particularly when the children's behavior fails to impress them. Pregnancy is a period when women experience mental and emotional differences and turbulence that result in various strange reactions, cravings, and dispositions. Sometimes, they experience excruciating pains that make them cry. This situation alters their emotional state and their mental health as well. They react to this in a variety of ways. The women confirm that they tend to act more from the place of instinct than reason during this

period. They begin to crave weird things or things they are not known to enjoy in the past. Pregnancy deeply penetrates the woman's innermost being. Their entire mental state is affected. Nobody expects to leave a woman going through all of these alone. Maternal anxiety and depression, both pre- and postnatally, may influence the child's maladjustment (Barker, Jaffee, Uher, & Maughan, 2011). In pregnant women, these effects may be elucidated by a range of physiological processes that are triggered when listening to music and persist for an extended duration (Shimada et al., 2021). One sure thing that works is administering mind-enhancing music— recorded or live (active) performances. Music therapy is a speciality within prenatal health care that has shown beneficial effects on stress, anxiety, and depression (Chang, Chen, & Huang, 2008). Prenatal music interventions may serve as an effective method to alleviate anxiety in full-term pregnant women during a non-stress test and enhance the birth process by shortening the initial stage of labour in nulliparous women (García González, Ventura Miranda, Requena Mullor, Parron Carreño, & Alarcón Rodríguez, 2018). No doubt, the power of music is potent enough to ameliorate the effects of the emotional turbulence experienced by pregnant mothers. The language of music goes beyond mere words to communicate with the deep recesses of the woman's heart. It is even more helpful if she participates in the music-making. Songs in the Nigerian music tradition address the various emotional concerns women face during this period. Consequently, music, vocal or instrumental, can resource and access the woman's inner strengths and innocuous spots. Singing appropriate songs can transform the "trauma vortex," a re-experiencing of previous trauma, into a "healing vortex," an inner experience of feeling resourced and safe (Austin, 2008: 61; see also Levine, 1997).

Some criteria are followed in administering the music therapy:

- a. The general musical culture the patient is acquainted with.
- b. The woman's previous choice of music.
- c. The particular mood of the patient.
- d. The woman's temperament.
- e. The expected mental outcome.

Sometimes, little body movements are also performed, which the woman-patient can get involved in (the best way she can) or watch to get entertained through receptive therapy. This can go a long way to distract her from her troubles and challenges or, better still, implant a musical consciousness that will help her go through her hard times and pains. The delivery period is also a crucial one for women. They seem at that point to journey to the point where earth and land of the gods and spirit meet. For some of the women, they need hope that they will make it. For some, they need musical analgesia for the heap of pains they go through; for some, it is the fear of getting a male child or a female child. Music therapy is potent to address these to a significant extent. To administer music therapy successfully, it is necessary for the woman in this state to be engaged by:

1. The persons she knows or trusts.
2. The persons involved should know something about her musical past.
3. A suitable environment devoid of unnecessary distractions is required.

Even after delivery, therapy continues. The woman who is delivered of a baby is visited by her family, friends and well-wishers. They sing various songs to the mother and child. These

songs do not only serve as notes of victory but an emotional support for the woman who just went through deep trauma and pain. Below are examples of the songs:

Song 6: Nwa Bu UwaOma

NWA BU UWA OMA

Igbo folk song



O - mu - ru nwa bia gbu - ru a - nyi a - ka. Nwa b'u - wa o - ma e, O

mu - ru nwa ke - le Chi ya, nwa b'u - wa o - ma e. O - nye

mu - ru nwa le - zie y'a - nya, nwa bu u - wa o - ma, O - ka - ri ri e - go i - gwe.

Text in Igbo: Omurunwabiagburuanyi aka. Nwabuuwaoma e, Omurunwakele Chi ya, nwabuuwaoma e. Onyemurunwalezieyaanya, nwabuuwaoma. O kariri ego igwe.

Translation: One who gave birth to a child deserves cheers. Such should give thanks to God for a child is a world of good. The parent should take good care of the child, he/she is a world of good. A child is of more valuable than money.

Song 7: Nwa Bu Ife Oma

NWA BU IFE OMA

Igbo Folk song



Na nwa b'i-fe o - ma, na nwa b'i-fe o - ma, na nwa b'i-fe o - ma

na nwa b'i-fe o - ma. O - nye Chu - kwu nye - lu ya na - lu ya na nwa b'i-fe o - ma.

Na nwa bu n - go - zi, na nwa bu n - go - zi, na nwa bu n - go - zi

na nwa bu n - go - zi. O - nye Chu - kwu nye - lu ya na - lu ya na nwa bu n - go - zi.

Text in Igbo: Na nwabuiifeoma; onyeChukwunyeluyanalanwabuifeoma. Na nwabungozi, onyeChukwunyeluyanalanwabungozi.

Translation: A child is a good thing. Those who God has given a child should receive it for a child is a good thing. A child is a blessing. He/She who God has given a child should receive it for a child is a blessing.

Nigerian Cultural models and significance in mental health

The therapeutic effect of music has been explored severally by African women as stated above. However, cultural models have been built by the African cultural system which has made tradition and advancement survive in this regard. Below are some of the cultural models:

1. Use of folk songs and folk-like songs/themes: Here large repertoire of music is employed in enhancing moods. These compositions largely depend on the occasion and reason for the problem to be solved. There are condolence songs, birth songs, work songs, festival songs, moonlight songs, folk songs, and folk-like songs and themes spontaneously created to capture the essence of the occasion, etc.
2. Use of musical devices: Beyond the general use of songs, composers consciously employ some musical devices that have therapeutic effects such as:
 - (a) Repetition and repetitive phrases: This is needful in driving deep the message of the song and creating a more profound impression in the mind of the listener as the tune/syllable recurs again and again.
 - (b) Choice and use of suitable musical instruments: Sometimes, therapeutic music may require to be dense, loud, solemn, rhythmically compact, and/or possess other features. These effects are achievable through a sensible choice and use of musical instruments. For instance, pot drum would naturally play sparse rhythm when compared with membrane drum. The choice of the instrument would affect the intended purpose or outcome in this case.
 - (c) Linguistic consideration: Therapeutic song has a unique language which drives the message home. Many times, the mind of the patient is engaged with rich proverbs and parables which deviate his/her thinking from their challenges to the music fully. Sometimes, it is simple words with soothing effects that are employed.
 - (d) Rhythm: This is employed on the basis of an expected outcome. Many times, the rhythm in the music is meant to make the listeners dance, as a way of creating therapeutic effect or engage in some visible physical actions. In some other cases, the performers may want to create a soothing effect, so the rhythm has to be simple and less complex to elicit calmness.
 - (e) Pitches and volume: These are employed at higher or lower levels to inspire gaiety and serenity respectively.
 - (f) Harmony: The simultaneous production of horizontal and vertical sound structures inherently offers soothing and therapeutic effects. Africans use this device and involuntary/spontaneous harmony and counterpoint to capture the minds of the listeners and, for the time being, hold the bereaved captive in the realms of serenity and altered consciousness.

Keeping this in mind, it's important that the right people in our society pay attention to music, because it can help people feel better, whether they make it on their own or get it from a professional. This underscores the need to take music censorship more seriously in order to achieve the desired objectives. While music can be therapeutic, it can also have detrimental effects on human mental health. Immoral and amoral projections dehumanize and cannot promote mental health, despite music's potential to promote self-esteem, self-image, moral consciousness, and therapy. As discussed above, women's mental health benefits greatly from

the therapeutic roles and ambience of traditional music. This also makes it clear that the restoration, renaissance, and re-enactment of traditional music is crucial, especially in these days of economic hardship and crises of various kinds in Nigeria.

Results of the Text Analysis of the Igbo Songs

The thematic analysis of the song's lyrics and cultural context examined key themes such as spirituality, community, and hope, emphasizing their relevance to therapeutic outcomes.

Cultural and Lyrical Analysis of the Funeral Song: “*O naan’udo*” (Song 1)

The Igbo song text, “*O naan’udo*” (*He/She is Gone in Peace*), was examined under:

Lyrical Analysis Themes

- **Embracing closure:** The lyrics convey the deceased's transition to their spiritual origin, illustrating acceptance of death's inevitability.
- **Spiritual Ease:** The recurring prayer, “Chukwunarammuoya” (God receive their spirit), offers comfort to people in mourning by requesting divine guardianship for the departed soul.
- **Peaceful Transition:** The expression, “O nabagon’ebesiribian’uwa” (He/She is gone to where he/she came from), points out a serene end to the source, providing emotional closure.

Analysis of Cultural Context

Communal Healing: Women typically perform these songs in communal settings, allowing them to collectively express their loss and find strength in solidarity.

- **Spiritual connection:** The emphasis placed on God and the spiritual path emphasises the cultural conviction in divine intervention and everlasting life, so cultivating hope among the bereaved.

Therapeutic Effect

- **Repetition:** The repeating pattern of the lyrics enhances emotional anchoring and promotes quiet contemplation.
- **Language:** The use of gentle, fluid expressions evokes tranquillity and serenity, fostering relaxation and emotional equilibrium

Musical Features

- **Melody:** Uncomplicated and languid, fostering a serene atmosphere.
- **Harmony:** Frequently performed together, fostering a feeling of community and solidarity.
- **Rhythm:** Soft and consistent, eliciting a contemplative and tranquil atmosphere.

Cultural and Lyrical Analysis of the Funeral Song: “*Anyi biara k’anyi si nwanne anyi ndo*”

(Song 2): The Igbo text, “*Anyi biara k’anyi si nwanne anyi ndo*” (*We have come to console our brother/sister who is part of our group*).

Lyrical Analysis Theme

- **Communal Support:** The focus on uniting to comfort a bereaved individual shows the significance of communal empathy in the healing process.
- **Belonging:** The expression, “onyeanyi nay a di n’ofuotu” (who is part of our group), underscores the concept of togetherness and collective responsibility within the community.
- **Emotional Comfort:** The emphasis on providing solace highlights the psychological assistance provided by community mourning rituals.
- **Repetition impact:** the use of collective pronouns ("anyi" or "we") emphasises togetherness and mitigates feelings of loneliness among the grieving.

Analysis of Cultural Context

- **Communal Healing:** In Igbo culture, grief is a group endeavour, and songs such as these are crucial for reinforcing communal bonds and providing emotional support.
- **Cultural Significance:** The passage embodies the Igbo culture's collective character, which recognises mourning as a social obligation.

Therapeutic Significance

- By seeing the bereaved as members of a collective, the text mitigates feelings of isolation, assisting the individual in deriving strength from community.

Musical Analysis

- **Melody:** Uncomplicated, tranquil tunes that foster a serene, contemplative ambience.
- **Rhythm:** Consistent rhythms that facilitate communal singing promote solidarity and collective grief.
- **Harmony:** Collective singing in harmony strengthens unity and emotional bonds.

Lyrical and Cultural Analysis of the Funeral Song: “*Mgbe, Mgbe o o*” (Song 3)

A. Lyrical Analysis Theme

- **Expression of Loss:** “Egbeevuruokuko” (The kite has taken the chicken) signifies a sudden and irrevocable loss, eliciting the helplessness of bereaved confronted with death.
- **Vivid imagery:** The vivid imagery conveys the shock and anguish of the bereaved, facilitating emotional catharsis.
- **Powerlessness:** “Ma n’okwug’okwu” (But it cannot say anything) highlights the futility of resistance or grievance in the presence of loss, illustrating the inevitability of death and the cultural focus on acceptance.
- **Emotional Catharsis:** The recurrent wailing, “Mgbe, Mgbe o o,” serves as an emotional release for mourners, facilitating the articulation and processing of their sorrow.

Analysis of Cultural Context

- **Communal Grieving:** Lamentation songs are traditionally performed collectively, enabling mourners to share their grief.
- **Symbolism:** The imagery of the kite (predator) and chicken (prey) serves as a prevalent metaphor for human vulnerability and the inevitability of death in Igbo culture.

Therapeutic Function

- The song offers a structured medium for the bereaved to articulate their emotions, mitigating emotional suppression and fostering healing.

Musical Features

- **Melody:** A mournful, wailing tone that reflects the emotional depth of grief.
- **Rhythm:** A slow and deliberate tempo that corresponds with the contemplative essence of lamentation.
- **Repetition:** The recurrent use of “Mgbe” engenders a meditative and cathartic experience.

Lyrical and Cultural Analysis of the Funeral Song: “Ndiombuochu” (Women are sacred) (Song 4)

Lyrical Analysis Themes

- **Sacredness of Women:** The recurring affirmation, “Ndiombuochu” (Women are sacred), highlights the esteem for women in Igbo culture, validating their worth and enhancing their emotional resilience.
- **Cultural Identity and Unity:** Mentions of specific communities (“Nd’Idi,” “Nd’Ibeku,” “Nd’Ogbozara”) demonstrate the communal recognition of women’s significance, cultivating a sense of relating and solidarity among women from diverse regions. locations.
- **Empowerment and Healing:** By raising women's status to the sacred, the song provides emotional and psychological support, particularly in scenarios where women encounter adversity or marginalisation.
- **Repetition as Affirmation:** The reiteration of “Ndiombuochu” functions as a mantra, reinforcing self-worth and facilitating mental healing.

Analysis of Cultural Context

- **Cultural Reverence for Women:** The song embodies Igbo customs that venerate women for their contributions to family, community, and spirituality.
- **Community Acknowledgement:** Referencing particular communities highlights the collective cultural significance attributed to women throughout the Igbo community, promoting inclusion and pride.

Therapeutic Role

The song affirms women's sanctity, offering emotional affirmation and dignity, so encouraging women in difficult situations.

Musical Analysis

Tempo: A consistent, invigorating beat that promotes collective engagement and cultivates a feeling of cohesion.

Melody: uncomplicated and harmonic, crafted for group singing and emphasising the shared message.

The call-and-response structure, when present, signifies the participatory essence of Igbo music, fostering communal affirmation and support.

Lyrical and Cultural Analysis “Obodoemebigo”(Song 5)*The land is desecrated*

Analysis of Cultural Context

- **Societal Decay:** The phrase “Obodoemebigo” (*The land is desecrated*) symbolizes a breakdown in societal values, evoking a sense of collective mourning and frustration.
- **Leadership Failure:** Lines like “Me nd’nachianyiekwug’okwu” (*Our leaders are not saying anything*) and “Met’Igweeyeg’onu” (*Even our king could not open his mouth*) critique the silence and inaction of those in positions of authority.
- **Communal Helplessness and Discontent:** The lament, “Me nd’umunnedianyiekwug’okwu” (*Even our husband’s relations kept mute*), reflects the communal disappointment in traditional systems of support and resolution.
- **Call for Awareness:** By emphasizing the desecration of the land and the silence of leaders, the song seeks to awaken consciousness and prompt action within the community.

Analysis of Cultural Context

- **Expression of Collective Grief:** The song functions as a collective expression of grief, enabling individuals to articulate their dissatisfaction and navigate their mutual concerns.
- **Symbolism of Leadership:** The symbolism of leadership critiques traditional and political figures, emphasising social expectations for accountability and moral responsibility within Igbo culture.

Therapeutic Function

- Performing such a song may provide a medium for collective feelings, promoting unity among those impacted by social challenges.

Musical Analysis

- **Melody:** A melancholic tone that embodies the grief and exasperation of the people.
- **Rhythm:** Measured and intentional, highlighting the seriousness of the message and promoting contemplative engagement.
- **Repetition:** The repeated word “Obodoemebigo” emphasises the message and facilitates a communal emotional catharsis.

Lyrical and Cultural Analysis of “Omuru nwa bia gburu anyi aka” (Song 6), One who gave birth to a child deserves cheers.

Lyrical Analysis of theme

- **Celebration of Parenthood:** The expression “Omuru nwa bia gburu anyi aka” underscores the delight and reverence shown upon those who give birth. It signifies the collective recognition of motherhood as a source of pride and satisfaction.
- The phrase “Omuru nwa kele Chi ya” (Such should offer thanks to God) highlights the cultural tradition of expressing thankfulness to God for the blessing of a child.
- **Parental Responsibility:** “Onye muru nwa lezie ya anya” (The parent should take excellent care of the kid) underscores the ethical duty to nurture and safeguard children.
- The intrinsic value of children is encapsulated in the phrase “O kariri ego igwe” (A child is more precious than money), which emphasises their infinite worth, fostering emotional connections and prioritising relationships over monetary prosperity.

Analysis of Cultural Context

- **Communal View of Parenthood:** The song embodies the communal perspective on parenthood, highlighting the collective pleasure experienced by the community upon delivery.
- **Spiritual Significance:** Expressing gratitude to God for children is consistent with Igbo spiritual traditions, which see children as favours from a divine source.

Therapeutic Function:

The lyrics aim to elevate and motivate parents, particularly during difficult periods, by reinforcing the pleasure and significance of their responsibilities.

Musical Analysis

- **Melody:** Probably upbeat and joyful, embodying the happy topic of birthing.
- **Tempo:** Moderate to brisk, fostering engagement and communal enjoyment.
- **Repetition:** The recurrence of crucial words (e.g., “Nwabuuwaoma”) amplifies the message and fosters emotional resonance.

Lyrical and Cultural Analysis of the Song of "Na Nwa Bu Ifeoma" (Song 7)

Lyrical Analysis theme

- **Value of Children:** The phrase “*Na nwa bu ifeoma*” (A child is a good thing) emphasizes the importance of children as a source of joy and fulfillment in the Igbo cultural context. Children are viewed as inherently positive and valuable, reflecting their esteemed status in society.
- **Divine Blessing:** The line “*Onye Chukwu nyelu ya nalu ya*” (Those who God has given a child should receive it) acknowledges that children are gifts from God, reinforcing the spiritual and divine nature of parenthood.
- This aligns with the belief that children are a blessing and should be received with gratitude.
- **Blessing and Responsibility:** “*Na nwabungozi*” (A child is a blessing) further stresses that children are not only a joy but a divine reward, placing an emotional and spiritual responsibility on parents and society to nurture and care for them. The phrase “*onye*

Chukwu nyelu ya nalu ya” also underscores the importance of embracing and appreciating children as part of one’s life mission.

Analysis of Cultural Context

- **Children as Blessings:** In Igbo culture, children are seen as blessings that provide joy, wealth, and spiritual fulfilment, in addition to serving as the continuation of the family's bloodline.
- **Parental Responsibility:** The passage emphasises that parents have a divinely given obligation to love and nurture their children.
- **Spiritual Gratitude:** The continual recognition of God's influence in bestowing children signifies a profound spiritual connection between parenting and divine favour in Igbo cosmology.

Therapeutic value

The therapeutic value of *"Na nwa bu ifeoma"* resides in its capacity to provide emotional reassurance, bolster cultural values, and deliver psychological solace to parents and families. The statement endorses the intrinsic goodness of children, promoting fulfilment, resilience, and community support; therefore, it assists people in managing parenting issues and enhancing their emotional well-being within the Igbo cultural context.

Musical Analysis

- **Music:** The music is expected to be soothing and uplifting, emphasising the positive and festive motifs of the lyrics.
- **Rhythm:** A moderate, exuberant tempo that promotes engagement and cultivates a collective spirit of festivity.
- **Repetition:** The repeated affirmations of a kid being a blessing (“nanwabuifeoma,” “nanwabungozi”) assist to emotionally reinforce the message, enhancing its resonance with the audience.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The Igbo funeral song 1 *“O naan’udo” (He/She is Gone in Peace)* embodies themes of closure, spiritual ease, and peaceful transition, providing comfort to mourners through its lyrical emphasis on divine acceptance and communal healing. Its therapeutic impact is reinforced by repetitive, gentle language, a serene melody, and harmonious group performance, fostering emotional stability and collective solace.

The study aligns with Nnamani (2019), who reported that Igbo traditional music enables the youth to grasp essential life concepts, their community's core values, interpersonal interactions, and sense of humour. This also backs up the findings of Kuwabong (2024) which revealed that the synthesis of social, psychological, literary, and musical aspects shows the Dagaaba death lament as a means of fostering individual solace and reinforcing communal bonding. This also collaborates with the findings of Bruin-Mollenhorst (2018), who that lyrical substance is subordinate to other elements, such as emotional and social factors and societal.

The inference is that music's influence transcends words, since its emotional resonance, community involvement, and cultural context are crucial in forming experiences and reactions. This implies that music therapy, especially in trauma rehabilitation, may be successful not just

due to the lyrics but also because of the comprehensive interplay between melody, rhythm, and collective engagement. Thus, in scenarios like war rehabilitation or environmental trauma, music functions as a potent vehicle for emotional expression, social connectivity, and psychological healing, irrespective of lyrical content.

The Igbo funeral song 2, "Anyi biara k'anyi si nwanne anyi ndo" (We have come to console our brother or sister, who is part of our group), emphasises communal support, belonging, and emotional comfort, reinforcing the cultural belief in collective mourning as a source of healing. Thus, its therapeutic impact is enhanced by repetitive lyrical structures, serene melodies, and harmonious group singing, fostering unity, emotional resilience, and a sense of togetherness among the bereaved.

The study is consistent with Giorgio (2019), who found that music, by its concealment, serves as an ideal instrument to integrate the whole community into a cohesive primordial entity, directing the spirits and energies towards a shared objective and the community's survival. The research is also consistent with Nwobu (2018), who found that a music therapy guild should be established to include as many artists as feasible who are committed to facilitating human healing via music. Therefore, Nwobu (2018) recommends establishing significant awareness about the therapeutic value of music in various institutions, marketplaces, and churches. This indicates that the therapeutic efficacy of music is considerably enhanced by repeated lyrical patterns, calming melodies, and harmonious collective singing. These aspects collaborate to foster togetherness, emotional resilience, and collective support among the bereaved, aiding them in processing sorrow and deriving solace from community mourning rituals.

The funeral song 3 "*Mgbe, Mgbe o o*" a song of lamentation depicting hopelessness uses vivid imagery and symbolism to express loss, powerlessness, and emotional catharsis, reinforcing the inevitability of death in Igbo culture. Its communal grieving function, mournful melody, slow rhythm, and repetitive wailing facilitate emotional release, helping mourners process grief and find solace through shared lamentation. The research is consistent with Nwobu (2018), who found that a music therapy guild should be established to include as many artists as feasible who are committed to facilitating human healing via music. The study aligns with the findings of Bensimon et al. (2008), who observed that drumming not only fosters feelings of openness, togetherness, belonging, sharing, closeness, connectivity, and intimacy, but also serves as a non-threatening method to access painful memories, facilitating the expression of anger and the restoration of self-control. This indicates that mourning songs function as an essential emotional outlet, assisting people in processing sorrow and managing the anguish of loss. The use of vivid imagery and symbolism enhances emotional expression, enabling mourners to convey emotions of helplessness while affirming traditional convictions about the inevitability of death. Furthermore, these songs foster community unity, providing psychological solace and collective restoration via shared grieving practices.

Song 4 "*Ndiombuochu*" (*Women are sacred*) affirms the sacredness of women in Igbo culture, reinforcing their worth, unity, and resilience through lyrical repetition and communal references. Its uplifting melody, steady tempo, and possible call-and-response structure enhance its therapeutic role, fostering empowerment, healing, and solidarity among women. The study collaborates with Nwobu (2018), who stated that music is used in Igbo to keep man physically fit, to teach them the control and discipline necessary in warfare, and to inculcate feelings of patriotism. The findings also support Agu's (2006) assertion that "music is one of the strongest tools for cultural uniqueness and self-identity in the life of any society" (p. 18).

This suggests that the song serves as both a cultural affirmation and a therapeutic instrument, confirming women's inherent worth and social importance in Igbo society. The repetition of lyrics and common allusions enhances collective identity and resilience by offering emotional support, especially during hardship or marginalization. The uplifting melody, consistent pace, and call-and-response format promote engagement by cultivating solidarity, empowerment, and healing among women while maintaining cultural traditions that honor their sanctity.

Song 5 "*Obodo emebigo*" *The land is desecrated* serves as a lament on societal decay, leadership failure, and communal helplessness, using symbolic language to critique authority and awaken social consciousness. Its melancholic melody, measured rhythm, and repetitive phrasing reinforce collective grief, fostering unity and providing a therapeutic outlet for shared frustration and discontent. This study corresponds with Ochuko's (2023) research on eco-conscious poetry from the Niger Delta, which depicts trauma as an enduring, insidious catastrophe resulting from environmental degradation, therefore establishing poetry as an appropriate medium for articulating traumatic experiences in literary form. This indicates that music may serve as a potent vehicle for societal criticism, emotional expression, and community healing, converting communal suffering into a uniting and consciousness-raising experience.

Song 6 "*Omuru nwa bia gburu anyi aka*" *One who gave birth to a child deserves cheers*, celebrates parenthood, emphasizing gratitude, responsibility, and the intrinsic value of children within Igbo culture. Its uplifting melody, moderate tempo, and repetitive phrasing reinforce communal joy and provide emotional and spiritual encouragement, particularly for parents navigating challenges. This aligns with Shimada et al.'s (2021) study, which showed that music therapy throughout the prenatal, delivery, and postpartum stages may provide advantages for pregnant women and babies, therefore underscoring its significance in this domain. This implies that music in Igbo culture is essential for commemorating motherhood, promoting social support, reinforcing concepts of appreciation and responsibility, and acting as an emotional and spiritual source of encouragement for parents.

Song 7 "*Na Nwa Bu Ifeoma*" *(A child is a good thing)* highlights the value of children as blessings and sources of joy in Igbo culture, emphasizing parental responsibility and divine gratitude. Its uplifting melody, moderate tempo, and repetitive affirmations reinforce the spiritual and emotional significance of child-rearing, fostering a collective sense of appreciation and celebration. The study is consistent with García-González et al. (2018), who found that music therapy has shown efficacy in enhancing sleep quality in pregnant women, improving birth outcomes, and fostering mother-child attachment. This indicates that children are highly esteemed as blessings in Igbo culture, with music acting as a conduit for expressing thanks, reinforcing parental obligations, and strengthening community ties via collective celebration and spiritual affirmation.

CONCLUSION

It may be argued that the way proverbs are considered to be the palm oil with which words are eaten in Igbo culture is synonymous with music as the medium with which life itself is expressed. Women's mental health needs constant aid, rejuvenation and revival as they go through the various life processes and challenges that resonate with their nature, due to their peculiarity as women and life trials in general. This research reveals that music therapy stands as a veritable tool that fosters mental health among women especially during periods of pregnancy, childbirth, menopause, bereavement, family and spousal responsibilities, domestic

chores and protests. As the world advances, it is necessary to constantly engage with music therapy and the various musical forms, traditional, indigenous and contemporary, to extenuate the numerous mental health challenges the women are confronted with on daily basis.

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