

*Full Length Research Paper*

# **Cultural suppression of female gender in Nigeria: Implications of Igbo females' songs**

**Ebele V. Ojukwu\* and Eunice U. Ibekwe**

Department of Music, Faculty of Arts, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria.

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The widespread of domestic violence is a social problem awakening the interest of different organizations, governments and people as a result of its negative consequences. Female gender in Nigeria has been marginalized, stereotyped and humiliated in various ways resulting in negative impacts on them such as depression, physical disability and even death. Music has been found to be an avenue for the female folk to express themselves. Women in Igbo culture manipulate music to give voice to their collective thoughts and actions. The research employs survey method of data collection and thus is geared towards content and textual analysis of some of the songs used by Igbo women in airing their emotions; it adopts feminism as a theory. Due to the fact that music still remains an effective tool for communication aimed at ameliorating family squabbles, the paper argues that oftentimes women used these songs as a form of subtle protests to draw societal attention to their predicament instead of physical violence and combat. It therefore concludes by suggesting that musicologists and composers should put more energy in collecting, notating and recording more female cultural songs for posterity.

**Key words:** Female gender, Igbo community, suppression, music and communication.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Women and music in Igbo culture**

The concept of women in this guise involves women of marriageable status or married women to be precise. They are those rural women who are not exposed to western education system. They are always busy with child caring duties and other domestic activities. Most times, they depend on their husbands for livelihood and other essential maintenance need. As a result of this subservient role, music becomes their nearest companion and available mode of expression and communication. This is because; music remains the only medium that enjoys freedom of expression which spoken words do not enjoy. Apart from individual musical expressions, they

normally form different musical groups where they associate with their fellow women. Their music ranges from birth songs, puberty songs, marriage to funeral songs. Traditionally, it is believed that music is one of the greatest carriers of culture; hence, women seem to carry and circulate information on cultural values more readily than men due to their deep involvement in musical activities.

Women also portray cultural identity through their language of communication which is vernacular. Their body adornments and type of instruments they use, all these make cultural statements. The role women play as

\*Corresponding author. E-mail: [ev.ojukwu@unizik.edu.ng](mailto:ev.ojukwu@unizik.edu.ng). Tel: 08037244058, 08029962941.

birth and caregivers draw them closer to their children. During this period, women use to introduce or transfer the most needed early musical life to their children. These practices which are done orally help to ensure cultural extension and / or continuity. These are done in form of lullabies, folk songs and tales and so on. In other words, women's involvement in musical activities is the surest way of keeping a given culture alive.

### Women in African /Igbo culture

In African society and Igbo in particular, the gender peculiarities and patriarchal construct remain the bane across virtually all spheres of life in the society. There is a greater level of gender sensitivity to the extent that boys are brought up to see themselves as superior sex to girls and as such, boys feel stronger, more important and indispensable, while the females are trained to see themselves as weaker sex or even as appendages to the men folk (Ojukwu, 2015). This is as a result of what Ibekwe (2018) calls "natural factor" where she submits that "this natural factor of being born a man or a woman places women in a subservient position in society and thus situates them mostly for indoor activities" (p. 204). According to Ozumba (2005) "this silent but rigorous schooling into the patriarchal and matriarchal stereotype was ingrained in the traditional institution of the Igbo" [<http://www.quodlibet.net>]. The female gender in Africa especially, Nigeria seemed to be culturally suppressed resulting in upsurge in literature triggered by various feminist movements for example Women in Nigeria (WIN), National Women's Union, Federation of Ogoni Women Association, Non-governmental Women's Human Rights Organization, Federation of Nigeria Women's Society, Aba Market Women Organization, Abeokuta Women's Union, Widows Association of Nigeria, etc. These organizations attend to different women's rights issues within the private sphere of the family and in the public arena, in such areas as sexual and reproductive health; poverty; economic empowerment; violence against women; property ownership; peace and security; leadership development and political participation, among others (Madunagu, 2010). Female gender encounters various forms of discrimination, physical and emotional torture that pervades all aspects of their life, from childhood till death. Women are being discriminated against in various ways. The subordination of women has actually exposed them to difficult obnoxious practices meted out to them in the name of culture and tradition. Asigbo and Ibekwe (2015) decry that:

In Igbo culture, due to the fact that patriarchal institution is giving prominence in the scheme of things, most of their laws or traditions are gender discriminatory, hence, there is no equity and freedom. Dialogue most times is reduced to the barest minimum in matters that concern

women since they are considered to be on a lower socio-political scale from men (p. 228).

There are cases of African cultural practices, like widowhood rites in certain parts of Igbo land in the South-East, female genital mutilation rites in Yoruba land in the West, the 'Kule' or 'Ba Shiga' system in Hausa land in the North and so on. The 'Purdah' system also known as Bashiga is common amongst the Hausas of Northern Nigeria. The Purdah system for instance prevents Hausa women and young girls of puberty age from going out unescorted and getting involve in public life and activities. Widowhood rites in Igbo land portray situations where women are subjected to certain cultural practices that strip them of their rights. Sometimes, they are treated like animals, subjected to do unprintable things. These cultural and religious practices at times lead to abuse of womanhood (Ebo, 2015).

This discrimination against female gender in Nigeria is based predominantly on patriarchy, where the roles of men and women are socially constructed in such a way that women occupy inferior position in the scheme of things has equally been observed by Atsenuwa in Lewu (2015). The moment a girl child is born in Nigeria, she starts to encounter discrimination. Bello in Lewu (2015) laments the discrimination against female gender thus:

People who come to felicitate often greet the birth of a girl child with less glee than that of a boy. Some people even respond to questions on the sex of a new baby girl by saying it is another 'asawo' that is 'prostitute', especially if the mother had given birth to many female children in the past (p. 564).

Some are being subjected to various dehumanizing treatment for one reason or the other and in most cases are traumatized and are not given fair hearing. "Many writers have dedicated their literary energy to pleading the case of the African women and children" (Odinye and Okey-Umeh, 2016:79). There are cases of female gender abuse and rampant femicide in every society. The dominance of men over women has often caused fear and intimidation for most women in the Igbo culture. In some cases, where some of these women make frantic efforts to resist the abuse, often see themselves out of their husbands' home leaving their children behind. Even when they are allowed to go with their children, they are left with nothing to take care of the children. In other to save themselves and their children from starvation, some decide to stay back and remain in perpetual agony which oftentimes lead them into depression and eventual untimely death.

Customarily in Igbo culture, a woman who leaves her husband's home while the husband is still alive is being branded all sorts of names including prostitute, witch, nagger, etc. In most cases such women are not even welcomed in their parents' homes. They are left to be destitute forcing them to run back and plead with their husbands to receive them back especially when such women are financially dependent on their husband. When

such is the case, women resort to alternative means of communicating their emotions in other to make their voice heard and to seek their husbands' attention or at least reduce to the barest minimum, physical and emotional tortures they encounter in their husbands' home. Women can achieve this in a very subtle manner through the sweet melodies of beautiful songs, such that will captivate their husbands' souls and make them ponder. Okafor and Okafor (2009) write "the beauty of music in any society is that there is enough of it to express any circumstance (within a given) environment – the good, the bad, the beautiful and the ugly" (p.1). It should be realized that music flourishes where mere speech is feared to be used. Music softens and soothes the heart no matter how hardened and strong that heart is; there are songs that will calm it and make it ponder. This study is aimed at analyzing the texts of some of such songs used by women as safe and comfortable means of expressing themselves and communicating their predicaments.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Cultural suppression of women in Igbo traditional society

The Igbo woman refers to the baby-girl, the young daughter of the family, the wife, the mother and the many roles that the woman assumes in the course of her life in the traditional Igbo society. According to Okafor (2005) "women have affiliations of two kinds: as married women to the village of their husbands; and as daughters to the village where they were born" (p. 86).

Culture is seen as people's way of life. Akpabot (1975) views culture as a way of thinking, feeling and believing in a given society which gives that society a distinctive identity. Cultural suppression of women is an undeniable fact in Igbo community, which has subjected many women and girls to a vulnerable state, leaving them at the mercy of natural endowment. *The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language (2010)* defines suppression as, "the deliberate exclusion from consciousness and action of ideas, memories, or emotions, especially those regarded as unpleasant or as socially unacceptable" (p. 1261). Thus, cultural suppression is conscious exclusion of one from the thinking, feeling and belief of his/her culture.

In Igbo culture, women are not culturally regarded as equal to men. For instance, in Igbo culture, any woman who could not give birth to a child for her husband suffers years of ostracism, if not divorce. On another note, women are seen as inferior, and stereotyped roles are stipulated for them. Hence, opportunities for education, employment and recreation are either denied or restricted from them. This cultural alienation of a female gender is obvious in Igbo community. It is a situation that denies

women the right to own properties such as land or to inherit any of her late husbands' properties or participate in village meetings. The apparent evidence of cultural suppression of women in Igbo culture could be traced in some of the Igbo proverbs, such as: *Onyeji nwanyi buruibu, bu n'is inkiti* (who uses a woman as a pad in carrying luggage is carrying without a pad); *Onaghi adi mma agbachaa oso ka nwoke ebie ya ka nwanyi* (it is not good after running a race like a man, ends it like a woman); *Nwoke nusia ogu, nwanyi enwelu akuko* (when a man is done with fighting, a woman narrates how it was fought); *Nkita nwanyi zulu na-ata akwa okuko* (a dog raised by a woman eats fowl egg). These Igbo proverbs, seriously and culturally designate men as strong being and women as weak being; men as noble and women as depraved; men indulge in great exploit while women gossip and narrate about men's exploit; and men are disciplinarians while any child trained by a woman lacks core discipline. These proverbs, according to Asika (2015) "continue to look down on women as mere inferior things, not worthy of entrusting with any secret or serious responsibility" (p.130).

### Songs as vital means of communication in Igbo culture

The Igbo people are an industrious ethnic group that spread out all over Nigeria and beyond in pursuit of economic goals (Nzewi, 1991). The Igbo tribe is one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria together with the Hausa and the Yoruba. They are located in the South-eastern part of Nigeria and cover about five States namely: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo state. According to Okafor (2017):

The Igbo home land is the forest region of Southeastern of Nigeria with outcropping to the West, and lying between longitudes 6° and 8° East and latitudes 5° and 7° North. They lived mainly to the East of the lower Niger with a small extension of about 900,000 on the West Bank (p.1).

Song in Igbo culture serves to express feelings, thoughts and desires. These songs are commonly sung while engaging in tasks associated with other events such as, marriage, agriculture, funerals, farming, moon light plays, etc. A great number of these songs serve to articulate feelings or love, romance, or a longing for home and their sweet tunes carry over the grasslands, forests, mountains, and homes of the Igbo enriching old musical traditions and inspiring new ones. As one of the earliest art forms of humanity, songs have their roots in all kinds of activities and are deeply ingrained in human social life. A lot of important activities, such as labour, daily living, hunting, war, sacrifice, entertainment, love, etc can be displayed in folk songs. It is also an expression of

psychology and a way to express a beautiful vision of life and reveal emotions.

Music constitutes an important aspect of the life of the Igbo people. Emeka (2002) opines that music is integral with the lifelong educational system of the Igbo. It is known to possess cultural and spiritual values. According to Ekwueme (2004), "music accompanies the life of a black man from the womb to the tomb, being featured at celebrations; to announce the birth of a baby, at children's games, at peer group functions, at work and leisure, in religion and death" (p.59). Agu (2011) further affirms that, "the musical tradition surrounding his birth begins as soon as he is born. From the age of two, he starts listening to and enjoying music, especially the lullabies the mother or the baby-sitter sings to lull him to sleep" (p. 2).

This study is hinged on feminist theory which provides an analytic framework for understanding how women's location in, and experience of, social situations differ from men's. For example, cultural feminists look to the different values associated with womanhood and femininity as a reason why men and women experience the social world differently. Feminist theorists believe that the different roles assigned to women and men within institutions better explain gender differences, including the sexual division of labor in the household. They focus on how women have been marginalized in patriarchal societies. Some feminist theorists focus specifically on how masculinity is developed through socialization, and how its development interacts with the process of developing femininity in girls. It also borders on gender oppression and gender inequality and it argues that not only are women different from or unequal to men, but that they are actively oppressed, subordinated, and even abused by men. It further argues that women have the same capacity as men for moral reasoning and agency, but that patriarchy, particularly the sexist division of labor, has historically denied women the opportunity to express and practice this reasoning. These dynamics serve to shove women into the private sphere of the household and to exclude them from full participation in public life [<https://www.thoughtco.com/feminist-theory-3026624>].

In many communities in Africa, this cultural suppression still abounds to a great extent; women's fight for equality with men notwithstanding and until such a time when women succeed in clamoring equality with men, they need to find alternative and subtle means of expressing their emotions. This, as the paper argues, can be done through songs since songs remain effective means of expression without hurting and which can melt the heart of even the most difficult man. Given the emotionally charged nature of music, it can be an incredibly effective way to express oneself and cope with challenging life circumstances. Women also have songs for all kinds of occasions as Okafor (2005) opines: "women are the first teachers of Music" (p.74). If time or opportunity is given to explore the subtleties of the music of another culture, there is always a meaning behind the sounds. Sometimes that

meaning is quite basic, at other times; the meaning can be very complex and strongly connected to the beliefs and practices of that culture.

Music is one of the few ways in which people can connect with each other without language; it is one way in which cultures can not only identify themselves but also communicate with each other and find common ground. One can easily get an instant mental picture and some impression of the people of a particular culture and perhaps their language through their art and music. Sights and sounds of music can leave a deep impression on people.

## METHODOLOGY

Survey method of data collection was employed. Songs were randomly selected which were considered helpful in bringing out and giving meaning to the topic of study. The contents of the songs were analyzed in relation to the message they are meant to portray and a total of seven songs were analyzed. The songs were also translated and notated for wider audience consumption.

## SONGS THAT SUPPORT THE WRITERS' CLAIMS

Igbo speaking women, mainly from the south east of Nigeria share similar culture as far as communicating through music. Women express every mood in songs whether happiness, sadness, pain, joy or even for consolation. For instance, a childless woman can console herself with the fact that she is not wholly responsible for her childlessness with the following songs (Figure 1).

### Content and textual analysis of Song one

Childlessness is seen as an abomination in Igbo culture, as a result, any woman who finds herself in such a situation is looked upon as a curse in the family she is married to; she is faced with maltreatment and all kinds of abuse. In a situation like that, song becomes her only consolation. Therefore, the above song is usually sung by married women of middle age. The song is a plea on the husbands to be kind to their wives who still look up to God for child bearing. Through the song, husbands are advised not to maltreat or look down on women who are yet to beget children since child bearing is gift from God. The song is also a call for such women to hang their hope in God who gives children and believe that God will surely bless them with children. This song portrays the predicament of women in Igbo culture who are yet to bear children in their various homes, where people mock them as if they are the cause of their barrenness forgetting that the husband may even be the cause of the problem.

The song is usually rendered meditatively and moody to enable whoever listens to the song to meditate on the

**Song One: From a Childless woman****Abu m Oyo Oyo***Di m lee abu m oyooyo**Di m lee abu m oyooyo**Obughi mkerenwa**Okwanu chi ne enyenwa**Ezigbo di m ewenzinaiwe**Aga m amuruginwa**Chinekekereuwagaenyekwanu**m nwa**Ukonwaakona m**Yaakona m yaakonamo***English Translation**

My husband look, I am beautiful

My husband look, I am beautiful

I did not create baby

It is God that gives baby

My good husband do not be angry

I will bear you a child

The God that created the earth

will give me baby

Babies do not elude me,

Do not elude me, do not elude me

## ABUM OYO OYO

Arranged by Ebele Ojukwu

Dim lee a - bum o - yo yo, dim lee! a - bum o - yo yo;

9 o - bu - ghi m ke - re nwa, o - kwa - nu Chi n' e - nye nwa, e - zi - gbo dim e - we - zi - n' i - we a

15 gam a - mu - ru gi nwa Chi - ne - ke ke - r' u - wa g' e - nye - kwa - nu

20 m nwa u - ko nw' a - ko - la m y' a - ko - na m, y' a - ko - na mo!

**Figure 1.** Textual analysis of song one.

relics and have a rethink. It is educating both the women singing it and to those who the song is addressed, to focus on the creator for fruit of the womb since it is not by human power or might. Other songs that serve various purposes in the lives of women in Igbo culture include:

**Content and textual analysis of Song two**

Beauty, they say, depends on the eyes of the beholder. Some men marry because of facial and body appearances.

The moment all these are no more or disappear as a result of one thing or the other probably child birth, their admiration ceased. While women do not worry about how the look after child birth, men at times find consolation in other women whose beauty are still intact (Figure 2).

This song explains the innate happiness in a woman who bears children in her husband's home. It tries to establish that children or child bearing is *sine quo non* to happy home.

Song two is usually sung by women during weaning

**Song Two: Marriage for Beauty****MmaNwanyi Bu Nwa***Di m lee lee, di ojjioma**Di m lee lee, di ojjioma**Ikporo m okeibirioge m kunwana aka**M'azusiaafianwa, di ojjioma**I fu m nauzosi m ibuduonye**youM'asiimaghiziokeibiri ahu I juruaju**Otu lee lee, mmanwanyibunwa**Otu lee lee, mmanwanyibunwa**M'asiimaghiziokeibiri ahu I juruaju**Otu lee lee, mmanwanyibunwa**Otu lee lee, mmanwanyibunwa***English Translation**

My husband look,, look, husband for beauty

My husband look, look, husband for beauty

You called me old woman when I'm nursing a baby

I weaned my baby,husband for beauty

You saw me on the road and asked me who are you

I said, don't you know the old woman you rejected

Crowd look, look, woman's beauty is baby

Crowd look, look, woman's beauty is baby

I said, don't you know the old woman you rejected

Crowd look, look, woman's beauty is baby

Crowd look, look, woman's beauty is baby

**MMA NWANYI BU NWA**

Arranged by Ebele Ojukwu

Dim lee! lee! dio - ji - ji o- ma, dim lee! lee! dio - ji - ji o- ma\_ I -

5 kpo-ro mo-ki-bi-r'o-ge m ku nwa n'a- ka, m'a - zu-si'a-fia nwa dio - ji - ji o- ma\_ I -

9 fu m n'u- zo si "m'i - bu di o- nye?"m'a - s'i - ma-ghi-zio-ki-bi-ria-hu'i - ju-r'a - ju. O - tu

13 lee! lee! m - ma nwa-nyi bu nwa, o - tu lee, lee, m - ma nwa-nyi bu nwa\_\_

**Figure 2.** Textual Analysis of Song two.

weaning ceremony. Through this song husbands are reminded that their wives are still beautiful though rearing children may make them look haggard. According to the song, the women's beauty seems to fade while they are busy with their babies who take most of their time. There is a notion that men go after other women outside their homes while their wives are with child but clues for the wife when she weans her baby and her beauty blossoms

again. According to the song, a husband calls his wife old woman when she is breastfeeding but was unable to recognize her beauty when she blossoms after weaning. It ends the song by saying that a woman's beauty is her baby. Through this song, men are advised to be patient with their wives while rearing their children and the women to make effort and look good to be desirable for their husbands.

**Song 3: Retribution for disobedience****Bia Lee NgaMmiri Mara n' Onya****Refrain:** *Bia lee ngammiramaran'onya* Come and witness where water was trapped**MmaNwanyi Bu Nwa***Uli lee lee, uli lee, lee (twice)**Nne m gwakwara m agwa m alunandinamba**Nna m gwakwara m agwa m alunandinamba**Nne m gwakwara m naonyeomaeriugundu**Onye puta, onye puta Bia nye m ugene**Onye puta, onye puta Bia nye m ugene**Ugene, ugene Bia nye m ugene Ugene,**Bia lee ngammiramaran'onya***English Translation**

Uli come and see, uli come and see

Mother told me not to marry a foreigner

Father told me not to marry a foreigner

Mother told me that a good child does not eat raw pumpkin

Every one come out and give me ugene

Every one come out and give me ugene

ugene, Come and give me ugene

Come and witness where water was trapped

**BIA LEE NGA MMIRI MARA N'ONYA**

Arranged by Ebele Ojukwu

Call

U - li lee! lee! U - li lee! lee!

Refrain

Bia lee nga mmi-ri ma-ra n'o -

9

U - li lee! lee! U - li lee! lee!

nya. Bia lee nga mmi-ri ma-ra n'o -

17

N-ne m gwa-kwa-ram a - gwa si m'a - lu-na di na mba.

nya. Bia lee nga mmi-ri

24

N-na m gwa-kwa-ram a - gwa m'a - lu-na di na mba.

ma-ra n'o - nya. Bia lee

31

N ne m gwa-kwa-ra mu na o-ny'o ma e - riu - gu ndu.

nga mmi-ri ma-ra n'o - nya.



2

38

O-nye pu-t'o-nye pu-ta O-nye

Bia lee nga mmi-ri ma-ra n'o - nya. Bia nye m'u - ge - ne

46

pu - t'o - nye pu - ta U - ge - ne, u - ge - ne.

Bia nye m'u - ge - ne

52

Bia lee nga mmi - ri ma-ra n'o - nya!

Bia nye m'u - ge - ne. Bia lee nga mmi - ri ma-ra n'o - nya!

Figure 3. Textual analysis of song three.

### Content and textual analysis of song three

Disobedience is one the behaviours that attracts retribution especially when it involves marriage. In Igbo culture, marriage is not only the union of a suitor and bride, but a contract between both families. It is the duty of the parents to advice their daughter rightly to avoid had I known. If in the end the marriage is not successful nobody sympathizes with the victim. This song is a lamentation of a woman who is being maltreated in her husband's home. In the song, the woman laments that she was warned by her parents not to marry outside her culture since they are bound to misunderstand her every move. The woman beacons on passersby to pity her predicament. Her lamentation in the song implies that she has done everything within her reach for peace to

reign but all to no avail. This she shows through the refrain, "*bia lee ngammirimaran'onya*" meaning "come and see where water is trapped". Water in Igbo culture signifies peacefulness, quietness, solemn, easy going, free etc. Here, the woman regretted not harkening to her parents' advice to marry in a foreign culture and sees herself as free flow of water that entered into a trap after she had tried everything within her power to maintain peace; she resorted to singing to attract sympathy from all and sundry. The implication of this song is that men should realize that a woman that leaves her people, home and culture should be treated honourably and with subtleness and should never be made to regret marrying in a foreign culture. It is also a call for women to adhere to their parents' advice since they always have their children's interest at heart (Figure 3).

### Song Four: Problems of polygamy

#### *Di Nwata Nwaikolo*

#### Refrain: *Zamiliza*

#### *Di Nwata Nwaikolo*

*Di m, di m o, di m nwatanwaikolo (twice)*  
*Nwunye di m gburuewun'ime, si o mu gburu*  
*Ngo rabayagorabaya, okweghi m ogugo*  
*Nwunye di m gburuokukon'akwa, si o mu gburu*  
*Ngo rabayagorabaya, okweghi m ogugo*  
*Nwunye di mooobikoalaputanamo*  
*Ewo o di m achupukwana mu o*  
*Ewo o di m nwatanwaikolo*

#### English Translation

My husband, my youthful husband (Twice)  
 My co-wife killed a pregnant goat and accused me of it  
 I denied it but to no avail  
 My co-wife killed a hen in egg and accused me of it  
 I denied it but to no avail  
 My co-wife please don't put me in trouble  
 My youthful husband please don't send me packing  
 Please, my youthful husband



# DIM NWATA NWAIKOLO

(My Youthful Husband)

Arranged by Ebele Ojukwu

Call

Di m, di m oh!\_ di m nwa-ta nwa-i - ko-lo. Di m, di m oh!\_ di

Response

Za-mi-ri za.

7

m nwa-ta nwa-i - ko-lo. Nwu- nye\_ di m gbu-r'e - wu n'i - me si o mu\_

Za-mi-ri za.

12

gbu-ru; m go-ra-ba ya, go-ra - ba y'o-kwe-ghi m'o - gu-go. Nwu- nye di m

Za-mi-ri za. Za-mi-ri za.

17

gbu-r'o-ku-ko n'a - kwa si o mu\_ gbu-ru; m go ra ba ya, go ra - ba y'o-kwe-ghi m'o -

Za-mi-ri za.

22

-gu-go. Nwu- nye. di mo\_\_ bi-k'a - ra-pu-ta-kwa-na mo! E -

Za-mi-ri za. Za-mi-ri za.

28  
 wo di m'a - chu - pu - kwa - na mo! E -  
 Za - mi - ri za.

32  
 wo di m nwa - ta nw'i - ko - lo.  
 Za - mi - ri za.

Figure 4. Textual analysis of song three.

**Content and textual analysis of song four**

Polygamy is a welcome practice in Igbo culture. Most times, there is always intense rivalry between co-wives over who would be most loved by their husband. The above song is a plea by a distressed wife to her husband to be considerate in her case with her co-wife who killed a pregnant goat and accused her of killing it. The wife in this song tried to call her husband praise names for him to remember good old days being the husband of her

youth while pleading with her co-wife not to put her in trouble. The implication of this song is that there is a tendency for a polygamous man to act under a spell, if his second wife is diabolic in nature, may bewitch her husband and cause a divide between him and his other wives possibly his first wife so that her husband will love her most and believe everything she tells him, even when she is telling lies to the detriment of his first wife causing the first wife to feel rejected, inferior and traumatized (Figure 4).

**Song Five: Lovely marriage**

**Oyoyo Di m**

*Di m lee Di m lee Oyoyo Di m o*  
*Di m lee Di m lee Oyoyo Di m o*  
*Ala m biaraije di m mmanaruoyoyo di m o*  
*Ala m biaraije di m mmanaruoyoyo di m o*

**English Translation**

My husband, my handsome husband  
 My husband, my handsome husband  
 The land I sojourned is good to me my handsome husband  
 The land I sojourned is good to me my handsome husband

**OYOYO DI M**  
 (My Handsome Husband)

Arranged by Ebele Ojukwu

Dim lee! dim lee! o-yo-yo di mo! Dim lee! dim lee! o-yo-yo di mo, a -  
 8  
 lam bia - r'i - je di m mma n'a - hu o - yo - yo di mo! a -  
 12  
 lam bia - r'i - je di m mma n'a - hu o - yo - yo di mo!

Figure 5. Textual analysis of Song five.

**Content and textual analysis of song five**

Love is the key to every successful marriage. A woman who enjoys her husband’s love will always cherish, praise and have her husband’s interest at heart (Figure 5). The

above song is a praise song given to a husband by his wife reassuring him that she is happy with him and his people. When a woman begins to sing the above song, it shows she is at peace with her marriage, her husband, his people and the happenings around her.

**Song 6: Childlessness**

**Oke Nwaakwazina m**

*Okenwaakwazina m o  
Eke keluuwa, okenwaakwazina m o  
Okenwaakwazinam  
N’onyenaamughinwana ala anyi  
Onaghiadik’ibeya  
Eke keluwanuluolumo  
Eke keluwanuluakwa m, emelegini  
Okenwaakwazinamo*

**English Translation**

Share of a baby elude me not  
God the creator, share of a baby elude me not  
Share of a baby elude me not  
For who fails to give birth in our place  
Does not look like others  
God the creator of earth hear my voice  
God the creator hear my cry, what have I done  
Share of a baby elude me not

**OKE NWA AKWAZINA M**

Arranged by Ebele Ojukwu

O - ke\_nw'a-kwa-zi-na mo! e-ke ke-l'u-wa, o - ke\_nw'a-kwa-zi-na mo.

O - ke\_nw'a-kwa-zi-na m n'o - nye n'a-mu-ghi nwa n'a-laa-nyi o-na-ghia-

di k'i-be ya. E-ke ke-l'u - wa nu-r'o-lu mo! e-ke ke-l'u-

wa nu-r'a-kwa m; e-me-lum gi - ni? O - ke\_nw'a-kwa - zi-na mo!

Figure 6. Textual analysis of Song six.

**Textual analysis of song six**

The content of this song is quite similar to song one already treated above about a childless woman and her faith in her husband’s home as well as the community she finds herself in (Figure 6). This is a song of lamentation. It is a very sorrowful song given by a childless woman who has been tormented by her

husband’s people for not bearing a child. When a woman sings this type of song, it shows that she has been through trauma for not having a baby to the extent that she pleads to God to hear her voice and cry and also questions God for the cause of her childlessness. Ibekwe (2018) stresses that “the song is an open intercessory prayer to God” who is a giver of children (p. 16).

**Song 7: Value of child in Igbo culture****Onyena Etiri m Nwa**

Onyenaetiri m nwa,  
 Na etiri m nwa, naetiri m nwa  
 NwanyiakwunakpereChukwu, nyeya ego  
 Enyekwanayonwa  
 O no na di kpereChukwu, nyeyanwa  
 I nyechayanwa, nye ego, agbabanaya aka

**English Translation**

Who beats my baby  
 Beat my baby, beat my baby  
 A harlot prays to God, give her money  
 Never give her baby  
 Married woman prays to God, give her baby  
 After giving her baby, give her money, don't leave her empty handed

**ONYE N'ETIRI M NWA?**

Arranged by Ebele Ojukwu

O-nye n'e - ti - ri m nwa n'e - ti - ri m nwa n'e - ti - ri m nwa. O-nye n'e - ti - ri

6  
 m nwa n'e - ti - ri m nwa n'e - ti - ri m nwa. Nwa-nyi'a-kwu-na kpee-re chu-kwu

11  
 nye y'e - go e - nye-kwa - na ya nwa; o - no na di kpee - re chu - kwu

15  
 nye y'a - nwa I - nye - cha ya nwa nye y'e - go a - gba - ba - na y'a - ka.

Figure 7. Textual analysis of Song seven.

**Textual analysis of song seven**

Children are the most valued possession for every woman. They always celebrate both mother and child at the instance of child birth (Figure 7). This song is performed by married women when they come together to celebrate the birth of a new baby by one of their members. In the song the women pray that God grants children to married women and also bless them with finances to cater for the children but on the contrary prostitutes pray to God for money since that seems to be the reason why they go into prostitution. This also goes to portray harlots as women who have no need for babies. The song also satirizes wayward men who patronize sex hawkers while their wives are in their homes giving birth and taking care of the children.

**IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Suppression is a psychological problem which is capable of leading the victim into depression and traumatization. Agreeably, the number of women in our culture, who live in suppression, is quite alarming. Many resort to violence in almost every aspect of their relationship. Thus, sexual objectification has been a prevailing practice and is likely to be perpetuated, if the menaces are not addressed. Referring to the foregoing, United Nations facts and statistics says that "girls and women worldwide, across lines of income, class and culture are subjected to physical, sexual and psychological abuse around the world, at least one in every three women has been beaten, coerced into sex or abused in some other way" Explicitly, suppression restricts ones freedom and makes

the person gullible and vulnerable. Domestic violence has negative implications in the family and society at large and strategies or measures must be employed in order to address the problem, especially if it involves an aspect of gender struggles and equality. This goes a long way in destroying relationships in families and society since the most vulnerable in society such as women and children are dehumanized, brutalized and killed (Odinye and Okey-Umeh, 2016). In social interactions, it is necessary to gauge the emotional state of others in order to relate appropriately with people around you. Music is a complex auditory signal with the capacity to communicate emotion rapidly and effectively and often occurs in social situations or ceremonies as an emotional unifier” [<https://english-magazine.org>]. Culturally, hopes, fears and aspirations of all people are often expressed in their music (Ekong, 2008).

Every human being has moments when one is brought to one's knees with pain, sadness, and confusion. The intellectual, verbal expression of feelings doesn't do justice to one's experience of the emotion. People often have hard time expressing how they feel through words (Wallen, 2014). In these tough life moments, music can be a constructive way to express who you are and what you are feeling. If you are feeling particularly sad about a reality in your life, listen to a song that connects you to that emotion. We are not suggesting that music should be used to wallow in pain or negativity; that would not be positive for one's mental health or for those around him/her but honestly suggesting that when one is emotionally struggling, connecting to music is one effective way to become more honest about who one is, what one is really experiencing, and how one is coping with negative emotion.

## Conclusion

This study has tried to establish that most African societies are patriarchal and the women's roles are highly subordinate and redundant thereby limiting women's opinion and freedom in marriage to the discretion of men. Music is the life of the soul, it gives life, hope and power to the oppressed and the suppressed; and indirectly influences even the oppressor and the suppressor. Since Nigeria and Igbo community in particular has not come up with any tangible solution as regards to suppression of women, the women should for the time being relied heavily on sonic expressions specifically, music prosody. Most women who have exceptional endowment and are naturally inclined to music; though are culturally suppressed, they often employ music as a leeway to communicate their emotions. Summarily, in as much as the writers condemn women suppression with its attendant domestic violence in every ramification, they uphold that the use of soothing music should still be resorted to as the best option to make their voice heard instead of engaging in a reprisal attack or open

confrontation.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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