

**INVESTIGATING TEACHER PRACTICES IN INTEGRATING
INDIGENOUS SONGS FOR PLAY-BASED LEARNING IN EARLY
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CENTERS: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY OF
NDOLA DISTRICT, ZAMBIA**

BY

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**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree
of Master of Early Childhood Care, Development and Education (ECCDE)**

The University of Zambia

Lusaka

2024

STUDENT DECLARATION

I **Mpandashulu Mulenga** student registration number **2023007392**, declare that this dissertation is my original work and is a product of my efforts through the professional guidance of the recognised supervisor whose name and signature has also been appended and signed below. Further, I declare that this dissertation has not been presented in any form to any other university other than that for which I am now a candidate. Where the work of others has been used, appropriate acknowledgements have been made.

DATE

SIGNATURE

SUPERVISOR

This dissertation has been submitted for review with my approval as university supervisor

DR. BIBIAN KALINDE

SIGNATURE

DEPARTMENT

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This dissertation by **Mpandashulu Mulenga** has been approved as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Early Childhood Care, Development and Education (ECCDE) by the University of Zambia.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Alice Namugode Mpandashulu and my children Mwila, Mulenga, Mapalo and Mwenge, and also to my mother Mercy Lombe and my father Mr. Harrison Mwamba.

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ACRONYMS

PBL: Play-based learning

P: Parent

DMIN: Administrator

DEBS: District Education Board Secretary

I.S: Indigenous songs

EA: Expressive Arts

S.S: Social studies

P.E.O: Provincial Education Officer

MoE: Ministry of Education

Pre.Sch.Tr. Pre-school teacher

ABSTRACT

This study examines the integration of indigenous songs into play-based learning within Early Childhood Education (ECE) centers in Ndola District, Zambia, emphasising educators' practices. The research aims to elucidate the incorporation of indigenous songs into pedagogical practices and their impact on children's learning outcomes. Employing a multiple case study design, the study utilises non-participant observations, semi-structured interviews with educators and administrators, and focus group discussions with parents. A purposive sampling technique selected 15 participants: five ECE teachers working with children aged 4–5, five school administrators, and five parents. Additionally, five ECE centers were chosen through stratified sampling.

Findings indicate that teachers integrate indigenous songs across various subjects, including literacy, numeracy, and social studies, to promote cultural values and social skills. These songs contribute to children's cognitive, emotional, and social development by enhancing language acquisition, memory, and cultural identity. However, challenges such as limited resources, inadequate teacher training, and insufficient access to culturally relevant materials impede effective integration. To address these issues, the study recommends developing resource books and an indigenous song database, providing professional development programs for teachers, and strengthening community-school partnerships to ensure cultural authenticity and sustainability in classroom practices.

Key words: Indigenous songs, Play-Based Learning (PBL), Early Childhood Education, Cultural Identity, Cultural Awareness

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation and limitations, theoretical framework, definition of key terms and chapter summary.

1.2 Background of the study

Early childhood education is a foundational phase that sets the trajectory for a child's development and lifelong learning (Berebitsky, 2018; Sommer, 2013; Marzak & Belghmi, 2024). It is during this period that children develop critical cognitive, emotional, and social skills, which serve as a bedrock for their future education and personal growth (Tayler, 2015). Globally, the significance of quality early childhood education is increasingly recognised as essential for achieving equitable and sustainable development (Good et al., 2021; Rafiyya et al., 2024). Policymakers, educators, and researchers are actively exploring innovative and contextually relevant approaches to enrich children's learning experiences and outcomes (Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008; Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2009). Despite this global focus, substantial disparities persist, particularly in low- and middle-income regions such as Africa, where limited access to quality education is compounded by a lack of infrastructure, insufficient resources, and a shortage of trained educators (Kekana, 2016; UNESCO, 2019).

In African contexts, indigenous songs (IS) represent an available yet often underutilised resource for enhancing early childhood education (Garcia-Sierra et al., 2016; Miya, 2007). Indigenous songs are traditional musical expressions embedded in the cultural heritage of communities (Good et al., 2021) are a vital medium for conveying stories, values, traditions, and wisdom across generations, fostering a sense of identity and belonging within cultural context (Borunda & Murray, 2024). More than mere artistic expressions, these songs have served as tools for informal education, socialisation, and the preservation of cultural norms in African societies for centuries (Akuno, 2009; Miya, 2007). In early childhood, indigenous songs play an essential role in providing a platform for children to express themselves creatively, internalise social norms, and engage deeply with their cultural heritage (Campbell, 2010). The educational potential of indigenous songs extends beyond cultural preservation, as they create opportunities for children to

explore language, rhythm, and storytelling while also nurturing emotional and social development (Hare, 2015; Campbell et al., 2022).

Play-based learning (PBL) in early childhood education (ECE) is a teaching approach that places play at the center of children's learning experiences (Moore et al., 2014). Widely regarded as a foundational element of ECE practices (Edwards, 2017), PBL recognizes play as a natural and essential activity through which young children explore, experiment, and make sense of their environment (Kalinde et al., 2024; Bird and Edwards, 2014). It is acknowledged as a core pedagogical strategy in early childhood education (Bird and Edwards, 2014). This approach can be applied in various subject areas, offering flexibility and adaptability. For example, in environmental education, PBL can combine content knowledge with intentional teaching strategies (Edwards and Cutter-Mackenzie, 2011). Similarly, in visual arts, it provides opportunities for children to engage in creative expression, communication, and meaning making (Lindsay, 2020).

Play based learning emphasises hands-on, exploratory activities that allow children to learn through play. It draws on theoretical frameworks like Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD), which highlights the role of social interaction and guided discovery in supporting children's growth and learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Ali et al., 2018). By creating a low-pressure environment for exploration, PBL nurtures creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities while fostering social and emotional development. This approach aligns with children's natural curiosity and modes of learning, promoting holistic development across cognitive, emotional, physical, and social domains (Kalinde et al., 2024; Kalinde, 2016; Mukela, 2022).

The integration of indigenous songs into play-based learning creates a culturally relevant synergy by combining the experiential benefits of hands-on learning with the deep cultural heritage embedded in traditional music (Kakoma, 2017, Kalinde, 2024; Mukela, 2022; Matafwali & Mofu, 2023). Indigenous songs are traditional musical expressions rooted in the cultural heritage of specific communities, serving as a vital medium for passing down stories, values, and social norms across generations. These songs often incorporate singing, rhythmic movements, and interactive elements, making them highly engaging for children. By their nature, indigenous songs provide imaginative and interactive opportunities for children to engage in play, enhancing the learning process in meaningful ways (Kalinde, 2024; Garcia-Sierra et al., 2016; Miya, 2007). They serve

as tools for teaching cultural values, fostering social interaction, and strengthening children's connection to their cultural identity. For instance, when traditional songs are used in group play, they can help children develop language skills, improve coordination, and build social connections while nurturing a sense of pride in their heritage (Brewer, 2007; Pinnock, 2009; Chigeza et al., 2019).

Moreover, indigenous songs not only engage children emotionally and cognitively but also stimulate brain regions linked to memory and learning, supporting overall cognitive development (Holmes, 2017). Scholars have described similar activities using various terms such as musical play songs, game songs, musical play, singing games, or music play (Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 2010; Mans, 2002a; Marsh & Young, 2006). Despite the diverse terminology, these activities share common features, including singing, movement, and playful interaction, which highlight their versatility as both educational and cultural tools.

This study investigates the integration of indigenous songs into play-based learning in early childhood education (ECE) centers in Zambia, with a specific focus on the experiences of teachers. It aims to explore how these two pedagogical concepts (indigenous songs and play based learning approaches) enhances educational practices, uncovering the benefits, challenges, and cultural relevance of incorporating indigenous songs into play-based learning. The study seeks to understand how this approach contributes to learning outcomes, fosters cultural pride, and supports the holistic development of young children. By documenting teachers' experiences and perspectives, the research aspires to provide actionable insights that inform the development of culturally relevant and effective pedagogical strategies, particularly in resource-constrained educational settings. Moreover, this research addresses broader issues related to the integration of cultural heritage into modern education systems and explores how traditional practices like indigenous songs can be adapted to meet contemporary educational needs while promoting cultural preservation.

1.3 Problem statement

The integration of indigenous songs into play-based learning, a practice that holds significant potential for enhancing early childhood education, faces substantial challenges in the implementation of Zambia's educational curriculum (Mukela, 2022). Despite the numerous

benefits that indigenous music and games offer to early childhood learners, their adoption and integration remain limited and are often perceived merely as a form of entertainment (Kalinde, 2016).

In the current state of Zambia's early childhood education centres, the sporadic use of indigenous songs in play-based learning is compounded by a lack of comprehensive research and literature addressing this pedagogical approach within the Zambian context (Kalinde, 2016; Matafwali & Mubanga, 2021). This deficiency is exacerbated by teachers' confrontations with numerous challenges, notably limited training and resources, hindering their ability to effectively incorporate indigenous songs into the curriculum (Kakoma, 2017; Matafwali & Mubanga, 2021; Mukela, 2022).

Moreover, this neglect has the potential to undermine the cultural sustainability and cohesion of Zambian communities. Additionally, it could hinder the comprehensive development of young children, affecting their future educational achievements and socio-emotional well-being (Mukela, 2022). Hence, this research seeks to explore the critical problem of the limited integration of indigenous songs into play-based learning within early childhood education centres in Ndola District, Zambia, by delving into the approaches teachers use through observations, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of teachers concerning the integration of Indigenous Songs for Play-Based Learning in Early Childhood Education Centres in Ndola District, Zambia.

1.5 Research objectives

- To examine how teachers are integrating indigenous songs in play-based learning in Zambian early childhood education centres.
- To identify the kind of indigenous songs that are integrated in play-based learning in Zambian early childhood education centres.
- To ascertain challenges teachers, face in the integration of indigenous songs in play-based learning in Zambian early childhood education centres.

1.6 Research questions

- How do teachers integrate indigenous songs in play-based learning in Zambian early childhood education centres?
- Which indigenous songs do teachers integrate into play based learning in Zambian early childhood education centres?
- What challenges do teachers face in the integration of indigenous songs in play-based learning in Zambian early childhood education centres?

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study advances the understanding of how indigenous songs can be integrated into play-based learning in early childhood education in Zambia. By exploring this approach, the research contributes to educational theory and practice by highlighting the importance of culturally relevant teaching strategies, especially in contexts where indigenous elements are underrepresented. Given that many early childhood frameworks rely on Western pedagogies, this study emphasises the value of incorporating local cultural elements to make learning more engaging and relatable, fostering children's sense of identity and belonging.

The study provides valuable insights for educators, demonstrating how indigenous songs may serve as powerful tools for language development, numeracy skills, and social interaction rather than being perceived solely as entertainment. It may inform curriculum developers on how to integrate traditional songs into educational materials, ensuring that school learning reflects children's home experiences. Additionally, the findings may guide policymakers in advocating for policies that recognise indigenous songs as essential components of early learning, potentially leading to teacher training programmes that equip educators with culturally responsive teaching skills.

Beyond the classroom, this research benefits families and communities by reinforcing the role of indigenous songs in children's cognitive, social, and emotional development. Increased parental involvement in children's learning through traditional songs can strengthen family bonds and cultural continuity. The study also contributes to the preservation of indigenous knowledge amid globalisation, offering a resource for scholars interested in indigenous education and play-based learning. Moreover, its findings may serve as a model for other regions seeking to integrate local

traditions into formal education, contributing to global discussions on inclusive and culturally diverse learning systems.

1.8 Theoretical framework

The framework that guided this study was Vygotsky's social Constructivism. Vygotsky's social constructivism theory aligns closely with the study on integrating indigenous songs into play-based learning in Zambian early childhood education centres. His theory emphasises the importance of culture, social interaction, and language in a child's cognitive development, which resonates with the integration of indigenous cultural elements, such as songs, in educational practices. Below is a detailed explanation of how the theory resonates with this study:

- **Cultural context and learning**

Vygotsky argued that learning is deeply rooted in cultural and social contexts. Indigenous songs are a significant cultural artefact in Zambian communities representing traditional knowledge, values, and heritage. Their integration into play-based learning aligns with Vygotsky's assertion that children learn best when educational content is embedded in familiar cultural contexts. By using indigenous songs, teachers can provide culturally relevant learning experiences that resonate with children's backgrounds and enhance their engagement and comprehension.

- **The Role of social interaction**

Vygotsky emphasised that cognitive development occurs through social interactions. Indigenous songs, often performed in group settings, naturally encourage collaboration, participation, and interaction among children. When used in play-based learning, these songs provide opportunities for peer learning, communication, and the co-construction of knowledge, fostering social skills and emotional well-being. The theory emphasises that the social construction processes are derived from apprenticeships provided by cultural experts who include both adults and peers (Greenfield et al. 2003), and that "individual development must be understood in, and cannot be separated from, its social and cultural-historical context" (Rogoff, 2003). Sociocultural theorists maintain that an individual's participation in social interactions and culturally organised activities is important for development (Dillon, 2005). This development encapsulates the cognitive developmental processes as well.

- **Play as a learning mechanism**

Play is a central component of Vygotsky's theory, where he highlights its importance in enabling children to explore, experiment, and internalise new ideas. Indigenous songs, integrated into play provide a structured yet flexible framework for children to learn through imitation, role-playing, and exploration of cultural narratives, making the learning process both meaningful and enjoyable. Indigenous play songs and games largely act as lens that mirror and reflect what a particular culture value (Rogoff, 2003).

- **Challenges and teacher training**

The study identifies challenges teachers face, such as limited training and resources, which Vygotsky's theory acknowledges as critical. For effective implementation, teachers need to be equipped with the skills to act as facilitators within the ZPD and incorporate cultural elements into play-based learning. Addressing these challenges aligns with the theory's focus on the role of educators in mediating and enriching the learning process.

1.9 Delimitation of the study

Geographically, this study was delimited to the Ndola district of the Copper belt in Zambia. The focus was specifically on eight different zones within the district, namely zone 1, 2, 3, 4,5,6,7, and 8 encompassing urban schools. By limiting the scope to this area, the study aimed to provide a localized understanding of the integration of indigenous songs in early childhood education within the context of Ndola. The study focussed on the four to five ages of learners.

1.10 Limitation of the Study

One potential limitation of this study was related to the data collection method. Some of the five selected schools faced road network challenges during the rainy season. However, the researcher overcame this limitation by finding alternative means of transportation, which ensured successful data collection. Another limitation was the small sample size, which restricted the generalisability of the findings to other parts of Zambia. Despite this, the researcher intentionally selected participants from diverse backgrounds to ensure a range of perspectives relevant to the research questions, thereby enhancing the applicability of the study to similar settings.

1.11 Operational definitions

Indigenous songs: Traditional songs or music passed down through generations within a specific indigenous culture, carrying cultural, historical, and social significance.

Integration: The intentional inclusion of indigenous songs into early childhood education practices and curriculum, involving the identification of appropriate methods for their inclusion.

Play-based learning: An educational approach that emphasises the role of play in children's learning and development, offering opportunities for child-directed play to promote exploration, problem-solving, and creativity.

Cultural relevance: The extent to which educational practices and materials reflect and incorporate the cultural values, traditions, and experiences of the local community, ensuring that indigenous songs are integrated in a meaningful and respectful manner.

Cognitive and linguistic development: The growth and enhancement of cognitive abilities, including thinking, problem-solving, memory, and language skills, in young children, which the study aims to explore regarding the impact of integrating indigenous songs.

1.12 Chapter summary

Chapter One provides a comprehensive foundation for the study, structured into twelve key sections. The Overview introduces the integration of indigenous songs into play-based learning within Zambian early childhood education centres. Introduction highlights the global emphasis on culturally responsive teaching and the value of incorporating traditional elements to enhance learning outcomes. Background explores the role of indigenous songs in Zambian culture and their potential as educational tools, contributing to holistic child development. Problem Statement identifies gaps in literature and practice regarding the effective integration of indigenous songs in play-based learning activities, emphasising the need to investigate teachers' experiences. Purpose of the Study aims to explore and document teachers' experiences, perceptions, and practices concerning the use of indigenous songs in early childhood education. Research Objectives and Questions guides the inquiry by focusing on understanding teachers' experiences, identifying benefits and challenges, and exploring the impact on children's learning and development. Significance of the Study highlights the study's potential contributions to knowledge, policy, and practice, particularly in informing curriculum development and promoting culturally responsive

pedagogy. Theoretical Framework draws on sociocultural and constructivist learning theories, emphasising the importance of cultural context and active engagement in learning. Delimitations and limitations, clarifies the study's scope, focusing on early childhood education centres in Zambia, and acknowledges potential challenges such as resource constraints. Ethical considerations detail the measures taken to adhere to ethical research standards, including informed consent and respect for participants' rights and cultural values. This structured approach sets the stage for understanding the integration of indigenous songs into play-based learning activities, offering a culturally grounded perspective on early childhood education in Zambia.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents a review of literature related to the present study on teachers' experiences on the integration of indigenous songs into play based learning activities in early childhood education centres, stating the global, African and Zambian perspectives. This literature review aims to explore the global, African and Zambian perspectives on how teachers integrate indigenous songs into play-based learning activities and its impact on children's development. It will also highlight the significance of incorporating cultural diversity and inclusion in early childhood education. Literature was retrieved from a variety of sources, such as educational journals, professional journals, books, doctoral theses, as well as websites. The reviewed literature provides critical insights into the integration of indigenous music and cultural play songs in early childhood education, with various studies employing qualitative methodologies to explore this subject. These studies collectively highlight the cultural, cognitive, and pedagogical significance of indigenous music while exposing gaps in its incorporation into formal curricula (Inyang, 2022; Nampijja, 2023). why is this here?

2.2 Global perspective on integrating indigenous songs into play-based learning

The global perspective on integrating indigenous songs into play-based learning highlights the transformative potential of culturally inclusive education in fostering diversity and connection. Indigenous songs offer more than entertainment; they are rich cultural assets that play a vital role in shaping young minds (Schippers, 2009). Research has consistently shown their ability to enhance language development by improving phonological awareness, expanding vocabulary, and facilitating multilingualism in diverse learning environments. Moreover, indigenous songs (I.S) serve as powerful tools for fostering a sense of belonging among children by creating emotionally safe spaces where their cultural identities are recognised and celebrated (Hare, 2015); Olorunsogo, (2019). This recognition is critical in building self-esteem, promoting positive relationships, and cultivating respect for cultural diversity within early childhood education settings (Gonzalez-Mena, 2013; Siraj-Blatchford, 2010).

Globally, the integration of indigenous songs demonstrates their universal applicability and significance in supporting children's holistic development as seen in various countries. For

instance, in Norway and Finland, indigenous *Sami* songs (*joik*) have been incorporated into early childhood education to preserve cultural identity and enhance children's emotional and social development (Hirvonen, 2010). Similarly, in South America, traditional folk songs have been used to teach language and cultural heritage in countries like Peru and Brazil, promoting inclusion and community engagement (Hebert & Campbell, 2016). In India, indigenous lullabies and rhymes serve as tools for early language development and intergenerational knowledge transfer (Hossain et al., 2022). Likewise, in Nepal, traditional music is integrated into early education to support moral development and social bonding among young learners (Kaur et al., 2022). Kalansooriya and Wehigaldeniya (2023) highlight how indigenous songs, rooted in traditional knowledge, enhance children's social and emotional skills while bridging traditional knowledge with education.

This practice not only bridges cultural gaps but also promotes mutual respect and empathy, enriching the educational experience for all learners (Baturu, 2018; Harrison, 2016). Similarly, in Canada, First Nations songs have proven instrumental in reinforcing cultural pride among indigenous children while enhancing language skills and strengthening social bonds. These examples underscore the ability of indigenous songs to enrich play-based learning across various cultural contexts, offering benefits that transcend geographic boundaries (Restoule et al., 2017).

In addition to their immediate benefits for children, the integration of indigenous songs (I.S) in play-based learning addresses broader societal challenges, such as the preservation and revitalisation of endangered languages and cultures (Donaldson, 2019). Many indigenous communities face the risk of cultural erosion due to globalisation and modernisation, making it essential to embed their traditions within educational frameworks (Garg, 2024). Through PBL, indigenous songs serve as dynamic mediums for storytelling, moral education, and cultural continuity (Hare, 2015; Olorunsogo, 2019). They ensure that children, regardless of their background, develop an appreciation for diverse cultural narratives while contributing to the survival of these traditions (McCarty et al., 2019).

Children across societies, cultures, and religions engage in various forms of singing games, highlighting the universal nature of these musical activities among children (Brodsky & Sulkin, 2010). According to Merriam (1964), musical activities such as game songs, counting songs, and language songs are specifically associated with childhood. However, as children grow older, they

gradually transition from these age-specific songs to the domain of adult music with the meaning slightly different from that of children. McPherson (2016) describes music as a collaborative activity, emphasising that children's involvement in musical activities fosters teamwork and strengthens social bonds within friendship groups (Marsh, 2008; McPherson, 2016).

This global perspective underscores the need for educational systems to move beyond standardised approaches, embracing the richness of indigenous knowledge to create more inclusive, respectful, and culturally responsive learning environments.

2.3 African perspective on integrating indigenous songs into play-based learning

Masoga (2006) stated that the future of Africa depends on the ethical and virtuous upbringing of African children through the use of indigenous music. Vallejo (2013) also emphasised that children find it fascinating to perform their indigenous songs, because they are linked to certain symbols of the circumstances of their social lives, and there is no language barrier in the singing. In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of incorporating indigenous songs in play-based learning within the African context (Nampijja et al., 2024; Zosh et al., 2022; UNICEF, 2018; Ogunyemi & Hensing, 2020). African scholars and researchers have emphasised the need for culturally relevant pedagogies that honour and respect the diverse cultural backgrounds of children (Bairaimah, 2016).

Mkhombo (2019) employed a qualitative case study design to examine the status of isiZulu music within the South African school curriculum. Using purposive sampling, the study selected participants knowledgeable about indigenous isiZulu music. The findings revealed that isiZulu music holds cultural value, fostering social cohesion and team spirit. However, its presence in the school curriculum was minimal, pointing to the need for reforms to better integrate indigenous music. This aligns with Kalinde's (2016) ethnographic study, which explored the role of cultural play songs in early childhood education in Zambia. Using a qualitative research design that incorporated non-participant and complete participant observations, video recordings, and face-to-face interviews, Kalinde investigated the use of cultural play songs in both formal and informal learning environments. The study involved two phases: one within preschool settings, where 30 teachers from 20 preschools across seven provinces were purposively sampled, and another in a simulated out-of-school setting, involving 18 preschool children and an expert on cultural play songs through expert sampling. The research found that cultural play songs were rarely used in

Zambian preschools, as English rhymes and Sunday school songs were preferred. Teachers' knowledge, skills, perceptions, and school administration and parental attitudes played a crucial role in determining the use of cultural play songs in early childhood education.

Studies in Africa generally emphasise the importance of cultural preservation, identity development, and promoting inclusive education (Hare, 2015). They recognise the significance of indigenous songs in fostering children's holistic development, including language acquisition, cognitive skills, and social-emotional well-being (Chung, 2022). Values such as sharing, empathy, kindness and even integrity are highly exhibited through these songs (Greenfield, 1994); Mishra, 1997); Serpell, 2001); Serpell, 2008); Serpell & Nsamenang, 2014). In her study of Ghanaian children, Addo (1996; Mans, 200a) assert that music and play enhance learning and that singing games in Africa are guided by rules which can enhance discipline and serve as a medium through which children learn and share various cultural expressions prevalent in their societies, often unconsciously. In essence, singing games play a fundamental role in socialising African children into the cultural practices of their communities (Minks, 2002; Nyota & Mapara, 2008). However, further research and support are needed to enhance the integration of indigenous songs in early childhood education across different African countries. In Kenya, Andang'o, (2010) found that Sunday School English songs were mainly used and favoured in pre-schools that were faith based and upheld the transmission of Christian values as part of their mandate.

2.4 Zambian perspective on integrating indigenous songs into play-based learning

In the Zambian context, there is a growing recognition of the importance of integrating indigenous songs into play-based learning in early childhood education (Matafwali & Mofu, 2023). While the literature on this topic in Zambia is limited (Kalinde & Munsaka, 2017), some findings and perspectives shed light on the potential benefits and challenges of incorporating indigenous songs in early childhood education (Kalinde & Munsaka, 2017; Matafwali & Mofu, 2023; Mukela, 2022).

The integration of indigenous songs for play-based learning in early childhood education centres holds global recognition and plays a pivotal role in Zambia's educational landscape (Kalumbi & Pitsoe, 2021). This practice gains particular significance within the context of Zambia's evolving educational policies, including the Educational Reforms of 1977, which stated that pre-school was described as prior entry into grade one at seven years of age though (ZECF, 2013) it was not

compulsory and not a prerequisite for entry into grade one. It acknowledges that in early childhood education, learning takes place through play. It continued to say, by providing children with a large cycle of playmates and a wider range of supervised play activities and learning experiences, will help to promote physical, mental and social emotional well-being of the child. It also promoted culture, songs and dances. Focus on learning in 1992, also embraced most of what was in the Education reforms of 1977 but also brought in subsidies for handicapped children. The "Educating our future" policy initiated in 1996 further embraced what was in the previous policy documents and acknowledged music as a powerful tool for expressing feelings, communication, festering imagination and inventiveness, interacting with others to expressing solidarity and balancing emotions. One of the educational goals that is reiterated in all the Zambian educational policy documents since independence is the need to produce a learner that appreciates Zambia's cultures, customs and courtesies traditions (Zambia, 1977; 1992, 1996). These policies, accompanied by the Education Act of 2011 formally integrates early childhood education into Zambia's education system as a key component of basic education. It also mandates the government to promote, regulate, and provide resources for ECE, ensuring accessibility for all children, particularly in underserved areas (Bibian et al., 2024).

The above outlined education policies, curriculum frameworks and acts all support the incorporating of indigenous knowledge, songs and play games so that education can be meaningful to children. Sandlane, (1989) stated that, after British rule ended in 1964, Zambia's curriculum was formed to include African indigenous cultures. This was an effort to make the education more relevant to Zambian children. According to Marfo and Biersteker, (2011), when children are denied meaningful education that is grounded in their local realities, their ability to be productive adults is compromised.

Studies conducted in Zambia emphasise that teachers recognise the value of incorporating indigenous songs in play-based activities to promote cultural awareness and pride among children (Kalinde & Vermeulen 2016). In Kalinde's (2016) ethnographic study, which explored the role of cultural play songs in early childhood education in Zambia. Using a qualitative research design that incorporated non-participant and complete participant observations, video recordings, and face-to-face interviews, Kalinde (2016) investigated the use of cultural play songs in both formal and informal learning environments. The study involved two phases: one within preschool settings,

where 30 teachers from 20 preschools across seven provinces were purposively sampled, and another in a simulated out-of-school setting, involving 18 preschool children and an expert on cultural play songs through expert sampling. The research found that cultural play songs were rarely used in Zambian preschools, as English rhymes and Sunday school songs were preferred. Teachers' knowledge, skills, perceptions, and school administration and parental attitudes played a crucial role in determining the use of cultural play songs in early childhood education.

Similarly, Kakoma (2017) employed a qualitative case study approach to examine the significance of indigenous songs in early childhood music education in the Mongu district of Zambia's Western Province. Fieldwork was conducted in six pre-schools three in central Mongu and three on its outskirts. Participants included 18 teachers (three from each school), head teachers, and the district education board secretary responsible for preschools. Informal group and individual discussions with learners were also conducted. The study found that indigenous songs serve multiple functions, including cultural transmission, language development, motor skills enhancement, and emotional well-being. However, despite these benefits, some participants viewed indigenous songs as outdated, instead prioritising global languages like English and Westernised lifestyles. This perspective mirrors the findings of Kalinde (2016), who also identified limited use of cultural play songs due to systemic biases.

Further contributing to the discourse on indigenous play, Matafwali and Mofu (2023) conducted a study using Participatory Action Research (PAR) to explore how outdoor indigenous games and songs can enhance play-based pedagogy in early childhood education in Zambia. Their study involved teachers, parents, grandparents, and adolescents from Lufwanyama district, though the exact sample size and sampling techniques were not specified. Findings emphasised that documenting indigenous games could strengthen home-school connections through community engagement, promoting a shift in pedagogical practices from direct instruction to play-based, contextually relevant learning. Their conclusions support the arguments of Kakoma (2017) and Kalinde (2016), who underscored the need for educational practices that integrate indigenous knowledge systems to enrich early childhood learning.

Furthermore, Mukela (2022) employed an ethnographic research design to investigate the role of indigenous musical play games in cognitive development among children in Zambia's Western Province. Using purposive sampling, the study engaged 144 participants, including school

children, music teachers, college students, music lecturers, and expert village musicians across seven districts. Additionally, a one-day workshop with teachers provided further insights. Findings revealed that indigenous play games instil core Lozi sociocultural values such as respect and social responsibility, essential for childhood socialisation. These games also support cognitive development by fostering emergent literacy and numeracy skills. For example, storytelling and riddles improved listening and speaking abilities, while traditional board games enhanced numeracy skills. However, similar to earlier studies, Mukela found that indigenous musical play games were largely absent from school curricula, with many teachers exhibiting negative attitudes toward their use. These findings echo those of Mkhombo (2019) and Kalinde (2016), who highlighted the marginalisation of indigenous musical forms in formal education due to systemic preferences for Western education models.

Despite the acknowledged value of indigenous knowledge in early learning, several difficulties hinder their adoption into the curriculum. One major challenge that teachers face in integrating indigenous songs into play-based learning is the lack of adequate training and resources (Chung, 2022; Smith et al., 2019). Many early childhood educators have limited exposure to indigenous knowledge systems during their formal teacher education, which often focuses on Western pedagogical models. As a result, they may lack the confidence or competence to incorporate local songs effectively into classroom activities (Matafwali & Mofu, 2023). Moreover, the absence of standardised teaching materials and curriculum guidelines that include indigenous songs further complicates their integration Mukela, (2022). Teachers are often left to rely on personal memory or oral transmission, which can lead to inconsistency and inaccuracies (Ng'asike, 2020). This lack of institutional support undermines efforts to promote culturally relevant pedagogy in early childhood education (Mukela, (2022).

Another significant challenge is the perception and undervaluation of indigenous knowledge systems within formal education settings (Kalinde, 2016). Indigenous songs are sometimes viewed as informal or outdated, leading some educators and stakeholders to question their relevance in a modern educational framework (Mochere, 2021). This perception discourages teachers from fully embracing these cultural resources, especially when under pressure to meet standardised academic outcomes (Mukela, 2022). Additionally, Tenzer & Pudelko (2015) DeCapua & Wintergerst (2016) stated that language barriers may arise, as some indigenous songs are composed in local dialects

that neither the teacher nor the children may fully understand. This can hinder the meaningful engagement of learners in play-based activities that utilise these songs (Bartleet et al., 2016). Without deliberate efforts to validate and support the use of indigenous songs, their potential to enrich early learning experiences remains underutilised (Matafwali & Mofu, (2023).

Furthermore, one key challenge is the systemic undervaluing of indigenous songs, which are often perceived as informal or irrelevant within the formal education structure (Green, 2017; Nketia, 1999). This perception not only marginalises local cultural expressions but also discourages educators from incorporating them into classroom practices. Additionally, there is a notable lack of practical guidance for teachers on how to use indigenous songs effectively many educators do not have access to documented versions of melodies, lyrics, or contextual meanings of these songs (Mwamba, 2021). This absence of structured resources makes it difficult to confidently and accurately integrate indigenous music into play-based activities, thus limiting the potential of culturally responsive pedagogy in early childhood education (Matafwali & Mofu, 2023).

Across these studies, a common pattern emerges; despite their cultural, cognitive, and pedagogical value, indigenous music and play-based activities remain underutilised in early childhood education due to negative perceptions, systemic biases, and curricular limitations. The reviewed literature consistently calls for curriculum reforms that incorporate indigenous music and play-based learning strategies, ensuring a more inclusive, culturally responsive, and effective early childhood education system.

2.5 Research gap

From the studies reviewed in this section, at global level, African, and Zambian contexts, non-examined teacher experiences with the integration of indigenous songs (IS) into play-based learning activities. Instead, they focused on other aspects, such as indigenous knowledge in general. Kakoma (2017) explored the meaning of indigenous songs for pre-schoolers in Western Province, Zambia. Kaluba et al (2021) investigated whether play-based learning activities aligned with the curriculum and found no alignment. Similarly, Kalinde (2016) found that culturally, play songs were not considered valid for teaching and learning but were merely seen as entertainment. Meanwhile, Mukela (2022) analysed the curriculum, teachers' guides, and learners' activity books, revealing that indigenous songs were absent from these materials.

2.6 Linkage of the study to Vygotsky 's social constructivism theory

Indigenous songs, grounded in Vygotsky's social constructivism theory, highlight the importance of socio-cultural environments in fostering learning. Tchombe (2011) emphasises that elements like language and songs sustain social interconnections, while Winsler (2003) underscores the need to bridge children's prior knowledge with classroom activities, transforming learning from the known to the unknown. Language, a central tool in Vygotsky's framework, mediates thought and learning. Indigenous songs, rich in local languages, nurture linguistic skills and cultural identity while enhancing vocabulary through play-based learning (Mukela, 2022). Within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), teachers can scaffold children's learning using songs to build on their existing knowledge and introduce new concepts in an engaging manner (Wiggins & Espeland, 2012; Scrimsher & Tudge, 2010). Children's interests and knowledge, shaped by family and community experiences, drive their learning processes (Hedges, 2007). Play, as Sutherland (2012) concludes, serves as a natural exploration tool, helping children navigate their environments and solve problems, making it integral to their developmental journey.

2.7 Chapter summary

The integration of indigenous songs into play-based learning globally demonstrates their transformative role in fostering cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional development. Rooted in Vygotsky's social constructivism theory, which highlights the role of cultural tools in learning, these songs serve as bridges between children's prior knowledge and new concepts. Examples diverse regions, such as the use of Aboriginal songs in Australia, First Nations songs in Canada, traditional Zulu songs in South Africa, native Quechua songs in Peru, Indian folk songs, Caribbean calypso rhythms, Congolese drumming traditions, Russian folk ballads, Scandinavian Sami joik, Native American chants in North America, Brazilian samba, Nigerian Yoruba songs, Ghanaian highlife, Dutch traditional melodies, and Zambian folk tunes, showcase how indigenous music enhances cultural engagement, heritage connection, and social bonding. By drawing from such a rich tapestry of cultural practices worldwide, the integration of indigenous songs into education fosters holistic development, preserves endangered languages, and promotes inclusivity, unity, and a deeper sense of identity among children across continents.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents a discussion on methodology used in carrying out the study. The following areas were discussed: the research philosophy of the study, the research approach, the research design, sampling method, target population, sample size, data collection procedure, validity and reliability of data collection methods and instruments, data collection procedure and pilot testing of data collection instrument. Others were, trustworthiness, creditability, transferability, dependability, confirmability, data analysis, ethical considerations and finally summary of the chapter

3.2 Research Philosophy

The research philosophy that was used in this study was interpretivism. Interpretivism is a research approach that emphasises the importance of understanding and interpreting the subjective experiences and meanings that individuals attach to their social world (Smith, 2010). In the context of this study, Interpretivism allowed the researcher to explore and interpret the experiences of teachers, administrators, and parents regarding the integration of indigenous songs in early childhood education. By adopting an interpretivists research philosophy, the study aimed to uncover the underlying meanings and cultural significance of indigenous songs in the educational context. It sought to understand how these songs are perceived and valued by different stakeholders, and how they contributed to the cognitive and linguistic development of young children (Jones, 2015).

3.3 Research Approach

This study is a qualitative study. A qualitative research study is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It is a study that consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. Qualitative studies seek to get the descriptive deeper meanings of a problem under study. This study involved a closer attention to the interpretive nature of inquiry and situating the study within the political, social, and cultural context of the researchers, and the reflexivity or “presence” of the researchers in the accounts they presented (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

3.4 Research Design: Multiple the study

A research design outlines the systematic process through which an idea is implemented into a research project and subsequently transformed to contribute to the broader body of knowledge (Cheek, 2008). In this study, a qualitative multiple case study design was employed to examine how educators integrate indigenous songs into play-based learning in early childhood education (ECE) settings. This design was selected because it facilitates an in-depth understanding of complex phenomena within real-life, bounded contexts (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Multiple case study research is particularly effective for investigating social realities and understanding the dynamics of educational practices in their natural settings (Best & Kahn, 2014; Yin, 2009). The 'case' in this context refers to a specific setting, institution, event, or individual (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The method involves the use of multiple sources of data such as interviews, observations, and focus group discussions to generate rich and detailed information (Ary et al., 2014; Baxter & Jack, 2008; Simons, 2009). This enables the researcher to capture a holistic view of each case while maintaining a focus on the key research concerns (Stake, 1995; Karlsson, 2016).

Although a multiple case study research is sometimes criticised for its limited generalisability, its strength lies in the depth of insight it provides into each unique context (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Nieuwenhuis, 2016). The purpose of this study is not to generalise findings, but rather to generate contextually rich insights and identify recurring patterns and relationships across different ECE centers (Yin, 2014, 2017). The focus on participants who are closely linked to the research context enhances the transferability of the findings (Nieuwenhuis, 2016).

To ensure the study's methodological congruence with a qualitative paradigm, five ECE centers were purposively selected. This multiple case study design supports the comparison of diverse but related settings, leading to a deeper understanding of how indigenous songs are integrated into play-based activities (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Combo, 2022). Through observation, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions, the study aimed to develop codes and themes that illuminate this educational practice.

Multiple case study research also contributes to educational theory and practice by offering context-specific insights that support the development of effective pedagogical strategies (Creswell, 2013; Mills et al., 2010). As Yin (2012, 2018) and Brown (2008) argue, this design enables researchers to explore practical issues in situ, while simultaneously building new knowledge. In this way, the study not only investigates how indigenous songs are applied in ECE learning environments but also contributes to the enhancement of culturally responsive teaching practices.

3.5 Sampling Method

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative research often utilises participants who have direct knowledge and experience related to the research topic, making them ideal candidates for providing in-depth and rich data for analysis. In order to appreciate this selection process, Kombo and Tromp (2006) defined sampling as a process of selecting a number of individuals or objects from a population such that the selected group contains elements representative of the characteristics found in the entire group.

This study therefore employed purposive sampling technique which is defined by Msabila and Nalaila (2013) as a purposive technique which involves handpicking of individuals from the population based on the researcher's judgment or knowledge. In other words, purposive sampling method is based on the judgment of the researcher regarding the characteristics of a representative sample (Bless & Achola, 1988). Purposive sampling was used to select suitable ECE centers from the schools situated across zones 1 to 8. Five ECE centers were chosen based on specific criteria relevant to the research goals (Smith, 2017). The researcher settled for five ECE centers due data saturation of responses from the participants (Morse, 2000).

To ensure balanced representation across various geographical areas, the researcher employed a stratified sampling approach based on population density. Specifically, two schools were purposively selected from zones seven and eight, which have high population density; two from zones three and four, representing medium density; and one from zone 1, indicative of low population density. This approach aligns with the principles of stratified sampling, which involves dividing the population into distinct subgroups (strata) based on specific characteristics, in this case, population density, and then selecting samples from each subgroup. This method ensured adequate representation across different population densities.

3.5.1 Target population

This study focused on all early childhood education (ECE) teachers, all children aged 4-5 in level three, all administrators, and all parents from purposively selected ECE centers within zones one to eight in Ndola District, Zambia. According to the Copper belt Provincial education authorities and the Ndola District Education Board, the district has no rural schools; all schools are officially classified as urban, although some are located on the outskirts.

3.5.2 Sample Size

A sample size, as indicated by Creswell (2014), is a small proportion of the population selected for observation and analysis. Nakkeeran (2016) used the term "participants" to refer to a sizable sample of a population. Therefore, in this study, the researcher consistently used the term "participants" to describe the selected individuals who took part in the research. There is no specific prescription for determining the exact number of participants in qualitative research, as the primary aim is to explore a phenomenon in depth rather than to generalise findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study employed a sample of 15 participants, consisting of early childhood education (ECE) teachers, administrators, and parents with children in level three and aged 4-5 years. The sample size was determined based on the pilot study, where data saturation was reached after interviewing five participants. Specifically, the study included five ECE teachers with 250 children in total, five administrators, and five parents. The research was to be conducted across fifteen schools from eight different zones (zones 1 to 8). However, the researcher purposively selected five schools, as no new information emerged beyond the fifth interview, indicating data saturation (Morse, 2000).

Table of the sample size

Number of participants	Location in Ndola District
1 Pre-school teacher and children 1 Administrator 1 Parent	Zone one (high-cost area -low density)
1 Pre-school teacher and children 1 Administrator 1 Parent	Zone three (medium cost- medium density)

1 Pre-school teacher and children 1 Administrator 1 Parent	Zone four (medium cost - medium density)
1 Pre-school teacher and children 1 Administrator 1 Parent	Zone seven (low cost- densely populated)
1 Pre-school teacher and children 1 Administrator 1 Parent	Zone eight (low cost- densely populated)
Total - 15 participants	Five zones

3.5.3 Data Collection methods and instruments

The study used three methods and three instruments to collect data namely, non-participant observation method with non-participant interview guide, the in depth interview method with semi- structured interview guide and the focus group discussion method with focus group discussions guide.

3.5.3.1 Non participant observation method

Non-participant observation is a qualitative research technique where the researcher observes subjects without actively engaging in the activities or interactions being studied. The researcher maintains a passive role, often acting as a "fly on the wall," to avoid influencing the behaviour of the children. This method is particularly useful for understanding natural behaviours and contexts, as it helps minimise researcher bias and reveals discrepancies between what people say and what they actually do.

Using the observation guide as a tool, the researcher collected data by ticking what was observed such as use of indigenous songs in play based learning activities, availability of indigenous materials to support teaching using indigenous songs, teacher-children and child-child interaction, use of storytelling songs in the lessons, use of indigenous songs during the interludes in between lessons to break monotony, use of indigenous songs in subject corners and during conclusion of lessons as a way to recap the whole lesson. Each lesson lasted 40 minutes, except for literacy and

numeracy sessions, which were each allocated one hour. Data collection involved five classroom observations, one from each of the five purposively selected schools.

3.5.3.2 In-depth interview method

In-depth interviews are a qualitative research technique involving intensive, one-on-one interviews with individuals to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation. These interviews are typically open-ended and conversational, allowing researchers to delve deeply into the participant's practices, motivations, and feelings. This method is valuable for obtaining detailed information and uncovering new insights that might not emerge through other data collection techniques.

The advantage of using a semi-structured interview guide is that it allows the interviewer generate new questions during the interview because of what the interviewee says, and this provides a comprehensive apprehension of the phenomenon (Taylor, 2008). Thus, probing helped the researcher get more clarity on information being received. Semi-structured interviews give greater depth than a questionnaire because the researcher can probe or encourage respondents to elaborate their answers and also can crosscheck information (Mulenga, 2015).

The interviews explored how teachers utilised indigenous songs in instruction, the specific types of songs used, and the challenges encountered in the implementation process, (see *details in Appendices B*).

Data collection was conducted as follows: ten individual interviews, comprising one pre-school teacher and one school administrator from each of the five purposively selected ECE centers. The process spanned two months due to occasional scheduling adjustments caused by school events and district-level administrative meetings. Despite logistical challenges, the researcher successfully reached all schools, aided by local area councillors who facilitated road repairs, ensuring accessibility.

3.5.3.3 Focus group discussion method

According to Onwuegbuzie (2004) focus group discussions are a qualitative research method used to gather detailed information and insights from a group of participants. These discussions involve a small group of people, typically 6-12 individuals, who are selected based on specific criteria relevant to the research topic. The session is usually facilitated by a moderator or researcher who

guides the discussion, asking open-ended questions to encourage participants to share their thoughts, experiences, and opinions (Onwuegbuzie, 2004). However, Mulenga (2015) cautioned that there must be scrupulous preparation and facilitation in order to avoid some members of the group dominating other group members during an interview session so as to encourage equal participation from all group members.

The purpose of focus group discussions is to explore participants' attitudes, perceptions, and feelings about a particular subject in depth. Unlike one-on-one interviews, focus groups capitalise on the dynamic interaction between participants, which can lead to the emergence of new ideas and insights that might not surface in individual interviews (Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Using a focus group interview guide, the researcher conducted a discussion with five purposively selected parents, each representing a different ECE center. These parents had children aged 4–5 years enrolled in level three (middle class), meaning they had interacted with the teachers that handled their children for a longer period of time than those whose children were in level one or two. Since the early childhood education programme allowed for parental orientation meetings, these parents had great insights about their children's learning programmes. The focus group discussion explored the integration of indigenous songs into play-based learning activities, focusing on the types of songs used and the challenges encountered. Each parent was given the opportunity to share their views, as documented through verbatim excerpts in chapter four. The researcher employed this method to explore the topic in-depth, gather diverse views and uncover issues which might not be covered by individual interviews (Nyumba et al., 2018). The discussion which lasted an hour was recorded to ensure accurate data transcription and analysis.

3.6 Data collection procedures

Prior to commencing data collection, the researcher obtained an introductory letter from the University of Zambia, identifying him as a postgraduate student conducting a study in selected Early Childhood Education (ECE) centers within Ndola District. This letter was submitted to the University of Zambia Research Ethics Committee for ethical clearance. Upon approval, the letter was subsequently presented to the Provincial Education Officer (PEO) for the Copper belt Province, who authorised the District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) of Ndola to cooperate

with the researcher. In turn, the DEBS instructed zonal head teachers in zones 1 through 8 to facilitate access and cooperation necessary for the successful execution of the study.

To ensure ethical compliance and mutual understanding, informed consent forms were distributed to all participants. These forms outlined the purpose and procedures of the study, allowing participants to make informed decisions regarding their involvement. Upon reviewing and understanding the contents, each participant signed the consent form, thereby establishing a professional and ethical foundation for engagement. Additionally, participants granted the researcher permission to use an audio recorder, which enhanced the quality of data collection by allowing the researcher to focus on asking relevant follow-up questions while enabling participants to articulate their views freely and authentically (Health, Williamson, & Williams, 2018).

Following all necessary approvals and consents, the researcher independently conducted the fieldwork using multiple data collection methods. Through non-participant observations guided by an observation guide, the researcher observed ECE teachers and children aged 4–5 years (Level Three) to assess how indigenous songs were utilised, teacher-child interactions, peer interactions, and the types of materials employed in play-based learning. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ECE teachers and school administrators to gain insights into their practices and perspectives on integrating indigenous songs into the learning environment. To complement and enrich the data, a focus group discussion (FGD) was held with parents whose children aged 4-5 were enrolled in Level Three. This multi-method approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of how indigenous songs are integrated into play-based learning, including the contextual dynamics and materials used, as well as teacher and peer interactions.

3.7 Data analysis

The collected data was carefully transcribed and later analysed thematically. This method involves identifying emerging themes within the qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The following six-phase processes were used: data familiarisation, generating codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and lastly writing a report. Thematic analysis was a good method for this study because it helped the researcher to interpret and make sense of the data rather than merely summarising statistical data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). The other advantage is that it is a method rather than a methodology, meaning that, unlike many other

qualitative methodologies, it is not tied to a particular epistemological perspective (Burns & Clarke, 2013; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). This makes it a more flexible method, easy to apply and use by junior researchers (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). After subjectively analysing and interpreting the themes to extract the message they contained, the researcher presented and explained meaningfully in a manner that addresses the research questions in chapter four through the descriptions in the form of words, phrases and sentences, and the direct quotations from the study participants basing on the research objectives or questions. Additionally, the study findings were not only presented in chapter four but also discussed in chapter five with supporting citations from different authors to justify the findings of this study. After the presentation, discussions and justification, the researcher came up with the conclusions, recommendations, suggestions and recommendations for further research which were systematically presented in chapter six of the study.

3.8 Pilot Testing of Data Collection Instruments

Pilot testing of data collection instruments, as stipulated by Creswell (2014), ensures that the questions, phrases, and expressions used in a research study are clear and easily understood by participants. In line with this, the researcher conducted a pilot study in zone nine of Ndola District, Zambia, to pre-test the data collection instruments namely, semi-structured interview, observation guides and focus group discussions guides four weeks before the commencement of the main study. The pilot study involved 15 participants, including early childhood education (ECE) teachers, administrators, and parents who had children in level three aged 4-5 years who shared similar characteristics with the target study population.

The pilot testing process facilitated the identification of potential ambiguities in the research questions. For instance, the segment containing sub-questions (a) and (b) under questions one to five was revised after the pilot study, as it was determined that the main question and part (a) sufficiently addressed the intended inquiry (Kumar, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Additionally, the pilot study allowed for necessary adjustments in the interview duration, extending it from the initially planned 40–50 minutes to 60 minutes per session (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

Furthermore, the pilot study helped address ethical concerns, particularly participant discomfort, before the main study (Maxwell, 2013). During the pilot phase, the researcher observed initial

apprehension among participants. However, after clarifying the study's purpose, participants became more at ease and engaged more freely in the discussions. As a result, the study was conducted without any participant dropouts.

3.9 Trust worthiness

Establishing trustworthiness of the study and its findings is a central issue in any research activity. Like validity and reliability in the quantitative research, in qualitative studies, trustworthiness is enhanced through the concept of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Similarly, Adler (2022) and Stahl and King (2020) stated that establishing trustworthiness of the research raises the confidence levels and authenticity of the study findings for readers. In this study, trustworthiness was established through the discussions of the subheadings below.

3.9.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent to which the findings are believable, trustworthy, and accurate. Stahl and King (2020) noted that credibility meant asking, "how congruent are the findings with reality?" The question relates to the internal validity in quantitative research. To promote credibility, triangulation methods were used where information was collected using multiple sources of data (Stahl, & King, 2020). Parry (1998) as cited in Lelissa (2018) observed that gathering data from multiple perspectives on the same incident helps to reduce the negative impact of a single source of data on research and assures accuracy of research findings. In this sense, semi-structured interviews were used to collect opinions, views and experiences from the fifteen participants, an activity that enabled personal data-source triangulation (Curtain & Fossey, 2007). Additionally, the use of purposive and expert sampling techniques promoted the credibility of the study findings since it enabled the collection of information from a suitable sample that could provide prolific and concrete information suitable for this study.

For data credibility, the researcher triangulated using non observation guide, interviews and focus group discussion guides.

3.9.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which research findings can be applied to the other contexts. The concept of transferability in qualitative studies is like that of external validity in quantitative

research which pertains to generalisability of study findings. However, in qualitative studies, it raises the question to whether the findings obtained can be transferred to or be useful in other settings (Pilot & Beck, 2014); (Shelton, 2004). Transferability the study findings was achieved by adopting what Geertz (1973) termed as “thick description” where the researcher describes the event and context in sufficient detail so that researchers and readers can judge the transferability and apply or transfer the relevant knowledge and findings to their own site (Stahl & King, 2020). To achieve this, (Nowell, Noriss, White & Moules, 2017) stated that, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, the number of organisations that participated and the length of the data collection sessions were also described. Detailed descriptions of the study context were provided to give readers a complete picture of the circumstances and environments in which the study was carried out enabling them to judge the relevance of the study findings to their settings.

3.9.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the extent to which the research study’s findings are consistent and repeatable. The term “dependability” is used in qualitative research in place of the term reliability in quantitative research (Clont, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Sealed, 1999). It asks the question of whether the study results are consistent even through repeated trials by the researchers. According to Avizienis, Laprie & Randell, (2001), dependability is when another researcher arrives at the same or comparable findings, not necessarily the same conclusion when using the data, perspectives, and situation. To promote dependability, the researcher used debriefing method where other researcher-experienced colleagues were given chance to read and react to the field notes. According to Stahl and King, (2020), the interpretation and reaction from the other researcher on study findings assures the researcher of the authenticity of the data. Similarly, the expert vetting method was used to ensure the findings obtained and reported were dependable; here the supervisor provided necessary guidance on research data collection tools, prepublication reports, and provided recommendations on strengths and weaknesses for modifications (Stahl & King, 2020). The above explains show how dependability was achieved and hence the trustworthiness of the study.

For dependable data in this study, the researcher piloted the instruments.

3.9.4 Conformability

The concept of ‘conformability’ asks a question to whether the findings and researcher’s interpretations of findings are really coming from the filed data and not from researcher’s imagination (Liamputtong, 2019; Tobin & Begley, 2004). It also requires the researcher to indicate methods under which conclusions and interpretations have been reached (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Guba and Lincoln (1989) argued that conformability can be achieved when other trustworthy criteria such as credibility, transferability, and dependability have been established. To achieve this, the researcher provided thick descriptions and justification behind the choice of theoretical, methodological and analytical procedures to make others understand how and why decisions were made (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). For data confirmability- In this study, the researcher used verbatim reporting and member checking.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical guidelines, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for participants' rights (right to withdraw was explained to participants). All collected data was anonymised to protect participants' privacy. As Trochim (2006) notes, anonymity ensures that participants remain unidentified, even to researchers in some cases, offering a stronger guarantee of privacy. To maintain anonymity and protect respondents, no names were used; instead, codes were assigned to represent participant categories: parent (P), preschool teacher (Pre. Sch. Tr.), and administrator (ADMIN).

3.11 Chapter summary

This chapter presented a detailed account of the methodology employed to achieve the study’s objectives. It began with an overview of the research philosophy, which adopted an interpretive approach to understand the subjective experiences and cultural significance of indigenous songs in early childhood education. The chapter emphasised the use of qualitative research methods to explore and interpret data in a real-world context.

The research design, based on a case study approach, provided an in-depth understanding of the integration of indigenous songs across five selected schools in Ndola District, Zambia. Purposive and expert sampling techniques were used to identify 15 participants, comprising ECE teachers, administrators, and parents, ensuring diverse and balanced representation. Detailed procedures for

data collection were outlined, including the use of semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and focus group discussions. The researcher ensured thorough ethical considerations, including obtaining consent, ensuring confidentiality, and adhering to professional research standards.

The data analysis process employed thematic analysis, enabling the researcher to identify patterns and draw meaningful insights from the data. To ensure the study's trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were thoroughly addressed, supported by triangulation, thick descriptions, and expert validation.

Overall, this chapter established a robust methodological framework for the study, ensuring the reliability, validity, and ethical integrity of the research. The next chapter will present the findings based on the data collected and analysed.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents the findings of the study from the five classroom observations, ten in-depth interviews one from a pre-school teacher and the other from an administrator from the five ECE centers and a focus group discussion with five parents whose children were in level three and 4-5 years of age. Guided by the three research questions, the study sought to explore teacher experiences on the integration of indigenous songs into play based learning activities, the types or examples of indigenous songs used to integrate into play based learning activities and the challenges they faced to integrate indigenous songs into play based learning activities in early childhood education centres in Ndola District, Zambia.

4.2 The school profile and participants

The study was conducted in five schools with early childhood education (ECE) centres in Ndola district, located in the Copper belt province of Zambia. Three participants were purposively selected from each school namely, an ECE teacher working with children aged 4–5 years, an administrator, and a parent. The selection criteria required that the teachers and administrators had served for at least five years, while the parents were chosen based on having children in level three (middle class with ages 4–5). These criteria ensured that all participants had relevant experience in integrating indigenous songs into play-based learning activities. Among the five ECE teachers interviewed, two were above 50 years, while three were between 30 and 40 years. In terms of qualifications, two held bachelor's degrees, while three held diplomas in ECE. Notably, all five teachers were female.

The five administrators interviewed had varying age ranges and academic qualifications. One was a female with a bachelor's degree, while the remaining four were male, two holding bachelor's degrees and two holding master's degrees. In terms of age distribution, three administrators were above 50 years, one was between 40 and 50 years, and the other was between 30 and 40 years. The parents interviewed also had diverse age ranges, qualifications, and occupations. All were female, with two aged above 50 years and the remaining three between 30 and 40 years. Their professional backgrounds varied, two were primary school teachers with diplomas, one was a nurse

with a certificate, and two were business women. However, the business women did not disclose their educational backgrounds but actively participated in the study.

On the first question, ‘*How do teachers integrate indigenous songs into play based learning activities in Zambian early childhood education centres?*’ The following themes emerged: the songs are supposed to be infused in the themes below as examples.

4.3 Thematic learning across subjects

Most teachers stated that they used indigenous songs according to the topic that they wanted to teach across subjects, whether in Literacy, Numeracy, Social Studies, Science and or Expressive Arts. The above theme has sub themes such as, Literacy and Language, Numeracy, Social studies, Science, and Expressive arts. Presentation of each sub theme in detail will follow the order laid above.

4.3.1 Literacy and Language

Most teachers reported that they used indigenous songs to teach phonics, phonemic awareness, listening skills, pronunciation, vocabulary, and reading. They explained that introducing new vocabulary and vowels in the local language was more effective because children understood the content more easily. In contrast, teaching these concepts in English would require students to grasp both a new language and the learning material simultaneously, making comprehension more challenging. Teachers said they incorporate songs like “*ashintilile*” and “*pamushi pa fulwe*” to aid in letter formation and phonemic awareness. Parents also highlighted songs such as “*ashintilile kukamuti*”, which reinforce literacy skills.

This narration is also backed up by the verbatim below from a pre-school teacher.

Pre.Sch. Tr. 2. said “*we incorporate them when teaching reading. For example, when we are teaching reading in Bemba, we teach them action like in vowels we teach them /a/ ahintilile kukamuti, /e/ akonkomefye, /I/ ali nakasote /o/ ali noalufumo /u/ kwati muganda, and when they are reading these sounds, they do actions and can easily read these vowels because of the gesture they do*”.

4.3.1.1 Examples of the songs for teaching literacy and languages

- ***Ashintilile kukamuti***

This is a song teachers use to teach phonics, phonemic awareness and vocabulary. They do it in a playful manner. The teacher will have five placards with a vowel written on it, he/ she will flash the cards with vowels /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, and /u/ while children mention each sound as they sing and also demonstrate the way it is formed or shaped. This helps them to remember both the sounds and names easily.

Bemba lyrics		English literal translation	
Call	Response	Call	Response
a	Ashintilile kukamuti	a	leaned against a tree
e	Akonkomenefye	e	leaned on itself
i	Ali na kasote	i	had a hat
o	Ali no lufumo	o	had a belly
u	Ali mukanda	u	was a pit

- **Pamushi pa Fulwe**

In this song, the teacher will give the placards to the volunteers. The five volunteers will come in front of the class and form a queue in vowel sequence. The teacher will start the song “*pamushi pa fulwe*,” while children will respond, “*eya*”. The five children in front of the class will crawl one after the other according the sequence of the vowels as they sing. The teacher will point at each vowel and the children will respond by shouting the correct sound of that particular vowel. Then children will take turns to role play the tortoise movements as they continue internalising the vowel sounds and their shapes or formation.

Bemba lyrics		English literal translation	
Call.	Response	Call.	Response
Pamushi pa Fulwe -	Eya	At tortoise village -	yes
Palibe mfumu -	Eya	There are kings. -	yes
Ishakwata amashina -	Eya	With names. -	yes
Aba nibani? A		Who is this? a -	a
Aba nibani? E		Who is this? e.	e

Aba nibani? I.	i	Who is this? i.	-	i
Aba nibani ? o	o	Who is this? o.	-	o
Aba nibani ? u	u	Who is this? u	-	u

4.3.2 Numeracy

Most teachers said that building foundational mathematical skills, including number recognition, counting, and problem-solving was not an easy concept to present just like that. They explained that for young ones to learn better, they needed more fun than desk top activities because their nature of learning was about play.

Pre.Sch. Tr. 5 stated the following, *“for example on counting, you tell a bit of a story on animals so you give learners a village setup or scenario as you count using a song “Namwene imbwili imo ilebutuka imbwili paishila imo shaba na 2” (meaning I saw one leopard running, another leopard joined then there were two leopards) the number will continue increasing until you get to the last number that you want the learners to learn about on that day”*

The researcher saw learners taking an active role to role play (imbwili imo) until they increased the numbers to ten. Imbwili imo meant one leopard, so the children imitated to be a leopards during that counting lesson. Each time they the teacher mentioned the number, children went to join on the queue to make the correct count. It was an enjoyable activity as children learnt how to count in an amazing and playful manner.

4.3.2.1 Example of a songs for teaching numeracy

- **Namwene imbwili**

This song is used to teach counting, number recognition as well as number sequence. The teacher will first introduce the number by displaying different objects on the table such as stones, sticks, bottle tops as well as leaves. The teacher will also display number patterns with dots to consolidate on the topic. Thereafter, the teacher will display the pictures of a leopard (🐆) then will explain the scenario of how leopards run in the bush when chasing other animals for food. Then she/he will display the pictures of the leopards and ask learners to tell how many leopards they are seeing until they get to the last number to be taught on that particular day. So, the children will dramatize the counting lesson by joining the queue as they sing the song, *“Namwene imbwili.*

Bemba lyrics	English literal translation
Call: Namwene imbwili imo ilebutuka	Call: I saw one leopard running
Response: imbwili paishila imo shaba na shibili	Response: it was joined by another and they were two
Call: Namwene mbwili shibili shilebutuka	Call: I saw two leopards running
Response: imbwili paishila imo shaba shitatu	Response: it was joined by another and they were three
Call: Namwene mbwili shitatu shilebutuka	Call: I saw three leopards running
Response: imbwili paishila imo shaba shine	Response: they were joined by another and they were four
Call: Namwene mbwili shine shilebutuka	Call: I saw four leopards running
Response: imbwili paishila imo shaba shisano	Response: they were joined by another and they were five

4.3.3 Social studies (SS)

Under this subject, most teachers stated that they teach children traditional and culture such as respect and appreciation for their parents. They also stated that sometimes they use indigenous songs to teach about domestic and wild animals. This is where a teacher can ask learners to demonstrate how certain animals sound. This could be done through an indigenous song entitled *“Inama sha mumpanga shaba ne misowa iyingi”*. (meaning wild animals have several and different sounds). The teacher could ask the children to demonstrate how certain animals sound and then ask where they can be found. Here, children may choose to sound out any wild animal of their choice while the rest would raise their hands up to state which animal the sound belong to. This type of learning is fun and enjoyable by children. Below are some of the quotes that support the above narratives.

Pre.Sch. Tr. 5 said that *“there are songs about tradition and culture. You can teach the learners about respect and morals. For example, on respect you can sing a song “Ciminine-ciminine bamayo”, (meaning a child should not stand while elderly people are sitting but he/she should kneel down before them.). You have to demonstrate what the learners can do you have to demonstrate to them so that they know what to do, what is the meaning of the song, you have to explain to them, yes. Then even sing the*

song like “kuli mayo cawama kuli tata cawama ndecitashani?”, (meaning they have to say thank you to their parents.”)

4.3.3.1 Examples of songs for teaching moral values, social emotional, fine and gross motor skills

- **Ciminine**

This song teaches young ones that in Zambian culture children are supposed to kneel down when speaking to elders to show respect. So the teacher can ask learners to dramatise the scenarios of a child with no respect and that with respect. This song is also accompanied by drums and movements. One, two or three children can be inside the circle and dance to the music.

Bemba lyrics	English literal translation
Call: Ciminine-Ciminine bamayo	Call: he/she is just standing while elders are seated
Response: Ciminine	Response: she/he is just standing
Call: Napabakulu	Call: even when elders are seating!
Response: caiminina fye umushiki Ciminine	Response: he/she is just standing

Pre.Sch. Tr. 4 said, “Then in social studies when you must teach them about domestic animals or wild animals, you can sing “Inama sha mu mpanga, shaba nemisowa iyingi, (meaning wild animals have several different sounds). Then as a teacher you must name the animals one by one, then the learners they have to produce the sound made by that animal and state whether it lives, either among people or in the bush. Let say an elephant or let say a lion. Children will have to state that the lion lives in the bush or wild and so it is called a wild animal”.

- **Inama sha mu mpanga**

This song teaches on the wild animals and the sound they produce.

Bemba lyrics	Literal translation in English
Call: Inama sha mu mpanga	Call: wild animals
Response: shaba ne misowa iyingi	Response: have different sounds

Call	Response	Call	Response
inkalamo	ku buluma	lion	roars
Insofu	lipenga	An elephant	trumpets
Cimbwi	Keseka-seka	A hyena	laughs
Imboo	moo,moo	A buffalo	moos

4.3.4. Science

Most teachers under this subject said that they use indigenous songs to teach about different diseases, foods and about the human body. In support of the narrative above, here is a quote below

Pre.Sch. Tr. 5 said, “when you are teaching about parts of the body in science, you must sing a song “mutwe mapeya makufi, tukondo” (meaning head and shoulders knees and toes, knees and toes). You have to touch the parts of the body even the learners they have to do that. You must sing with them “mutwe mapeya makufi tukondo, mutwe mapeya makufi tukondo”, then (elyo wayamba ukulanda ama) parts (yonse aya muleyalanda na bana), until you finish, after singing, that’s when you are going to introduce the lesson, you ask them if (bacila umfwa ifyaciba mulwimbo,) lesson (yaingila, efyo iya)”. Meaning you ask them if they understood the words in the song, thereafter, the lesson begins.”

4.3.4.1 Example of a song for teaching parts of the body

- **Mutwe ampyeya makufi, tukondo**

Bemba lyrics	Literal translation in English
Call: Mutwe	Call: Head
Response: mapeya, makufi, tukondo	Response: and shoulders knees and toes ,knees and toes
Call: na	Call: and

Response: menso, na e, chilefu-lefu no mona, mutwe , mapeya tukondo	Response: eyes , and ears and chin and nose, head and shoulders knees and toes
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4.3.5. Expressive Arts (EA)

The teachers stated that they use different indigenous songs during Expressive arts lessons. They stated that usually children were always excited to participate in songs and games outside classroom. The researcher also witnessed some lessons being conducted outside classroom, and agreed with the teacher's statement. During some outdoor activities teachers had to put in extra effort to stick to time. They gave examples of songs like "*Kabushi kalilalila*", (meaning a bleating goat), "*Nambushi ee!*" (meaning sheep, sheep come!). They explained that these songs were exciting because learners did vigorous exercise which helped them in all domains. They said during such activities children coordinated, while the child going round with the ball had to think of the person to leave the ball to secretly, run round to find the same spot where that person he/she left the ball with sat while others cheered. They explained that such activities involved all the senses and domains contributing to children's good well-being.

Pre.Sch. Tr. 4 said that songs like "*kabushi kalilalila*", (bleating goat) "*nambushi ee?*" (Sheep, sheep come), they helped children to build their fine and gross motor skills, socialisation, emotional well-being, and cognitive skills.

Pre-sch. Tr. 5 explained that the song "*Kabushi kalila-lila*" supports holistic child development. Physically, it engages the entire body; socially, it encourages interaction and empathy among peers; morally, it teaches kindness, such as saying sorry when a friend falls. The teacher can guide children to show compassion, which promotes emotional well-being. Language development is also enhanced as children communicate during play. Additionally, the activity fosters critical thinking as learners reflect on their actions during the game.

4.3.5.1 Example of a song for teaching holistic development

- ***Kabushi kalilalila***

In this play game songs, children squat or sit in a circle and one child as 'soloist' leads the song while running around the circle of squatting /sitting children with a ball/rag in the hand. At the

phrase kalilalila, he/she runs faster and places the ball/rag behind one of the squatting /sitting children who becomes ‘soloist two’. Soloist two picks up the ball/rag and chases soloist one who must run fast enough to occupy the empty space left by soloist two.

If soloist one is hit with the ball/rag by soloist two, then he/she must repeat the solo role. If not, soloist two completes the activity of placing the ball/rag behind another child of their choice. This goes on until each child has had a chance to lead the play by being a soloist and hopping around the squatting children.

Bemba lyrics	Literal translation in English
Call: Kabushi kalilalila	A goat is crying
Response: Meee	Meee (mimic a crying goat)
Call:ndeshila umunandi	Call: I will give it to my friend
Response: Meee	Response: Meee (mimic a crying goat)
Eo twangala nankwe	Call: The one I play with
Response: Meee	Response: Meee (mimic a crying goat)
Call: pefye kusukulu	Call : Always at school
Response: Meee	Response: Meee (mimic a crying goat)
Call: mee, me- Response: meee	: Call: Mee, mee (mimic a crying goat)
Call: Kalilalila, Response: kasha umwana	Call: It’s crying Response: looking for a baby it left behind

The use of indigenous songs in thematic learning across subjects enhances young learners' engagement and understanding by making lessons interactive and culturally relevant. Through indigenous songs, children grasp different skills in a fun and memorable way. This approach not only supports academic development but also nurtures social, emotional, and cognitive growth, reinforcing the importance of play-based learning in early childhood education.

The second theme is entitled transitioning between subjects. It also came with its sub themes as tabulated below.

4.4. Transitioning between subjects

Teachers said that they used indigenous songs during circle time and during transitioning between subjects. Under this major theme, there were also sub themes as below; Circle time, and Breaking monotony.

4.4.1. Circle time

Teachers highlighted that in early childhood education (ECE), formal teaching is challenging due to the young age of the learners, who naturally have a strong inclination toward play. To enhance learning, they emphasised the importance of incorporating songs, play, and dance, as these activities are what children enjoy the most. They explained that circle time is an essential part of their daily routine and typically occurs at the beginning of the day. During this time, children gather and sit in a circle on the carpet, allowing everyone to see each other. The session involves singing songs, playing games, dancing, and storytelling. Afterward, teachers introduce the day's activities and explain the schedule. Responsibilities and tasks are assigned to each child and.

Admin. 3 stated that, “during circle time teachers greet their learners through song such as “Muli shani mwe bana? Tuli bwino ba teacher”.

4.4.1.1 Example of songs used during circle time

- *Muli shani mwe bana?*

Bemba lyrics	Literal Translation in English
Call: Muli shani mwe bana?	Call: How are you children?
Response: Tuli bwino ba teacher	Response: We are fine teacher
Call: Nga ba fyashi bali shani?	Call: how are your parents?
Response :Bali bwino ba teacher	Response: They are fine teacher

4.4.2. Breaking monotony

Under this title, teachers discussed strategies they used to maintain learners' interest in the classroom. They emphasised that young children had short attention spans and could become

easily bored. To address this, they often incorporated indigenous songs between subjects to break the monotony and keep children engaged throughout the lessons.

Pre. Sch. Tr. 1 said, *Since early childhood education (ECE) lessons are highly integrated, these musical interludes signalled the transition to a new topic. Short song like, 'Kalulu kumawa and longa, longa, longa are sung.' Children are well-trained to organise and pack materials from the previous lesson before preparing for the next one.*

4.4.2.1 Example of a song to break monotony

- ***Kalulu ku mawa***

Bemba lyrics	Literal Translation in English
Call : Kalulu ku mawa	Cal: Hare in the morning
Response : Adya matemba	Response : Eats someone's maize
Call :Eee	Cal: Eee
Response : timuceke pa mimba ngati adya matemba	Response: Let's cut him open to see if he has eaten the maize

- ***Longa, longa, longa***

Bemba lyrics	Literal translation in English
Call: Longa, longa, longa x 4	Call: Park, park, park x 4
Response: Longa ma toys x4	Response: Park the toys x4

During my lesson observations, I noticed that children would sometimes move to different subject corners, where lessons involved hands-on activities using various artefacts. In some cases, the entire lesson would take place within that specific corner. Some songs incorporated physical movements, while others were designed to develop literacy, numeracy, and other essential skills.

4.5. Storytelling and role-play

Storytelling is the art of conveying narratives through words and actions to engage the audience's imagination. It serves multiple purposes, including entertainment, education, the preservation of culture, and the transmission of moral values. Stories can be delivered orally, in writing, or through various media, often incorporating plot, characters, and a narrative perspective to create compelling experiences. This theme, 'Storytelling and role-play', emerged as the third major theme in the study and is organised into four sub-themes: cultural awareness and identity, passing on values and morals, heritage, history, and freedom, and holistic development. Each of these sub-themes is explained in detail below.

Administrator 2 said, "Storytelling is as old as creation and was a key way our ancestors passed down morals, values, and culture. My grandmother often told us stories after chores, asking questions to make us reflect on their lessons and the songs within them. These songs taught us about life, and those raised with such values behaved respectfully, unlike some of the behaviour we see today where young ones argue with elders, dress inappropriately and even post nude pictures."

In support of the above narration Pre-School Teacher 4 highlighted the integration of indigenous songs and storytelling into play-based learning to promote values, morals, and cultural awareness. She cited the song "Ninani walya makanga yabene?" ("Who has eaten someone's Guinea fowl?") as a teaching tool for moral lessons like honesty and integrity. The song also facilitated the teaching of number concepts, vocabulary, colours, and counting. Through related activities such as drawing, colouring, tracing, and role-play, children internalised educational and cultural concepts, resulting in holistic learning experiences.

The researcher observed that the lesson was so captivating as children listened to the story and joined in the story song (ninani walya makanga yabene- namatenga). He watched children's emotions shifting depending on the scene at a particular time. This lesson had a lot of teachings in it, he could see this during the question time and when they were asked to give feedback on the lesson according to how each one of them wanted to do it.

4.5.1 Example of a song on morals in storytelling

- ***Ninani walya makanga yabene***

This song teaches on integrity and honesty. When a person or child is entrusted with certain duties must do them diligently whether under someone's watch or not .

Bemba lyrics	Literal translation in English
Call: Ninani walya makanga yabene?	Call: Who ate someone's Guinea fowl?
Response: Namatenga	Response: Deep waters
Call: cisense mukule mutwale Pali bemba	Call: Sardines take him/her to deep waters
Response: Namatenga	Response: Deep waters

- ***Kwali cilumendo***

This song teaches integrity and honesty as well.

• Bemba lyrics	Literal translation in English
Call:Kwali cilumendo	Call: There was a gentleman
Response: Takwete mano-o	Response: He could not reason properly
Call: Aibile mpwa	Call: He went to steal
Response: Mwa banafyala-a	Response: From his in-laws
Call: Nafyala pa kwisa nani aibe mpwa-a	Call: His in-laws asked, who has stolen the vegetable?
Response: Ninsala mayo eya njikete-e	Response: It was hunger that dove me to steal

4.5.1. Cultural awareness and cultural identity

Most teachers explained that indigenous songs introduce children to Zambia's diverse cultures, languages, and traditions, fostering respect and pride in their heritage. They also stated that these

indigenous songs helped children build a strong connection to their cultural roots through traditional beliefs, history, and symbols.

Admin. 2 said that *“as children learn these songs, there is preservation of heritage and historical knowledge.”*

4.5.2. Passing on values and morals

Passing on values and morals through music involves using songs and musical activities to teach important life principles and ethical behaviour. Music can serve as a tool to communicate lessons about kindness, respect, honesty, and responsibility in an engaging and memorable way. Through lyrics, rhythms, and melodies, children and adults alike can internalise positive values and develop a sense of right and wrong. Additionally, music often reflects cultural traditions and beliefs, making it a powerful medium for preserving and transmitting moral teachings across generations.

Admin. 4. Said that *“children will learn their culture through indigenous songs, will appreciate school for incorporating what they already know and that there will be improvement of oratory skills in children.”*

P.1. said, *“traditional songs help to teach respect”. Songs like “ciminine” (meaning a child should not stand while elderly people are sitting, he/ she must kneel down), my child likes to sing it. They also learn not to look down or judge others basing in their looks. She gave an example of a song “Kapapa kalubalala” (meaning only when you break open a groundnut shell, will you know what is inside of it), which when interpreted gives an interpretation that ‘each one has a purpose God created them for’.*

4.5.2.1 Example of a song on values and morals

- **Kapapa ka lubalala**

This song teaches on respect for all human creation, which when interpreted gives an interpretation that ‘each one has a purpose God created them for.

Bemba lyrics	Literal translation in English
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Call: Kapapa ka lubalala	Call: Groundnut shell
Response: Mwikamona ukutuntumana mukati emuli amano	Response: Don't just look at it's outer shell inside that's there's sense
Call: Mukati	Call: Inside
Response: Emuli amano	Response: That's where there's sense

4.5.3. Heritage, history and freedom.

Teachers explained that heritage, history, and freedom encompass the cultural traditions, significant past events, and ideals of independence that shape a community or nation's identity. They also went on to say heritage reflects the values, customs, and artefacts passed down through generations, history, the events and experiences that define a collective past, and freedom represents the struggles and achievements that establish autonomy and rights. Together, they foster cultural pride, historical understanding, and a commitment to preserving independence. They also insisted that heritage, history and freedom can be preserved through different songs such that when these songs are sung, people will learn something.

Pre. Sch. Tr. 5 said, *“for freedom, we teach songs like, “Munshita ya cha-cha-cha”, “Cawama casokona na lelo ba Kaunda” and also the national anthem. These help children to become patriotic and they feel connected to their nation, the independence and freedom that was gained by their forefathers. You should have seen the demonstration of the fight for independence by these children!”*

4.5.3.1 Example of a song on heritage, history and freedom

- ***Munshita ya cha-cha-cha***

This song teaches patriotism and connection to one's nation.

Bemba lyrics	Literal translation in English
Call: Munshita ya cha-cha-cha	Call: During struggle for independence

Response: Twale lala mu mpanga, Twale lala pansoka kwati tuli nama sha mu mpanga kwati tuli nama sha mu mpanga	Response: We used to sleep in the bush, we used to sleep on serpents a if we were animals
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4.5.4. Holistic development

The teachers indicated to the researcher on separate incidences that these indigenous songs were very powerful tools for equipping the young generation with all the necessary skills they needed ranging from, cultural awareness, cultural identity, moral values such as social emotional development, physical and cognitive development. The researcher also remembers how **Pre.Sch. Tr. 4.** recounted on the importance of indigenous songs immediately after the interview.

She said, “if the government mandated the use of indigenous songs in all schools, Zambia could cultivate children who are culturally, morally, socially, spiritually, and mentally upright. She observed that these songs naturally instilled values in children, engaging their emotions and promoting holistic development. However, only a few centers in Ndola currently implement this approach”.

On the second question, ‘*which indigenous songs do teachers integrate into play based learning activities in Zambian early childhood education centres?*’

4.6. Types of indigenous songs used in play-based learning (PBL) activities

The study revealed that teachers used traditional, cultural and thematic songs, called (Inyimbo *sha cikaya*) in Bemba, with the sub themes as outlined below: *call and response songs, seasonal songs, ceremonial and cultural songs, rhymes and chanting songs, folkloric or story songs, and play and game songs.* Teachers stated that these songs reflected cultural heritage and traditions and that they were found everywhere in Zambia despite different languages and that they carried the same meaning. They said these songs were integral in teaching language skills, moral values, and cultural pride while also supporting social emotional, physical and cognitive development. Presentation of each sub theme in detail will follow the order laid above.

4.6.1 Call and response songs

Teachers stated that they used these songs because they encourage participation and were highly interactive in that, one child or the teacher may start the song then the rest will respond. They said these songs were used to teach new concepts, consolidate ideas, and even when concluding the lessons in both culturally and educational areas. They gave examples of the songs such as (*“Ciminine, Kapapa ka lubalala, uyu mwana mwebesheni”*).

P.3 said: “ *Songs like ‘uyu mwana mwebesheni’ help learners to improve their attentiveness as they await to respond to the caller and at the same time learn how to become patient to their leaders, elders, leaders at various level”*.”

Most songs tabulated above are call and response because they have call and response characteristics.

4.6.2. Seasonal songs

Most teachers explained that indigenous seasonal songs were an important part of many African cultures, as they helped connect people with the rhythms of nature, the changing seasons, and traditional activities such as hunting, farming, and ceremonies. They stated that these songs were passed down through generations and often played a vital role in the spiritual and social life of the community. Seasonal songs can vary widely depending on the tribe or nation, each with its own languages, customs, and practices. Now here in school we do not focus on everything, we just teach some so that children can be aware of the environment around them. They stated that they usually teach children about the seasons and what each season is all about. We make children aware of the seasons in order to equip them with the necessary materials and skills, for example this season, children come with umbrellas and warm clothing because any time it can rain, we also teach them gardening so that when they go back home, they should help their parents while in cold season we always teach them to wear something warm. The only song they can sing now is “*we mfula isa-isa twangale na mainsa*”. (*meaning rain, rain come, we want to play with you*).

4.6.2.1 Example of a song on seasonal songs

- ***We mfula isa-isa***

This song is just taught to make learners aware that the rain season is on and every activity that comes with it.

Bemba lyrics	Literal translation in English
Call: We mfula isa-isa	Call: Rain, rain come, come
Response : Twangale na mainsa	Response: We want to play with you

4.6.3. Ceremonial and cultural songs

The teachers stated that ceremonial songs were performed during sacred rituals and ceremonies, such as healing rituals, rites of passage, harvest celebrations, or religious observances. These songs connected the community to the spiritual world, invoking blessings, guidance, or protection. Examples include songs used in marriage ceremonies, and coming-of-age ceremonies. They said most songs they use to teach children are taken from these examples what they just do is to use the language that would suit the learners. For example, “*Ciminine, uyu mwana mwebesheni, Wimona mamba pa numa*, “

For cultural songs they said they (songs) celebrate cultural identity, traditions, and the natural world. They are often sung during social gatherings like festivals, and community events. These songs help preserve cultural heritage, transmit stories and history, and reinforce shared values. They gave examples such as “*Kapapa kalubalala, kwali cilumendo, kabula kandale, akazi a mfumu*”. They affirmed that these songs helped to preserve cultural heritage, transmit stories and history and reinforce shared values.

P. 5 said that I think they use these songs to teach cultural values such as respect and integrity.

4.6.3.1 Example of a song on ceremonial and cultural songs

- ***Mwimona mamba pa numa***

The song teaches values such as respect for elders.

Bemba lyrics	Literal translation in English
Call: Wimona mamba pa numa	Call: Don't just look at the scales on my back

Response: Nine nafyala imbeka	Response: I am the one who has given birth to the beautiful girl
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4.6.4. Rhymes and chanting songs

Teachers said that rhymes and chants were songs that included repetitive vocal patterns, often with a steady rhythm of words or sounds, often designed to be easy to remember and passed down through generations. These songs may be playful, teaching, or spiritual in nature. Usually in teaching these could be used in counting, vowels or even the alphabetical order. Both rhymes and chanting songs are accessible, communal, and often serve both functional and spiritual roles in indigenous cultures. They help preserve tradition, promote unity, and convey knowledge. To support the narrative above, below are the quotes:

Admin.1. *said that teachers incorporate indigenous songs using literacy. What I mean is under Literacy teachers can help learners improve listening skills, pronunciation, vocabulary and even sentence structure.*

Pre.Sch. Tr. 2. *said we incorporate them when teaching reading. For example, when we are teaching reading in Bemba, we teach them action like in vowels we teach them /a/ ahintilile kukamuti, /e/ akonkomefye, /I/ ali nakasote /o/ ali noalufumo /u/ kwati muganda, and when they are reading these sounds, they do actions and can easily read these vowels because of the gesture they do.*

Pre.Sch.Tr.3 *said, we use them when we are teaching language. For example, Pamushi pa fulwe- eya, palibe mfumu – eya, ishakwata na mashina – eya. Aba nibani? /a/ Aba nibani? /o/ just like that.*

4.6.5. Story songs

Teachers explained that story songs were musical narratives that tell stories, often based on myths, legends, historical events, or everyday life. These songs blend storytelling with music, using rhythm, melody, and lyrics to convey important cultural teachings, values, and lessons. They said these were an integral part of many Indigenous and cultural traditions and serve both as a form of entertainment and a means of passing down knowledge. Story songs often encourage movement,

gestures, or imaginative play, allowing children to express themselves physically and emotionally while reinforcing the story's themes.

For example, the story that was taught by **Pre.Sch. Tr. 4** with a story song “ *We calya mayo, bushe ukatulika?*” She emphasised that,

‘Story songs in ECE can be powerful tools for teaching language, numeracy, cultural awareness, values, and creativity. By incorporating storytelling into music, children not only enjoy an engaging form of learning but also gain a deeper understanding of the world around them, fostering a love for music and storytelling while developing essential cognitive, social, and emotional skills.’

4.6.5.1 Example of a story song

- *We calya mayo bushe ukatulika?’*

Bemba lyrics	English literal translation
Call: We calya mayo	Call: You thing that has eaten my mother
Response : Bushe ukatulika?	Response : Are you going to break open?

4.6.6. Play and game songs

Play and game songs were said to be interactive, engaging songs that involved children in active participation, often through movement, actions, or games. They said these songs were designed to be fun and playful, helping children develop various skills while keeping them entertained. They typically incorporate repetitive lyrics, simple instructions, and sometimes a rhythm that invites physical activity or cooperative play. Play and game songs typically involve children in activities like clapping, dancing, and simple movements, all of which engage them physically and socially. These interactive elements not only make learning fun but also foster important developmental skills. Socially, children learn to cooperate, take turns, and follow instructions while participating in group activities. Morally, such songs often teach concepts of sharing, empathy, and teamwork. Additionally, the physical actions involved help develop both gross motor skills such as coordination, balance, and body awareness, and fine motor skills, such as finger dexterity, hand-eye coordination, and spatial awareness. In this way, play and game songs provide a holistic approach to learning, supporting children's emotional, cognitive, and physical growth while

encouraging social bonding and positive behaviour. Good examples for the play and game songs were “*kabushi kalila-lila*”, (bleating goat) and “*Nambushi ee*” (sheep, sheep, come).

Pre.Sch. Tr. 4 recounted that, *"The songs and activities like dancing and playing with the drum help develop children's motor skills. For example, in Kabushi kalila-lila, holding the ball promotes fine motor skills, while running enhances gross motor skills. The game also teaches children to follow rules, which we incorporate in lessons."*

Teachers reported that these songs ranging from call and response to folkloric songs, enhance language skills, moral values, and cultural identity. They also support children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development through interactive and participatory activities. By integrating these songs, educators preserve cultural heritage while providing meaningful, engaging learning experiences. The use of indigenous songs strengthens both academic and cultural growth, making them a vital component in early childhood education.

On the third question, *what challenges do teachers face in integrating indigenous songs into play based learning in Zambian early childhood education centres?*

This section presents findings in line with the third research question of the study. The following themes and sub themes emerged. Challenges in the integration of indigenous songs into play based learning with the following sub themes. Teachers’ training in music, lack of resources and support, insufficient indigenous song materials, lack of administrative support, language barriers and understanding, difficulty in adapting songs to curriculum.

4.7. Challenges faced when integrating indigenous songs into play-based learning

Integrating indigenous songs into play-based learning presents several challenges that affect the effectiveness and consistency of this approach in early childhood education. While the use of traditional music holds great potential for enriching children's learning experiences and preserving cultural heritage, many teachers encounter obstacles that hinder its implementation. These challenges range from a lack of appropriate resources and institutional support to limited training and understanding of how to incorporate indigenous content meaningfully. As a result, educators often struggle to fully embrace this method, despite recognising its value. The following sub headings explores some of the key difficulties teachers face in this context.

4.7.1 Teachers training in music

Out of the five teachers talked to during the in-depth interviews, four of them stated that they were trained to use music as a teaching tool under Expressive Arts which encompassed Music, Art and P.E that was why they were able to integrate indigenous songs into play based learning activities. However, one of them denied having been trained in using music as a teaching tool hence, dependence on others for her to deliver effectively. The above narration is supported by the quotes below:

Pre.Sch. Tr. 3. said, *“No, I was not trained, but I copy from others whatever is in line with what you want to do”.*

4.7.2 Lack of resources and support

Under this heading, teachers referred to the absence or insufficiency of essential tools and materials necessary for them to effectively carry out their roles, particularly in the context of integrating indigenous songs into play-based learning.

Pre. Sch. Tr. 3 said, *sometimes we want to use indigenous songs in our lessons, but we don't have the instruments or materials to support that. Even getting simple things like drums or traditional costumes is difficult. Without these resources, it becomes hard to make the learning experience meaningful for the children.*

4.7.3 Insufficient indigenous song materials

Teachers reported a shortage of indigenous songs. They said they did not have access to the full lyrics, recordings, or resources to teach indigenous songs effectively. Only titles of songs were available, and teachers lack access to complete lyrics or audio resources for proper teaching.

Pre. Sch. Tr. 3 said, *“The only challenge is that in the books there are only title in brackets so you may know a song at the beginning then you may not know where they got it from or the teaching' behind it, but if you complete may mean you have heard it from somewhere”.*

4.7.4 Lack of administrative support

While other teachers acknowledged having material, resource and financial support from their administrators, some teachers reported that some school administrators were not able to provide enough help materially and even financially just because they came with secondary school mentality and were not aware on the importance of ECE. Meaning they have never taught in primary school before so to them ECE is nothing as compared to grade eight or nine pupils.

In trying to answer the question on how she managed to put up all the talking walls, the teachers explained that she just used her own money.

Pre.Sch. Tr. 5 said, "I used my own money because if I waited for the administration, the class would remain bare. They don't understand ECE, because most heads have never taught at this level and think it's less important than upper grades."

4.7.5 Language barriers and understanding

Teachers stated that language barriers referred to challenges that arise when people who speak different languages or dialects try to communicate. They said that these barriers sometimes could lead to misunderstandings, misinterpretations, or even conflicts, as language shapes how we convey ideas, emotions, and cultural values. They said however, they always found it easy to communicate among themselves in English until they all got grounded with the language spoken in the area.

Pre.Sch.Tr. 4 said, "At first, it was hard because we didn't understand the local language, and that made it challenging to use indigenous songs. Even among ourselves, communication became easier, because we mostly used English."

4.7.6 Difficulty in adapting songs to curriculum

Teachers reported facing challenges in composing or adapting songs to align with specific learning topics or themes within the curriculum. This difficulty arose because the available resources provided only the titles of songs, without accompanying lyrics or musical notations. As a result, teachers who were unfamiliar with a particular song struggled to incorporate it effectively into their lessons. Below were some of the sentiments from the participants:

Admin. 3 said, *one challenge is language. Some songs are in local languages that a teacher may not understand well, for example, using a Nyanja song in a Bemba-speaking area. If the teacher mispronounces words or doesn't know the meaning, it becomes hard to use the song effectively."*

4.9 Chapter summary

The findings in this chapter highlight the pivotal role of indigenous songs in fostering holistic development and enhancing learning in early childhood education within Ndola District, Zambia. The integration of these songs into play-based learning activities is not only culturally relevant but also an effective pedagogical approach that enriches children's understanding across various subjects. Guided by the three research questions, the study has unearthed significant insights into the practices, examples, and challenges associated with this teaching method.

Teachers strategically incorporate indigenous songs to facilitate thematic learning across subjects such as literacy, numeracy, social studies, science, and expressive arts. The songs, deeply rooted in local culture, serve as a bridge to impart foundational skills in literacy and language, as evident in the teaching of phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and reading. This method proves particularly effective in addressing the dual challenge of language acquisition and concept understanding by leveraging the familiarity of local languages and culturally resonant content.

The study also identified specific examples of indigenous songs, such as "*Ashintilile*" and "*Pamushi pa fulwe*," which are instrumental in teaching phonics and letter formation, while other songs like "*kapaso K ne mfumu /a/ batila ka*" (the consonant K and vowel/a/ make the sound or syllable/ka/reinforce literacy skills, *kabushi kalila-lila* for holistic learning and *Ciminine, wimona mamba panuma* for cultural, moral values and traditional awareness. Findings are corroborated by the experiences and perspectives of administrators, teachers, and parents, who collectively emphasised the efficacy of using such songs to make learning enjoyable and memorable for children.

The chapter highlights the challenges faced by teachers in integrating indigenous songs into play-based learning, including resource constraints, lack of formal training, and the difficulty of balancing traditional content with modern educational standards. Despite these challenges, the positive impact on students' engagement, comprehension, and cultural identity emphasizes the importance of this approach. In conclusion, the integration of indigenous songs in early childhood

education proves to be an effective tool for enhancing cognitive, linguistic, and cultural development, making learning both meaningful and relevant. The findings encourage further reflection and action to address existing barriers and optimize the use of indigenous songs in educational practices.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Chapter overview

This chapter discusses findings for the study on the experiences of pre-school teachers on the integration of indigenous songs into play-based learning activities, type and or examples of indigenous songs used, and challenges faced by teachers to integrate indigenous songs into play based-learning activities in early childhood education centres in Ndola District, Zambia.

To answer the first question in this study, which read, *how do teachers integrate indigenous songs into play based learning activities in Zambian early childhood education centres?*

The following major themes emerged: thematic learning across subjects, transitioning between subjects, and storytelling and role play.

5.2 Thematic learning across subjects

This theme encompassed a cross section of subjects through which teachers used to integrate indigenous songs into play based learning activities as outlined below.

5.2.1 Literacy and language

The findings in lesson observations, focus group discussion and in-depth interviews revealed that most teachers use indigenous songs to teach foundational literacy skills such as phonics, phonemic awareness, listening, pronunciation, vocabulary, and reading. Teachers emphasised that local language songs simplify introducing new vocabulary and vowels, as children grasp concepts more effectively in their native language. This approach avoids the cognitive strain of learning a new language alongside unfamiliar concepts. The above views are supported by Gay, (2018); Mbatha (2020) who stated that globally, research supported the use of culturally relevant teaching tools, including native-language songs, to enhance comprehension and engagement in early childhood education. This view is further supported by Kakoma (2017); Mukela (2022) who stated that, it was found that incorporating indigenous songs improved learners' vocabulary retention and

phonemic awareness when children were exposed to familiar linguistic structures through music. These findings underscore the universal relevance of culturally grounded educational strategies.

However, there are opposing views on the over-reliance on indigenous songs and local languages in teaching literacy. Critics argue that such an approach may delay the development of proficiency in English, which remains the primary medium of instruction in higher education and professional domains in Zambia (Banda, 2008). This concern is particularly significant in contexts where fluency in English is regarded as a critical skill for socio-economic mobility. Moreover, some educators may lack sufficient training to effectively integrate indigenous songs into structured learning activities, which could undermine the intended educational outcomes (Gatumu, 2021).

The study views the two above views over the use of indigenous songs as valid however, the earlier provides children with greater opportunities to learn in an easy way as children use the familiar language to learn concepts better than when English language is used because it is unfamiliar, meaning children will have to learn the language itself and the concepts being taught. Beginners learn better in the language that they know, even when they see and hear words in print that they are already familiar with, it becomes easier to relate to reality. This is also supported by (Kakoma, 2017), who stated that, in early childhood education mother tongue communication is very important for meaningful teaching and learning, developing kinaesthetic motoric growth and helping to preserve cultural heritage.

5.2.2. Numeracy

Most teachers said that building foundational mathematical skills, including number recognition, counting, and problem-solving was not an easy concept to present just like that. They explained that for young ones to learn better, they needed more fun because their nature of learning was about play. They stated that teaching mathematical concepts, counting and numbers were easy because they used indigenous songs which helped in introducing the lesson even before the teacher could teach. That made teaching and learning fun and interesting.

This view is in line with the recent research which underscores the importance of integrating culturally meaningful play-based approaches to enhance numeracy skills in early childhood education. According to Harrison et al. (2020), intentional and reflective integration of play with culturally relevant contexts, such as indigenous songs, fosters deeper engagement and learning

outcomes in mathematics. This aligns with findings by Brass et al. (2020), which emphasised the significance of culturally grounded and sensory-rich learning experiences in helping children connect abstract concepts like numbers to their lived experiences. Similarly, the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO), (2024), highlights how play-based learning, when infused with cultural and indigenous perspectives, allows educators to balance intentional teaching with the natural learning tendencies of young children. This approach supports the development of foundational numeracy skills by leveraging the creative and exploratory nature of play to engage children meaningfully in mathematical concepts.

Furthermore, a study in Zambia by Lungu and Matafwali, (2020); Mukela, (2022), underscores that play-based learning, incorporating indigenous songs, helps children to relate mathematical concepts to their everyday lives. This not only fosters engagement but also enhances retention of foundational numeracy skills. Similarly, Madondo and Tsikira, (2021), highlight the developmental impact of traditional games and songs in rural Zimbabwe, emphasising their role in improving skills like counting and logical reasoning.

The connection between numeracy development and integrating indigenous songs in early childhood education aligns well with the Vygotsky's Social Constructivist theory, particularly in the context of his principles of play and social learning. According to Vygotsky, children's learning is enhanced through social interaction and scaffolding, (learning from known to unknown), where educators guide learners within their zone of proximal development (ZPD). Play, enriched with culturally relevant tools like indigenous songs, provides the necessary scaffolding to help children grasp abstract concepts such as number recognition, counting, and problem-solving. This pedagogical approach fosters an engaging, contextually meaningful learning environment.

This study supports the notion that indigenous songs are well aligned with Vygotsky's social constructivism theory which emphasises learning activities for pre-schoolers to be culturally responsive, socially acceptable, and interactive in nature. During lesson observations the researcher could see how all these components of the constructivism theory unfolded when learners did the circle time, visited their learning corners for group activities and when they did songs and dances to consolidate the numeracy and mathematical concepts that were taught.

5.2.3. Social Studies (SS)

Social studies education in early childhood benefits from culturally grounded teaching methods. This view aligns well with, Marsh et al. (2020), who emphasises the role of indigenous songs in teaching children about cultural values and social roles, creating connections to their communities and fostering respect for traditions. Similarly, Tunde and Adebayo, (2020), highlighted the effectiveness of traditional songs in teaching health-related topics in African schools. These songs provide accessible ways to teach hygiene, nutrition, and basic anatomy.

Vygotsky's social constructivism approach fits well in this study because it emphasises the value of active engagement with culturally meaningful content. By incorporating indigenous songs into science lessons, children construct understanding through familiar and interactive experiences.

This study, therefore, views the use of indigenous songs to teach respect, cultural traditions, and animal behaviour embodies a rich, interactive way to connect children with their societal roles and environment. This method supports Vygotsky's idea of learning through social interaction and culturally meaningful tools. It not only enhances children's understanding of cultural identity but also instils foundational social values.

5.2.4. Science

Lee and McCabe, (2021), demonstrate that integrating music into science lessons helps young learners understand complex topics like the human body, diseases, and nutrition. Their findings show that songs improve memory retention while making lessons enjoyable. This view is also supported by Tunde and Adebayo, (2020), who highlighted the effectiveness of traditional songs in teaching health-related topics in African schools. They stated that indigenous songs provided accessible ways to teach hygiene, nutrition, and basic anatomy.

In line with the above view, Zambian teachers often use indigenous songs to teach about health, food and anatomy. Further, Ngulube, (2022), notes that this practice links abstracts scientific concepts to children's everyday experiences, making science more engaging and accessible. Furthermore, this view resonates well with Vygotsky 's social constructivist approach which emphasises the value of active engagement with culturally meaningful content. By incorporating indigenous songs into science lessons, children construct understanding through familiar and interactive experiences.

In agreement with the above views, this study acknowledges that, indigenous songs serve as effective pedagogical tools for teaching complex science concepts, such as health, nutrition, and anatomy, by linking them to children's everyday experiences. This approach encourages active participation and aids in memory retention, reflecting the constructivist theory of engaging learners through relatable, sensory-rich content.

5.2.5. Expressive arts (EA)

The teachers stated that they use different indigenous songs during (EA) lessons to stimulate creativity and physical coordination. They stated that usually children were always excited to do songs and games outside classroom. I also witnessed some lessons that were conducted outside classroom where children did vigorous activities such running, clapping, and dancing, and I agree with what the teachers were saying. During some outdoor activities teachers had to put in extra effort to stick to time. In line with the above view, Catterall, (2021), underscores that songs and movement-based activities in expressive arts stimulate creativity and physical coordination in early learners. Outdoor activities, combined with music, encourage holistic development and self-expression. Similarly, Molefi and Ndhlovu (2021); Juntunen (2024) found that traditional songs used in expressive arts lessons promote creativity and social interaction among African children. These methods are deeply tied to cultural identity and community engagement which also aligns with Vygotsky 's social Constructivism theory which is deeply rooted in culture.

Further, Kakoma (2017); Kalinde (2016) N, (2024); Mukela (2022) observed that these practices enhance children's participation and enthusiasm, though logistical challenges like time management during outdoor lessons remain significant. Furthermore, the Constructivist theory supports experiential learning in expressive arts, highlighting how children construct knowledge through creative and hands-on activities that reflect their cultural context (Vygotsky, 1978).

This study acknowledges that the integration of indigenous songs in expressive arts fosters creativity, physical coordination, and emotional expression. Outdoor activities, complemented by traditional music, provide a platform for children to explore, interact, and develop key motor and social skills. This approach aligns with experiential learning, which is central to Vygotsky 's social constructivism theory.

5.3. Transitioning between subjects

The use of indigenous songs during transitions in early childhood education provides a dynamic way to engage learners, maintain interest, and signal changes in activities. Below is an analysis of the sub-themes.

5.3.1. Circle time

Circle time is widely recognised as a critical element in early childhood education. This is in line with Saracho, (2021), who stated that, circle time creates a structured yet playful environment that fosters social interaction, emotional regulation, and cooperative learning. Incorporating indigenous songs adds cultural relevance, enhancing children's sense of identity and belonging while providing opportunities for storytelling and language development. Further, research by Adeyemi and Adeleke, (2022), in Nigeria highlights how circle time activities involving traditional songs, storytelling, and dance allow children to connect with their cultural roots while developing essential communication and coordination skills.

In Zambia, circle time is an opportunity to integrate indigenous songs into daily routines, as noted by Kalinde (2016). Teachers use songs and games to introduce the day's activities, create a sense of community, and ease young learners into the formal aspects of education. This approach not only aligns with local traditions but also caters to the developmental needs of young children. The interactive nature of circle time reflects Vygotsky 's social constructivist principles, emphasising that children learn best in social, participatory environments. The use of indigenous songs provides culturally relevant scaffolding that helps children build new knowledge through shared experiences (Vygotsky, 1978).

This study acknowledges that circle time creates a structured yet playful environment that fosters social interaction, emotional regulation, and cooperative learning. Incorporating indigenous songs adds cultural relevance, enhancing children's sense of identity and belonging while providing opportunities for storytelling and language development. As observed during research, children were more excited to sit in that circle at the beginning of every lesson so that they could listen to stories, sing songs and do some moments. Such actions did not only excite learners; it also gave them the morale to start a day with a great bang in as far as learning was concerned.

5.3.2. Breaking monotony

Young children often struggle with maintaining attention in formal settings. Songs with physical movements are particularly effective in helping children reset and prepare for new tasks. Zambian teachers often rely on indigenous songs to signal subject transitions and maintain engagement. This statement aligns well with Finnegan (2012) who confirms that brief musical interludes can re-energise learners, foster focus, and aid in transitioning between activities. Further, Mkhombo (2019), in South Africa showed that indigenous songs, accompanied by clapping or dancing, kept learners engaged and reinforced concepts like literacy and numeracy. Furthermore, Kalinde, (2016), also alluded that these songs serve multiple functions such as breaking monotony, signalling transitions, and providing hands-on opportunities for skill reinforcement. The inclusion of physical activities during these interludes promotes holistic development by catering to both cognitive and motor skills. The Constructivist framework supports the use of meaningful transitions to maintain engagement and scaffold new knowledge. Indigenous songs act as cognitive and emotional bridges, allowing children to process and consolidate previous lessons before moving on to new content (Vygotsky, 1978).

It is true that these songs serve multiple functions such as breaking monotony, signalling transitions, and providing hands-on opportunities for skill reinforcement. The researcher noticed that each time the teacher wanted to switch from one subject to another, there was a song that would signal the end of that lesson, and when children heard particular songs would respond by singing and action. Sometimes they would be dancing, sometimes they would be forming a circle and sometimes they would be heading to subject corners.

5.4. Storytelling and role-play

The use of storytelling and role-play in early childhood education, enriched with indigenous songs, serves as a powerful approach to fostering cultural awareness, moral values, historical understanding, and holistic development. The above view is in line with Campbell et al. (2022); Hare (2016) who emphasises that storytelling and role-play are foundational in fostering cultural awareness and moral development. They argue that these methods, combined with music, create meaningful, emotionally resonant experiences that enhance young learners' engagement and understanding of societal values. Below is a detailed analysis of the sub-themes:

5.4.1. Cultural awareness and cultural identity

Storytelling and songs play a vital role in introducing children to diverse cultures and traditions. This is in line with Jones and Smith (2022); Kennedy (2016); Hare (2016) who stated that these activities help children appreciate cultural diversity, promoting empathy and respect for others. Indigenous songs allow learners to connect emotionally with their heritage while developing a strong cultural identity (Kalinde, 2024). In African education, storytelling and songs are deeply rooted in traditional practices. This view also aligns with Collins (1999) Nketia (2021) who highlighted that those oral traditions, through songs and stories, are effective in teaching children's cultural values and fostering a sense of belonging. This approach ensures that the younger generation understands and respects their cultural heritage.

Similarly, Kakoma (2017); Kalumba (2024); Matafwali & Mofu (2023); Mkandawire (2019); Mwila (2016) stated that these songs foster pride and respect for Zambian heritage while helping children establish a connection to their cultural roots. This aligns with the need to preserve indigenous knowledge in the face of globalization. Constructivism emphasises learning through meaningful, culturally relevant experiences. Vygotsky (1978) argues that cultural tools, such as indigenous songs, serve as mediators in learning, enabling children to internalise social and cultural knowledge while constructing their identity.

This study agrees that approach is essential for fostering a sense of belonging and respect for diversity in Zambia's multicultural society. Indigenous songs act as a bridge between the past and present, enabling children to appreciate their roots while navigating a globalised world. This resonates with Vygotsky's concept of mediated learning, where cultural tools enhance cognitive development. Furthermore, the integration of such cultural elements aligns with the global movement toward decolonising early childhood education, as noted by scholars like Nketia (2021) and Kalumba (2024).

5.4.2. Passing on values and morals

Songs and stories have long been tools for moral and ethical education. This statement aligns with Campbell et al. (2022) who noted that storytelling promotes character building, emotional development, and the understanding of societal norms. Role-play, as an extension of storytelling, helps children internalize values by acting out scenarios. Studies by Obonyo and Otieno (2021) demonstrate that African indigenous songs embed lessons on honesty, respect, and community

living, effectively instilling moral values in children. This method supports character development while preserving cultural integrity. These play songs were found to be consistent with Tsamaase et al (2020) who found similar findings on respect as a valued cultural aspect among Botswana people. This finding collate with the African values where respect for established authority is emphasised (Achebe, 1959); (Timberondwa, 1978).

In Zambian classrooms, teachers use indigenous songs to pass on moral lessons and foster social-emotional development. Ng'andu (2009); Mtonga (2012) observed that these songs often include themes of respect for elders, cooperation, and kindness, serving as practical tools for moral education. Through the constructivist lens, children learn values and morals by actively participating in culturally rich activities. Role-play and storytelling create scenarios where children can explore and internalise these lessons in meaningful contexts (Vygotsky, 1978).

This study believes that this practice is a testament to the enduring relevance of oral traditions in education. While formal curricula often focus on academic skills, indigenous songs ensure that character education remains central to early childhood development. From a constructivist perspective, such practices allow children to actively construct their understanding of societal norms through interactive and contextually meaningful experiences. These methods also address the growing need for social-emotional learning in early childhood settings, as advocated by Campbell et al. (2022).

5.4.3. Heritage, history, and freedom

Educators worldwide recognise the importance of teaching heritage and history to young learners. This view aligns well with Banks and Banks (2021) storytelling and songs about historical events help children develop a sense of identity and understand the struggles and achievements of their communities. African societies have long used songs to preserve historical narratives and celebrate freedom. Additionally, Molefi and Tlou (2021) argue that traditional songs serve as living archives, helping younger generations understand their heritage and the values that define their identity.

In Zambia, indigenous songs are also used to teach about the nation's independence and cultural milestones. In support of this view, Banda, (2023) stated that, teachers emphasise how songs about freedom struggles and historical events reinforce national pride and a commitment to preserving

independence. The views above are well linked to constructivism which also emphasises learning through contextually rich tools. Indigenous songs serve as cultural artefacts that enable children to construct knowledge about their heritage, history, and ideals of freedom, thereby linking past and present learning experiences (Vygotsky, 1978).

In my perspective, this approach is invaluable in cultivating informed and engaged citizens from an early age. It aligns with the African philosophy of 'ubuntu', which emphasises interconnectedness and collective identity. Indigenous songs provide a unique medium for preserving historical narratives and ideals of freedom, ensuring that young learners understand their role in sustaining their community's legacy. This is particularly crucial in Zambia, where postcolonial education aims to balance modernity with cultural preservation, as highlighted by Taylor (2006).

5.4.4. Holistic development

Holistic education focuses on developing all aspects of a child's growth cognitive, social, emotional, and physical. This is supported by Marsh et al. (2020) who indicated that integrating music, storytelling, and role-play fosters multiple intelligences, enabling well-rounded development. Indigenous African practices emphasise holistic development. Further, Zosh et al., (2017) found that storytelling and songs promote not only cognitive learning but also physical coordination, social skills, and emotional resilience in young learners.

In Zambia, teachers incorporate storytelling and role-play using indigenous songs to support holistic development. This is supported by Kakoma, (2017) who stated that, indigenous songs carry deep cultural and traditional meaning and contribute significantly to language, physical, social emotional as well as cognitive development. Further, Mtonga (2022) alluded that these activities enhance cultural awareness, social cohesion, and motor skills while making learning enjoyable and meaningful. Holistic development aligns with constructivist principles, which advocate for active, multi-dimensional learning experiences. Indigenous songs and storytelling provide platforms for children to develop various skills in a culturally meaningful context (Vygotsky, 1978).

This study views holistic development as an epitome of effective early childhood education. Indigenous songs engage multiple senses and domains of development, making learning both

enjoyable and impactful. They provide a natural context for children to develop fine and gross motor skills, language abilities, and social competencies. This aligns with Constructivist principles, which advocate for active, experiential learning that addresses all aspects of a child's growth. Studies by Marsh et al. (2020) and Tunde and Adebayo (2020) support the notion that music and storytelling are indispensable in fostering well-rounded development in young learners.

5.5. Types of indigenous songs used in play-based learning (PBL) activities

This section discussed the second objective of the study which explores the types or examples of indigenous songs utilised in play-based learning (PBL) activities in Zambian early childhood education (ECE) centres in Ndola District. These songs, deeply rooted in Zambia's diverse cultural heritage, serve as powerful tools for language acquisition, moral education, cultural pride, and holistic development. Drawing insights from global, regional, and local perspectives, showing how the discussion aligns with Vygotsky's socio-constructivist theory, which emphasises the mediating role of cultural tools in learning.

The study revealed that teachers used traditional, cultural and thematic songs, called (*Inyimbo sha cikaya*) in Bemba, (meaning indigenous songs) with the sub themes as outlined below: *call and response songs, seasonal songs, ceremonial and cultural songs, rhymes and chanting songs, folkloric or story songs, and play and game songs*. Teachers stated that these songs reflected cultural heritage and traditions and that they were found everywhere in Zambia despite different languages and that they carried same meaning. They said these songs were integral in teaching language skills, moral values, and cultural pride while also supporting social emotional, physical and cognitive development. Presentation of each sub theme in detail will follow the order laid above.

5.5.1. Call and response songs

Findings of the study reviewed that, teachers used these songs because they encourage participation and were highly interactive in that, one child or the teacher may start the song then the rest will respond. Kaemmer (1993:103) describes African music as having a cyclic call and response form in which parts are repeatedly sung without a defined end. They said these songs were used to teach new concepts, consolidation of ideas, and even when concluding the lessons in both culturally and educational areas. Call-and-response songs, prevalent in various cultures worldwide, enhance participation, social interaction, and rhythm. This is supported by Campbell

et al. (2022) who emphasised that these songs promote active listening and collaboration, and essential skills for young learners. In Africa, call-and-response songs are integral to oral traditions. In addition to what Campbell et al., Molefe and Tlou (2021) noted their role (indigenous songs) in fostering communal learning, as they require collective participation, making them effective for early childhood classrooms. Furthermore, Nompula (2011) also argued that, through call and response game songs, children learn to listen, respect and cooperate with the leader, which in turn develops respect for and cooperative spirit in working with the leaders in society

Teachers in Zambia use indigenous songs to engage learners in interactive activities, promoting group dynamics and cultural pride. These practices align with findings by Mukela (2022) who highlighted that, traditional songs support collaborative learning and cultural identity development in classrooms. Additionally, this statement is supported by Kakoma (2019) who noted that call-and-response songs foster participation and cooperation among learners and also emphasised the role of indigenous songs in instilling cultural pride and teaching social cohesion.

This study argues that integrating indigenous songs into play-based learning is not only culturally relevant but also pedagogically effective. The call-and-response method fosters collaboration, critical thinking, and emotional connection, aligning perfectly with the principles of social constructivism. However, this approach requires deliberate planning to ensure inclusivity, given Zambia's multilingual context. Teachers should be trained to integrate diverse indigenous songs effectively while respecting cultural nuances. Some examples of call and response songs are; *Kapapa ka lubalala, Ciminine-Ciminine ba mayo, kwali cilumendo takwete mano*.

5.5.2. Seasonal songs

Findings of the study reviewed that, indigenous seasonal songs were an important part of many African cultures, as they helped connect people with the rhythm, the necessary materials and skills, for example in the rain season, children come with umbrellas and warm clothing because any time it can rain, we also teach them gardening so that when they go back home, they should help their parents while in cold season we always teach them to wear something warm or carry tea in flasks”.

These findings are well linked to Stickney (2020); Mirada (2002); Chung (2022) who stated that songs linked to seasons teach children about natural cycles and environmental awareness; they enhance children's understanding of time, weather, and their surroundings. Similarly, Baba (2020);

Tunde and Adebayo (2020) stated that, in African communities, seasonal songs often marked planting or harvest times. He highlighted their role in teaching agricultural practices and environmental stewardship. Furthermore, Kaluba et al (2021); Mwale & Sampa (2019); Simwinda (2017) highlighted how teachers incorporate seasonal songs to teach learners about traditional farming, cycles and celebrations, fostering connections to local knowledge and environmental awareness. The above views are also in line with Vygotsky (1978) who stated that the approach provided a basis which explained how cultural tools like seasonal songs mediated learning and cognitive development. This aligns with the constructivist view that learning is deeply embedded in social and cultural contexts. One example of a seasonal song commonly used is, *we mfula isa-isa twangale na mainsa*.

5.5.3. Ceremonial and cultural songs

The study established that, ceremonial and cultural songs play a vital role in fostering community identity, spirituality, and continuity of indigenous knowledge. Teachers highlighted that these songs are integral to sacred rituals and ceremonies, including healing rituals, rites of passage, harvest celebrations, and religious observances. This is in line with Tomaselli (2021) who alluded that, through such practices, these songs connect the community to their spiritual heritage, invoking blessings, guidance, or protection.

Globally, indigenous communities have long utilised ceremonial songs to preserve their cultural heritage. This is in line with Smith et al. (2019) who narrated that, Native American and Australian Aboriginal songs are deeply rooted in spiritual practices and storytelling traditions. Further, Mkhombo (2019) recounted that, regionally, in African traditions, such as the Maasai and Xhosa communities, ceremonial songs are key to celebrating milestones like marriage or initiations.

Furthermore, Lumbwe (2009) explained that in Zambia, ceremonial songs hold particular significance in rituals such as "*Matebeto*" (marriage preparation) and "*ichisungu*" (coming-of-age ceremonies). These songs are not only a means of celebration but also tools for transmitting values and cultural norms to younger generations. Teachers adapt these songs to suit the educational needs of learners by modifying the language and presentation, ensuring accessibility while maintaining authenticity.

From a social constructivist perspective, ceremonial songs embody Vygotsky's principle that learning is deeply rooted in social and cultural contexts. These songs provide a shared framework for communal interaction, allowing learners to construct meaning through cultural engagement. As a researcher, it is evident that integrating such indigenous knowledge systems into education fosters cultural pride, enhances learning outcomes, and bridges the gap between formal education and traditional wisdom. Some examples of the ceremonial songs are, *munshita ya cha-cha-cha*, and *wimona mamba panuma*.

5.5.4. Rhymes and chanting songs

The findings of the study showed that, rhymes and chants hold significant pedagogical and cultural value in preserving and transmitting knowledge across generations. Teachers emphasised that these rhythmic expressions were used to engage learners in memorisation, coordination, and the development of linguistic skills. This is in line with Campbell (2002); Chan (2018); Kelly (2015) who explained that, traditionally, rhymes and chants have been employed to teach morals, values, and practical life lessons in an entertaining yet instructive manner. For instance, they are often used to instil discipline or narrate folklore in a way that resonates with young minds

In Zambia, rhymes and chants are commonly utilised in children's play and early education. Teachers often modify these to suit the linguistic and developmental needs of their learners while retaining cultural essence. This adaptation demonstrates the flexibility of indigenous knowledge in modern pedagogical contexts.

Through the lens of social constructivism, rhymes and chants provide a collaborative platform for learners to co-construct meaning within their cultural framework. As Vygotsky's theory emphasises the role of social interaction in cognitive development, these rhythmic tools enable children to learn through shared cultural practices.

As a researcher, it is evident that incorporating indigenous rhymes and chants into education not only preserves cultural heritage but also fosters creativity, language acquisition, and community bonding. Their rhythmic nature makes learning more engaging, helping to build bridges between traditional knowledge systems and formal education. Some examples of chants and rhyme songs are, *ashintilile kukamuti*, *pamushi pa fulwe*, *kapaso K ne mfumu /a/ batila ka*.

5.5.5. Story songs

Story songs represent a fusion of music and narrative, serving as powerful tools for cultural transmission and entertainment. Teachers noted that these songs often draw from myths, legends, historical events, or everyday life, intertwining rhythm, melody, and lyrics. Some examples of such songs are, *ninani walya makanga ya bene*, and *we calya mayo bushe ukatulika?*

In Zambia, story songs encapsulate historical events, cultural myths, and everyday life. These songs are integral in teaching young learners' cultural values, traditional practices, and moral lessons in an entertaining and memorable way. Teachers often adapt the language and themes of these songs to resonate with learners' developmental levels while maintaining their authenticity and cultural significance (Mukela, 2022).

From a social constructivist perspective, story songs offer a collaborative and culturally grounded medium for children to co-create meaning. By actively participating in the storytelling process, learners connect with their heritage and engage in cognitive and emotional growth. These songs exemplify Vygotsky's idea that learning is deeply embedded in social and cultural contexts.

As a researcher, it is evident that story songs hold immense value in bridging the gap between traditional knowledge and modern pedagogy. They nurture creativity, reinforce cultural identity, and provide learners with an interactive platform to explore moral and social themes, ensuring the continuity of indigenous knowledge.

5.5.6. Play and game songs

Teachers highlighted that these songs incorporate repetitive lyrics, simple instructions, and rhythmic elements that encourage physical activity and cooperative play. This finding is line with Tomaselli (2021) who alluded those activities such as clapping, dancing, and coordinated movements not only entertain but also foster critical developmental skills. Socially, these songs teach cooperation, turn-taking, and adherence to group norms. Morally, they often emphasise values like sharing, empathy, and teamwork. Further, the research findings by Smith et al., (2019) stated that, play and game songs are widely recognised as tools for engaging children in learning. For instance, songs like "Ring around the Rosie" in Western cultures or "Pat-a-cake" involve actions that enhance both social and motor skills.

Furthermore, Mtonga (2012); Mukela (2022) also alluded that, in Zambia, traditional play songs like “*Kabushi kalilalila*” and “*Nambushi ee*” which are a form of an essential part of childhood games, promoted social bonding and reinforced cultural identity. Teachers adapt these songs to suit classroom settings by simplifying instructions and tailoring themes to align with educational objectives. This ensures their relevance in modern pedagogy while preserving their cultural significance.

This study establishes that, it is evident that play and game songs offer a dynamic, culturally rooted approach to learning. They integrate traditional knowledge with modern educational practices, promoting holistic development by addressing physical coordination, social interaction, and moral learning. These songs not only make learning enjoyable but also preserve and celebrate cultural heritage, fostering a well-rounded educational experience.

To answer the third question in this study, which read, *what challenges do teachers face in the integration of indigenous songs in play-based learning in Zambian early childhood education centres?* The following major theme and sub themes emerged:

5.6. Challenges faced when integrating indigenous songs into play-based learning

Integrating indigenous songs into play-based learning combines cultural traditions with modern educational practices. While this approach offers rich opportunities for teaching language, values, and history, it also presents challenges. These include the difficulty accessing endangered songs and languages, and a lack of educators trained to understand the cultural significance Smith, (2019).

5.6.1 Teachers’ training in music

Teacher training plays a pivotal role in the effective integration of music into pedagogical practices. Out of the five teachers interviewed, four reported having received training under the Expressive Arts curriculum, which incorporates Music, Art, and Physical Education (PE). This training equipped them with the skills to use music as a teaching tool, particularly in integrating indigenous songs into play-based learning activities. Their training allowed them to creatively incorporate music to enhance engagement, cultural relevance, and learning outcomes.

This is in line with Smith et al., (2019) who explained that teacher training programs emphasise the integration of music as a medium for active and experiential learning. For instance, programs

in Finland and New Zealand highlight the role of music in holistic development, equipping educators with strategies for fostering creativity and cultural awareness. This view is also supported by Mkhombo, (2019) who said, regionally, African teacher training often incorporates indigenous music to connect education with cultural heritage and community practices.

This is further supported by Mtonga (2012); Mukela (2022) who stated that, in Zambia, the Expressive Arts curriculum reflects the Ministry of Education's emphasis on promoting holistic learning and cultural preservation. While many teachers are trained in this integrated approach, disparities in training access or emphasis may hinder the uniform application of music-based teaching strategies.

From a social constructivist perspective, teacher training that incorporates music aligns with Vygotsky's theory, which emphasizes the importance of culturally relevant tools in knowledge construction. Music serves as both a medium for interaction and a bridge between learners' cultural contexts and formal education.

According to this research, addressing disparities in teacher training is essential for the consistent and effective use of music as a teaching tool. Strengthening training programs in Expressive Arts can empower educators to confidently incorporate indigenous music into their teaching, fostering cultural identity, engagement, and holistic development in learners.

5.6.2 Lack of resources and support

Teachers highlighted the lack of adequate resources and support as a significant barrier to integrating indigenous songs into play-based learning. They emphasised the absence or insufficiency of essential tools, such as musical instruments, songbooks, and audio equipment, which limits their ability to deliver engaging and culturally relevant lessons. Moreover, they pointed out the lack of professional development opportunities and guidance, which hinders their capacity to innovate and effectively incorporate indigenous music into teaching practices. This is in line with Smith et al., (2019) who stated that, globally, resource constraints in music education are a common challenge, particularly in low-income regions. In many parts of the world, teachers rely on improvisation and local ingenuity to overcome the shortage of materials. Additionally, Chung, (2022) also continued to say regionally, African educators often face similar limitations, compounded by underfunded school systems and inadequate teacher training.

Furthermore, Kalinde (2016); Kakoma (2017); Matafwali & Mofu (2021); Mukela (2022) alluded that, in Zambia, the situation mirrors broader regional challenges. While the Expressive Arts curriculum encourages the use of indigenous music, many schools lack the financial and material support needed to fully implement these strategies. Teachers frequently adapt by creating instruments from local materials or simplifying lesson plans to suit available resources. However, these efforts may not fully address the pedagogical needs or the potential richness of indigenous musical traditions.

From a social constructivist perspective, the lack of resources and institutional support undermines the collaborative and interactive nature of learning. Vygotsky's theory emphasises the importance of tools and scaffolding in the learning process. In this context, the unavailability of musical resources limits teachers' ability to scaffold learning experiences that connect students with their cultural heritage.

From this study, it is evident that addressing resource and support challenges is critical to the successful integration of indigenous songs into play-based learning. Investment in infrastructure, provision of culturally relevant materials, and continuous teacher training are necessary to bridge this gap. Strengthening resource availability not only enhances teaching efficacy but also ensures the preservation and celebration of Zambia's rich musical heritage within education.

5.6.3 Insufficient indigenous song materials

Teachers expressed concerns over the limited availability of indigenous song materials, which they identified as a major obstacle to incorporating these songs into play-based learning. They noted a significant disparity between the resources available for English songs and those for indigenous songs, making it challenging to teach effectively. Specifically, they lacked access to full lyrics, accurate recordings, or instructional guides for indigenous music, hindering their ability to deliver culturally relevant lessons.

This view aligns well with Battiste (2013); who stated that globally, similar challenges have been observed in contexts where indigenous knowledge systems are undervalued or marginalised in formal education. For instance, Native American and Aboriginal Australian educators often face resource shortages, resulting in a reliance on oral transmission or improvisation to preserve traditional songs. This view further aligns with Mapana (2011); Monte et al (2016); Kekana (2016)

who stated that regionally, African educators in countries like Botswana and Kenya have reported difficulties in sourcing traditional music materials, which limits their ability to integrate local culture into education effectively.

This is further supported by Kalinde (2016); Kakoma (2017); Matafwali & Mofu (2021); Mukela (2022) who alluded that, in Zambia, teachers highlighted the scarcity of documented indigenous songs and teaching aids, such as songbooks or audio resources, as a significant challenge. While the Expressive Arts curriculum encourages the use of local songs, the lack of structured resources forces teachers to rely on personal knowledge or peer collaboration, which may not always be comprehensive or accurate.

This study argues that, addressing the shortage of indigenous song materials is imperative for fostering cultural preservation and enhancing educational outcomes. This can be achieved through the documentation and digitization of traditional songs, collaboration with local communities to compile authentic resources, and the development of teacher training programs focused on indigenous music. Such initiatives would empower educators to integrate indigenous songs into play-based learning effectively, enriching both cultural and pedagogical practices.

5.6.4 Lack of administrative support

Globally, the challenges of insufficient administrative support and language barriers in education align with issues discussed by scholars in multicultural and early childhood education. For example, Battiste (2013) noted that many education systems worldwide fail to adequately support teachers in diverse cultural settings, particularly when they are required to integrate indigenous knowledge and practices. In Sub-Saharan Africa, challenges like those identified globally are evident, as Bashir & Mayat (2018); Donaldson (2019) highlighted the underfunding of early childhood education (ECE) and a lack of teacher training in culturally relevant pedagogies.

In Zambia, the study findings reflect broader regional and global trends, Kalinde (2016); Kakoma, 2017; Matafwali & Mofu (2021) discusses the limited administrative support and inadequate resource allocation for early childhood education in Zambia. Teachers often have to personally fund materials to create effective learning environments, such as the “talking walls” mentioned in the study.

5.6.5 Language barriers and understanding

The study found that language barriers referred to challenges that arise when people who speak different languages or dialects try to communicate but fail due to differences in understanding. This is in line with Tenzer & Pudelko (2015) DeCapua & Wintergerst (2016) who stated that these barriers sometimes could lead to misunderstandings, misinterpretations, or even conflicts, as language shapes how people convey ideas, emotions, and cultural values.

The marginalisation of indigenous languages is also a widespread problem, as evidenced by Skutnabb-Kangas (2000); Garg (2024) who discussed the erosion of linguistic diversity due to the dominance of global languages like English. Language barriers often hinder the transmission of cultural knowledge, as teachers struggle to engage with students in languages they may not fully understand, impacting cultural retentions.

The region's vast linguistic diversity exacerbates language barriers, with Heugh (2002) arguing that colonial languages continue to dominate education, often at the expense of local languages. This dynamic complicates efforts to engage children with their cultural heritage, as teachers may lack proficiency in the languages needed to teach indigenous knowledge.

Additionally, language barriers persist, with teachers facing challenges in teaching indigenous songs, a concern also noted by Muzeya (2023) who emphasised the difficulty of incorporating local languages in classrooms where teachers may not be fluent. Parents' preference for English as a medium of instruction further exacerbates these barriers, reflecting the broader societal pressure to adopt global educational norms over local traditions (Marvin, 2019).

The study highlights the need for systemic reforms in education to prioritize cultural inclusivity and support teachers in multicultural classrooms. Globally, this requires recognizing and preserving indigenous languages and practices within educational systems. Regionally, it calls for reforms in teacher training and curriculum development that balance colonial legacies with the demand for culturally relevant education. In Zambia, addressing these challenges involves strengthening teacher support systems and integrating both local and global languages, ensuring that culturally inclusive policies and resources are in place to preserve indigenous knowledge and enhance meaningful learning experiences for all students.

5.6.6 Difficulty in adapting songs to curriculum

Research findings showed that, teachers frequently reported challenges in composing or adapting songs to align with specific learning topics or themes in the curriculum. This is in line with Green (2017) who stated that, globally, studies have highlighted similar challenges, where educators struggle to integrate music into lessons due to a lack of exposure to the prescribed songs or insufficient guidance on their use. Similarly, Nketia (1999) also added to say regionally, in sub-Saharan Africa, research noted that traditional music is often undervalued in formal education systems, making it difficult for teachers to access relevant resources or adapt songs effectively. The global and regional views above further aligns well with Mwamba (2021) who pointed out that Zambian studies emphasise that while music is included in the curriculum, the provided materials often lack practical guidance, such as lyrics or melodies, leaving teachers to rely on their own interpretations.

Additionally, this study observed similar patterns during the study, where teachers expressed frustration over the limited resources. They particularly pointed out that having only the titles of songs, without accompanying audio or sheet music, significantly impeded their ability to use music as a pedagogical tool effectively. This suggests a pressing need for educational stakeholders to provide more comprehensive musical resources that align with curriculum objectives.

Vygotsky's Social Constructivism theory strongly aligns with this study by emphasizing the critical role of culturally relevant tools, such as indigenous songs, in effective learning. From this perspective, the insufficiency of such materials undermines the cultural scaffolding necessary for cognitive and social development. Vygotsky's view that learning is an active process built on prior experiences highlights the importance of using indigenous songs in teaching. These songs draw from learners' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, providing a familiar foundation for constructing new knowledge, a process often described as moving from the known to the unknown.

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), a cornerstone of Vygotsky's theory, is particularly relevant. It underscores the teacher's role in guiding learners from familiar cultural contexts (e.g., indigenous songs) to new concepts, thus enhancing engagement and learning outcomes. Furthermore, play and game songs offer a dynamic platform for co-constructing knowledge in a culturally meaningful framework. These activities exemplify Vygotsky's belief in the power of

social interaction and collaboration in learning, enabling children to acquire cognitive, emotional, and social skills in engaging and community-based contexts.

5.7 Chapter summary

Chapter five delves into the integration of indigenous songs within play-based learning (PBL) activities in Zambian early childhood education centres, highlighting the methodologies employed by teachers, types of indigenous songs they used and the challenges they encountered.

Findings revealed that teacher incorporated indigenous songs to enhance thematic learning across various subjects. In literacy and language development, songs in local dialects facilitated better comprehension and communication skills among young learners. For numeracy, rhythmic patterns and counting songs introduced mathematical concepts in an engaging manner. Social studies (SS) lessons benefited from songs that narrated cultural stories, instilling societal values and historical knowledge. In science education, songs about nature and the environment made complex concepts more relatable. Expressive arts (EA) are enriched through music and movement activities derived from indigenous traditions, fostering creativity and cultural appreciation.

During transitions between subjects, teachers utilised indigenous songs to maintain student engagement and manage classroom dynamics effectively. This practice not only smoothens the shift from one subject to another but also sustains a lively and cohesive learning environment.

The study identifies several categories of indigenous songs employed in play-based learning (PBL). These included call-and-response songs, which promote collaboration and active participation; seasonal songs that reflect cultural practices tied to specific times of the year; ceremonial and cultural songs, deeply rooted in traditions and rituals; rhymes and chanting songs, used to enhance memory retention and engagement; folkloric or storytelling songs that convey lessons, history, and values; and play and game songs, which foster creativity, teamwork, and social interaction. These categories highlight the richness and versatility of indigenous songs in enhancing learning experiences.

Despite the benefits, teachers face challenges in integrating indigenous songs into PBL. A significant obstacle is the lack of formal training in music, leading to diminished confidence and effectiveness in utilising songs as educational tools. Additionally, there is a scarcity of resources

and administrative support, further hindering implementation. Language barriers present another challenge; variations in local dialects and proficiency levels among teachers and students can impede the seamless incorporation of songs. Cultural and conceptual differences may also affect the relevance and acceptance of certain songs within diverse classroom settings. Aligning traditional songs with specific curriculum objectives poses its own set of difficulties, requiring adaptability and creativity from educators.

In conclusion, while indigenous songs hold substantial potential to enrich play-based learning by making education more engaging and culturally relevant, addressing the highlighted challenges is crucial. Providing adequate training, resources, and support to teachers can enhance the effective integration of indigenous songs into early childhood education in Zambia.

CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Chapter overview

This chapter provides a comprehensive summary of the study, highlighting its key findings in relation to the research objectives and questions. It also presents the researcher's conclusions and actionable recommendations for enhancing the integration of indigenous songs into play-based learning (PBL) in Zambian early childhood education. The discussion emphasises the importance of preserving cultural heritage while addressing the challenges identified in the study.

6.2. Summary

The study aimed to achieve three primary objectives: to establish how teachers integrated indigenous songs in PBL, to determine the kinds of indigenous songs used, and to identify the challenges teachers faced in the process. The findings are summarised below in response to the research questions.

6.2.1. Research Question One: How do teachers integrate indigenous songs in play-based learning in Zambian early childhood education centres?

The study found that teachers integrated indigenous songs into play-based learning (PBL) activities in a variety of ways, leveraging their cultural and educational value. Teachers used these songs across subjects, employing them as versatile tools to engage children and enhance their understanding of various topics. Indigenous songs were particularly effective as transitions between activities, ensuring smooth movement from one task to another while maintaining the children's focus and interest. They were also used to introduce new concepts in an engaging and relatable manner. For instance, teachers used call-and-response songs to encourage active participation and foster communication skills. These songs allowed children to interact with the content and with each other, making the learning process collaborative and lively.

Storytelling songs were another approach, helping teachers convey moral lessons, cultural traditions, and values. These songs not only enriched the children's knowledge of their heritage but also instilled a sense of identity and belonging. Rhymes and chanting songs were frequently employed to aid memory retention and keep learners engaged during lessons. The rhythmic and repetitive nature of these songs made them an effective tool for reinforcing concepts across subjects such as Literacy, Numeracy, and Science.

Play and game songs were also commonly integrated, as they promoted creativity, physical development, and teamwork. Activities involving these songs allowed children to develop fine and gross motor skills while learning in an enjoyable and relaxed environment. Teachers observed that such activities fostered collaboration and social skills among learners. Despite these benefits, the study revealed that the integration of indigenous songs is largely informal, with no structured guidelines to ensure consistent application. This lack of formalisation limits the potential of indigenous songs to be fully embedded into the educational framework, reducing their impact as a systematic teaching strategy.

The findings underscore the need for a more formalised approach to the use of indigenous songs in PBL. Structured training and clear guidelines could enhance the effectiveness of this culturally relevant pedagogical tool, ensuring it becomes an integral part of early childhood education in Zambia.

6.2.2. Research Question Two: Which indigenous songs do teachers integrate into play-based learning in Zambian early childhood education centres?

The study found that teachers in Zambian early childhood education centres integrate a variety of indigenous songs into play-based learning (PBL) activities. These songs are referred to as "*Inyimbo sha cikaya*" in Bemba, they encompass traditional, cultural, and thematic elements and are widely recognised across the country, transcending linguistic differences while maintaining their shared meanings and purposes. Teachers emphasised the versatility of these songs in promoting holistic child development, as they support language acquisition, moral education, cultural pride, and the development of social, emotional, physical, and cognitive skills.

One commonly used type of indigenous song is call and response songs, which encourage active participation and foster communication skills. These songs are interactive, requiring children to listen and respond, thus enhancing their listening and speaking abilities. They also promote teamwork and collaboration, making them a valuable tool in group activities.

Seasonal songs are another category, often tied to specific times of the year, such as harvest or rainy seasons. These songs connect children with nature and their environment, teaching them about seasonal changes and agricultural practices while embedding cultural knowledge. Ceremonial and cultural songs are used to instil a sense of cultural identity and pride. These songs

are tied to traditional ceremonies and cultural practices, making them instrumental in preserving heritage and passing down moral values and traditions. Teachers noted that these songs often serve to teach respect for elders and the importance of community.

Rhymes and chanting songs were found to be effective in improving memory retention and engagement. The repetitive and rhythmic nature of these songs helps children remember concepts more easily while keeping them actively involved in lessons. Teachers often use these songs to reinforce literacy and numeracy skills in an enjoyable and interactive way. Folkloric or story songs are used to narrate moral lessons and cultural tales, helping children learn about societal norms, ethics, and history. These songs encourage imagination and creativity while promoting critical thinking and comprehension skills.

Finally, play and game songs are integrated into activities that promote physical development, creativity, and teamwork. These songs are often paired with movement and games, helping children improve their motor skills, coordination, and overall fitness. Teachers highlighted the role of these songs in fostering collaboration and social skills in a fun and engaging way.

Overall, these indigenous songs reflect Zambia's rich cultural heritage and traditions, offering a valuable resource for holistic child development in PBL. Despite their diversity, they share a common purpose: to teach, engage, and nurture children in a culturally meaningful and effective manner. The study underscores the importance of these songs as integral tools in early childhood education.

6.2.3. Research Question Three: What challenges do teachers face in the integration of indigenous songs in play-based learning in Zambian early childhood education centres?

The study revealed several challenges that hinder teachers from fully integrating indigenous songs into play-based learning (PBL) activities. One of the primary challenges is the lack of documented resources. Teachers often struggle to access a diverse repertoire of indigenous songs, as most of these songs have been transmitted orally from generation to generation. The absence of written or recorded collections makes it difficult for teachers, particularly those who may not be deeply familiar with their local traditions, to incorporate these songs effectively in their lessons.

Another significant challenge is the erosion of indigenous knowledge. A declining interest in traditional practices among younger generations, influenced by modernisation and globalisation,

has led to a gradual loss of cultural heritage. This shift has not only diminished the pool of individuals who can teach these songs but has also made it harder to preserve their original meanings and purposes. Teachers expressed concern about this trend, noting that it reduces opportunities for children to connect with their cultural roots and identity.

Inadequate training on the effective use of indigenous songs in teaching is another barrier. While teachers recognize the value of these songs, many lack the pedagogical skills and confidence to integrate them meaningfully into PBL activities. Without professional development and guidance, teachers are left to rely on informal methods, which may not maximize the educational potential of these songs.

Time constraints also pose a challenge, as the demands of academic curricula often leave little room for incorporating indigenous songs into lessons. Teachers reported feeling pressured to prioritize formal academic content, sometimes at the expense of creative and culturally relevant teaching methods like PBL with indigenous songs.

Additionally, the absence of a formal framework or policy for integrating indigenous songs into early childhood education further complicates the process. Without structured guidelines, teachers lack a consistent approach to using these songs, leading to variations in how they are applied across schools and classrooms. This informality limits the potential impact of indigenous songs as a systematic educational tool.

These challenges highlight the need for targeted interventions to support teachers in preserving and utilizing indigenous songs. Documenting and archiving indigenous songs in written or digital formats could ensure their accessibility for current and future generations. Professional development programs focused on integrating these songs into PBL activities would equip teachers with the necessary skills and confidence. Additionally, revising academic curricula to include indigenous songs as a formal component of early childhood education could address time constraints and provide a structured framework for their use.

Addressing these barriers is crucial for sustaining the cultural and educational value of indigenous songs in Zambia. By overcoming these challenges, educators can ensure that these songs continue to play a vital role in promoting holistic child development and preserving the nation's cultural heritage.

6.3 Conclusion

The study concludes that indigenous songs are powerful tools for enhancing PBL activities in Zambian early childhood education. These songs improve learner engagement, creativity, and cognitive development while supporting holistic learning outcomes. However, challenges such as limited documentation, inadequate teacher training, and a decline in indigenous knowledge transmission hinder their effective use in education. The findings highlight the need for a structured approach to integrating indigenous songs into the curriculum, ensuring they serve as effective pedagogical tools rather than being seen solely as cultural artefacts. A balanced approach that merges traditional knowledge with modern educational strategies can maximize learning benefits while maintaining cultural relevance.

6.4. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to the education curriculum specialists, the Ministry of Education and school administrators:

- 1.To develop and implement comprehensive training programmes for educators to enhance their ability to integrate indigenous songs effectively into PBL.
2. To provide language training for teachers to improve their fluency in indigenous languages, enabling them to teach indigenous songs with proper pronunciation, and deeper engagement. (At provincial and district levels).
- 3.To strengthen partnerships between schools and local communities to ensure the authenticity and cultural relevance of the songs used in classrooms.
- 4.To launch awareness campaigns to promote the value of indigenous songs in education, encouraging acceptance and support among stakeholders, including policymakers, parents, and educators.

Recommendations for further research

1. Further research may explore why there is minimal use of indigenous songs/music within the Zambian ECE context.

2. Delve into why most Zambian private owned schools do not hide to government's instructions on issues of curriculum implementation.

6.5 Chapter summary

This chapter summarised the study's key findings, highlighting how teachers integrated indigenous songs into PBL activities, the types of songs used, and the challenges encountered. The researcher's conclusions underscored the cultural and educational value of these songs while emphasising the need for structured support and collaboration. The recommendations provided actionable steps to enhance the use of indigenous songs in early childhood education, ensuring their preservation and effective application for generations to come.

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APPENDICES

Appendices A: Non-participant observation protocol

Name of school:

Date:

Time:

Observation number:

Aspect of observations	Notes and comment
1. Physical Layout <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom Setting – Talking Walls Age Group Availability of T/L resources related to indigenous songs (drums, shakers) 	
2. Organization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opening Format – incorporation of indigenous songs in play-based learning When is incorporation of indigenous songs done? Frequency of integrating indigenous songs in play-based learning Variation of teaching approaches 	
3. Identification of indigenous songs/ Explanation of significance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional significance Cultural significance Historical heritage significance Story telling Linked to traditional or cultural Stories 	
4. Teacher's Role/Attitude	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizer/Facilitator/Leader • provision of an enabling environment • encouraging Children • Smiles at children • engagement of children • Adaptation to challenges 	
5.Children's Role <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of Active Participation • Level of Passive Participation 	
6.Nature of interaction between Teacher and children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Centred • Child/children centred 	
7.Closing format	

Appendices B: pre-school Teacher's / administrators' Interview Guide

Name of school:

Province/District:

Time:

Participants number:.....

Part A: General information of the participant

Gender:

Age (20-30,30-40, 40-50 or above 50). :.....

Educational qualifications :.....

Work experience :.....

Training Institution:.....

Part B: Questions

1. Did you learn music during your training at college /university?
 - 1a. If YES, what type of music did you learn?
2. As a preschool teacher, would you say you were adequately trained to teach learners using music as a tool?
 - 2a. Give reasons for your answer
3. Were indigenous songs part of your course work during your training?
 - 3a. If YES, give some examples of these songs.
4. Do you teach ECE learners using music?
 - 4a. If YES, explain the type of music do you use.

5. Were you trained to integrate indigenous songs into play based learning?
- 5a. If YES, in what ways can indigenous songs be used during teaching?
6. What specific indigenous songs do you use in your teaching?
7. Are these songs traditional, cultural, or do they have specific themes? Can you provide examples?
8. Do you discuss the cultural or historical significance of these songs with the children?
9. What is the local name for indigenous songs?
10. Can you describe the play-based learning activities you typically engage in with the children?
11. How do you introduce and incorporate indigenous songs into these activities?
12. Could you explain the timing and frequency of integrating indigenous songs?
13. Are there any variations in your approach to song integration based on the activity or children's interests?
14. What materials has the administration provided to support play and music during teaching / learning?
15. Do you think indigenous songs have any other significance in ECE learners?
16. What suggestions would you make to improve teaching using indigenous songs in ECE classes?
17. How do you feel about integrating indigenous songs into your teaching?
18. Have you encountered any challenges while integrating these songs? Can you describe them?
19. How do you adapt or overcome these challenges?
20. Do you seek feedback or collaborate with colleagues regarding the integration of indigenous songs?

Appendices C: Focus Group Interview Guide for Parents

Part A

School attended by child.....

Number of participants

Gender:

Age range.....

Part B

Welcome and introductions.

Focus group's purpose: to explore parents' perspectives on the integration of indigenous songs in play-based learning within Zambian early childhood education.

Explore parents' awareness and perceptions of how teachers integrate indigenous songs:

1. How would you describe the ways teachers incorporate indigenous songs in play-based learning for young children?
2. Can you share any specific examples or experiences your child has had with these integrated songs?
3. Are you familiar with the types of indigenous songs being introduced to your child in early childhood education?
4. What do you think about the selection of songs? Any preferences or feedback?
5. Have you noticed any changes in your child's behaviour, engagement, or cultural awareness since the incorporation of indigenous songs?
6. How do you think these songs contribute to your child's overall development?
7. In your opinion, what challenges might teachers face when incorporating indigenous songs into play-based learning?
8. Have you observed any difficulties your child's teachers encounter in this process?
9. How well do you feel informed about the inclusion of indigenous songs in your child's education?

10. Do you have suggestions on how parents can be more involved or informed about these cultural elements?
11. Do you have any suggestions for enhancing the integration of indigenous songs in play-based activities?
12. Are there specific ways you believe teachers can overcome challenges related to this integration?

‘THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATION’

Appendices D: Ethical clearance letter of approval



THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES

Great East Road Campus | P.O. Box 32379 | Lusaka 10101 | Tel: +260-211-290 258/291 777 Fax: (+260)-211-290 258/253 952 | E-mail: director.drgs@unza.zm | Website: www.unza.zm

APPROVAL OF STUDY

IORG No. 0005376
HSSREC IRB No. 00006464
REF NO. HSSREC-2024- MAR-019

19th March, 2024

Mr. Mpandashulu Mulenga
The University of Zambia
P.O. Box 32379
LUSAKA

Dear Mr. Mulenga

RE: “INVESTIGATING TEACHER EXPERIENCES IN INTEGRATING INDIGENOUS SONGS FOR PLAY-BASED LEARNING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTERS: A CASE STUDY OF NDOLA DISTRICT, ZAMBIA.”

Reference is made to your submission of the protocol captioned above. The HSSREC resolved to approve this study and your participation as Principal Investigator for a period of one year.

REVIEW TYPE	ORDINARY REVIEW	APPROVAL NO. HSSREC:- 2024- MAR – 019
Approval and Expiry Date	Approval Date: 19 th March, 2024	Expiry Date: 18 th March, 2025
Protocol Version and Date	Version - Nil.	18 th March, 2025
Information Sheet, Consent Forms and Dates	☐ English.	To be provided
Consent form ID and Date	Version - Nil	To be provided
Recruitment Materials	Nil	Nil
Other Study Documents	Questionnaire.	
Number of Participants Approved for Study		

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- A reprint of this letter shall be done at a fee.
- All protocol modifications must be approved by HSSREC by way of an application for an amendment prior to implementation unless they are intended to reduce risk (but must still be reported for approval). Modifications will include any change of investigator/s or site address or methodology and methods. Many modifications entail minimal risk adjustments to a protocol and/or consent form and can be made on an Expedited basis (via the IRB Chair). Some examples are: format changes, correcting spelling errors, adding key personnel, minor changes to questionnaires, recruiting and changes, and so forth. Other, more substantive changes, especially those that may alter the risk-benefit ratio, may require Full Board review. In all cases, except where noted above regarding subject safety, any changes to any protocol document or procedure must first be approved by HSSREC before they can be implemented.

C Should you have any questions regarding anything indicated in this letter, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us at the above indicated address.

On behalf of HSSREC, we would like to wish you all the success as you carry out your study.

Yours faithfully,



DR. J. I. Ziwa

**CHAIRPERSON
THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA HUMANITIES AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE - IRB**

CC: Director, Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies
Assistant Director (Research), Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies
Assistant Registrar (Research), Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies

for study extension must be received by HSSREC at least 30 days before the expiry date. This is for the purpose of facilitating the review process. Documents received within 30 days after expiry will be labelled "late submissions" and will incur a penalty fee of K500.00. No study shall be renewed whose documents are submitted for renewal 30 days after expiry of the certificate.

- Every 6 (six) months a progress report form supplied by The University of Zambia Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee as an IRB must be filled in and submitted to us. There is a penalty of K500.00 for failure to submit the report.
- When closing a project, the PI is responsible for notifying, in writing or using the Research Ethics and Management Online (REMO), both HSSREC and the National Health Research Authority (NHRA) when ethics certification is no longer required for a project.
- In order to close an approved study, a Closing Report must be submitted in writing or through the REMO system. A Closing Report should be filed when data collection has ended and the study team will no longer be using human participants or animals or secondary data or have any direct or indirect contact with the research participants or animals for the study.
- Filing a closing report (rather than just letting your approval lapse) is important as it assists HSSREC in efficiently tracking and reporting on projects. Note that some funding agencies and sponsors require a notice of closure from the IRB which had approved the study and can only be generated after the Closing Report has been filed.