Abhi International Journal of
Humanities and Law
(A Peer Review Journal)
journal homepage: www.abhijournals.com/aijhl/

Volume 1, Issue 2, January 2025 ISSN : 3107-6793

Moral Education through Song: Deconstructing Jando Circumcision Rites in Muwawa Village

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:
Received January 15, 2024
Revised January 30, 2024
Accepted April 12, 2025
Available online April 25, 2025

Keywords:
initiation rites, moral education, circumcision, Jando, rural Malawi, oral literature, animal imagery, agrarian context, Functionalist approach.

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the role of songs in imparting moral education during the circumcision rite known as *Jando* in Muwawa village, Senior Chief Ngokwe, in Machinga, Malawi. Initiation rites in many African communities, including *Jando*, serve as pivotal moments of transition, guiding initiates from one life stage to another. The focus of this study is to analyse the selected songs used during these rites, emphasizing their moral teachings and the cultural context in which they were composed. The songs reflect the agrarian way of life of the community, with many lyrics drawing on imagery from the natural world, particularly animals, to communicate lessons on behaviour, responsibility, and social roles. Through this imagery, the songs underscore the community's deep connection to the environment, illustrating how nature shapes their understanding of human conduct. The analysis argues that although the songs are rooted in specific local contexts, the moral values they convey—such as respect, responsibility, and cooperation—hold universal relevance. The study employs a Functionalist approach to oral literature, highlighting the songs' utilitarian role in reinforcing societal values and norms. By exploring these initiation songs, the article contributes to a deeper understanding of how oral traditions function as educational tools and preserve moral teachings across generations.

1. Introduction

This paper examines the role of songs in moral education at the time of initiation into new societal roles for initiates at the Jando circumcision rites in Muwawa village, Malawi. This paper examines the role of the song texts and their ability to in still knowledge and values in these initiation rites. The central research question revolves around the importance of song texts in initiation rites and moral education. The five sub-research questions guide the analysis, which include the agrarian context in song composition, the use of animal imagery, reflection of environmental embeddedness, specific human behaviours alluded to, and universal values promoted. Research methodology The research used a qualitative methodology approach with its focus on analysing song texts through a Functionalist approach to oral literature. The paper is written to include a literature review, explanation of methodology, discussion of findings, and a conclusion that demonstrates theoretical and practical implications.

2. Literature Review

This section explores literature based on research that has been carried out on the role that songs play in African initiation rites, especially concerning Jando rites. It addresses the five sub-research questions: the agrarian context, animal imagery, environmental embeddedness, specific human

behaviours, and universal values. This section critiques existing literature, pointing out gaps such as underexplored environmental references, deeper analysis of universal values, and underrepresentation of specific behaviours in song texts. The paper is aimed at filling these gaps through a detailed analysis of the Jando songs.

2.1 Agrarian Context of Song Composition

The early studies of Jando songs pointed out that they were of agrarian origin, with the songs containing references to farming activities and cycles. These were the initial studies that showed relevance between music and daily life but failed to place them in proper perspective relating to deeper societal implications. More recently, later research has progressed by demonstrating symbolic meanings of agrarian references while leaving holes in understanding how these symbols work out in moral education. Our study builds on previous work by offering a nuanced analysis of the agrarian context, addressing unexplored aspects of the songs' educational roles.

2.2 Use of Animal Imagery

Research on animal imagery in Jando songs initially focused on identifying common animals and their symbolic meanings. Subsequent studies explored the cultural significance of these symbols, highlighting their role in illustrating societal values. However, past research often overlooked the dynamic relationship between animal imagery and moral lessons. Our analysis delves into this relationship, providing a detailed examination of how animal imagery supports moral education during the rites, offering a fresh perspective on its educational impact.

2.3 Reflection of Environmental Embeddedness

Initial research identified the environmental factors in Jando songs, which were seen to reflect the natural environment. This identification highlighted the cultural significance of the songs but did not provide a comprehensive analysis of their educational value. Subsequent research started to associate environmental factors with moral lessons, but the relationship is still not fully understood. Our research fills this gap by exploring how environmental embeddedness in the songs contributes to moral education and, therefore, enhances our understanding of their cultural significance.

2.4 Specific Human Behaviours Alluded to in Songs

Research on human behaviours in Jando songs frequently identified behaviours that the songs encourage or discourage. Such studies provided a foundation but did not delve into the role of the songs in creating these behaviours Recent research has tried to link song texts with behavioural outcomes, but there is still a gap in understanding how specific behaviours are portrayed and taught through the songs. Our analysis provides an in-depth examination of these representations, demonstrating the didactic function of the songs as guides to appropriate behaviour.

2.5 Global Values Enforced Through Song

Various universal values in the Jando songs have been indicated, including respect, responsibility, and community, among others. These studies might, however, ignore the detailed processes of how the identified values are effectively communicated and understood. Our study delves deeper into the manner in which universal values are realized through the song, thus enhancing understanding of timeless educational impact that the songs generate and filling existing gaps in regard to the effective transmission and context-specific significance.

3. Method

This research adopts a qualitative research method, applying the Functionalist method to interpret the song texts in Jando circumcision ceremonies. The qualitative method allows for an in-depth exploration of the educational roles of the songs and their functions in society. Data collection was

done through fieldwork in Muwawa village, interviewing participants and recording the songs. The collected data had been analysed thematically in order to focus on the agrarian context, animal imagery, environmental references, human behaviours, and universal values. This thematic analysis aids in grasping the detailed educational import of the songs and their cultural significance.

4. Findings

The findings of this study unveil educational involvements of songs within the Jando rites that answer all five sub-research questions. The findings include "Agrarian Symbolism and Moral Instruction," "Animal Imagery and Behavioural Lessons," "Environmental Connections and Cultural Education," "Human Behaviour and Song Narratives," and "Timeless Values in Song Texts." These results reveal how the songs reflect an agrarian context, use animal imagery to explain moral lessons, give importance to environmental embeddedness, portray particular human behaviours, and promote timeless values. By addressing these aspects, the study fills gaps in understanding the educational impact of Jando songs, highlighting their importance in moral education and cultural continuity.

4.1 Agrarian Symbolism and Moral Instruction

Analysis of song texts reveals the use of agrarian symbolism to impart moral lessons. Interviews with village elders highlighted the songs' references to farming activities, illustrating the connection between agriculture and societal values. For instance, a song that praises industrious farmers symbolizes hard work and responsibility in the minds of the initiates, thus reinforcing the values. Such a finding dismisses previous interpretations of the songs as merely descriptive; instead, they are found to play a part in moral instruction through symbolic references to agrarian life.

4.2 Animal Imagery and Lessons on Behaviour

The study shows that animal imagery in Jando songs plays a crucial role in teaching behavioural lessons. Participants pointed out that animals are used as symbols for desirable traits, such as the lion representing bravery. Song analysis showed how these symbols are used to illustrate and encourage specific behaviour, such as courage and community spirit. This finding gives new insights into how animal imagery supports moral education, pointing out its importance in conveying behavioural lessons.

4.3 Environmental Connections and Cultural Education

Research findings indicate that environmental references in songs contribute to cultural education in terms of reflecting the community's connection to their surroundings. Song performances interviewed and underscored the role of nature in the songs as a means of teaching respect for the land through environmental elements. For instance, seasonal change songs are used in discussing adaptability and resilience in order to promote these values among initiates. This finding expands understanding of the songs' educational roles, emphasizing their cultural and environmental significance.

4.4 Human Behaviour and Song Narratives

The study has emerged, thus playing the role of song narratives in portraying and shaping human behaviour. Analysis of song texts and participant feedback shows the use of the above descriptions in illustrating both positive and negative behaviours, teaching lessons on what is appropriate to conduct. For example, stories about cooperation among community members can be used to emphasize the importance of teamwork. This indicates that earlier research omitted an important factor, thereby demonstrating that indeed song narratives play a role in guiding behaviour and promoting societal values.

4.5 Timeless values in song texts

The research identifies timeless values conveyed through Jando songs, such as respect, responsibility, and community. Participants highlighted the songs' emphasis on these values, noting their relevance across generations. Analysis of song texts revealed how these values are woven into the lyrics, ensuring their transmission and internalization by initiates. This finding addresses previous gaps in understanding the songs' role in promoting universal values, illustrating their enduring educational impact and significance in moral education**.**

5. Conclusion

The research provides a rich understanding of the educational roles of songs in Jando circumcision rites, pointing to their importance in moral education and cultural continuity. The findings confirm that songs reflect the agrarian context, use animal imagery for behavioural lessons, emphasize environmental connections, portray human behaviours, and advance universal values. Such findings, therefore, reverse the earlier views that songs were simply descriptive, with the multifaceted educational impacts. However, because the study is conducted in Muwawa village alone, it has limited generalizability. Future research should employ mixed methodologies to explore how songs function in other contexts of cultures and deepen understanding on educational significance. This work therefore contributes to furthering oral literature theory while emphasizing the roles of culture preservation and moral education in African societies.

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