

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

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STUDENT DECLARATION

I, **Mpandashulu Mulenga** student registration number **2023007392**, declare that this thesis is my original work and is a product of my efforts through the professional guidance of the recognised supervisors whose names and signatures have also been appended and signed below. Further, I declare that this thesis 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.

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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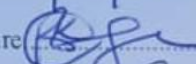


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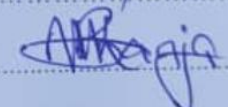


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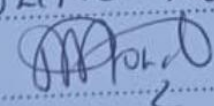


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DEDICATION

This thesis 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

F.P: Female Parent

M.P: Male 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

Integrating indigenous songs into play-based learning combines hands-on experiential learning with the rich cultural heritage of traditional music, creating a culturally relevant and impactful synergy. This study investigates teacher experiences on the integration of indigenous songs for play-based learning in early childhood education (ECE) settings in Ndola District, Zambia. Recognised for their role in preserving cultural identity, indigenous songs also foster children's cognitive, moral, and social development. Through non-participant observations, semi-structured interviews with educators and administrators, and focus group discussions with parents, this research examines how indigenous songs are utilised in teaching practices. Findings reveal that teachers incorporate indigenous songs across various subjects, including literacy, numeracy, and expressive arts. These songs serve as effective tools for teaching phonics, counting, and vocabulary while instilling cultural values such as respect and honesty. Specific examples include the song "Ashintilile" for phonics and "Imbwili imo, paishila naimbi Imbwili" for counting, alongside culturally significant songs like "Ciminine" and "Wimona mamba panuma," which emphasises respect for elders. Despite these advantages, challenges remain, including limited resources, lack of access to songbooks, and inadequate teacher training. Educators frequently rely on improvised materials and community support. To enhance the use of indigenous songs in ECE, it is crucial to address these challenges through improved resource allocation, targeted training, and curriculum development. Key recommendations include the creation of resource books, professional development programs, and partnerships with community elders.

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 Introduction

Early childhood education is a foundational phase that sets the trajectory for a child's development and lifelong learning (Berebitsky, 2018; Sommer, 2013). 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). 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 (kalinda et al., 2024; Kalinde, 2016; Mukela, 2022; Kalinde 2016).

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 intersect to enhance 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).

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 address the critical problem of the limited integration of indigenous songs into play-based learning within early childhood education centres in Ndola District, Zambia.

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 Zambia.

1.5 Research objectives

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

Research questions

1. How do teachers integrate indigenous songs in play-based learning in Zambian early childhood education centres?
2. Which indigenous songs do teachers integrate into play based learning in Zambian early childhood education centres?
3. 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 holds significant theoretical importance by advancing our understanding of the integration of indigenous songs into play-based learning within the unique context of early childhood education in Zambia. By conducting a comprehensive examination of this pedagogical approach, the research contributes to the broader field of educational theory and practice. It adds to the evolving body of knowledge regarding culturally relevant and effective pedagogical strategies, particularly in a context where indigenous cultural elements are underrepresented in the literature. In addition, this research offers valuable insights that can inform educational policies and practices in Zambia and potentially serve as a model for other regions facing similar challenges in early childhood education. By addressing the gap in the current literature and providing evidence-based recommendations, the study can guide policymakers in developing culturally sensitive educational policies that promote inclusive and effective ECE practices. The findings can contribute to the development of policies that prioritize the integration of indigenous songs into early childhood education curricula, ensuring that children have access to a culturally enriched and meaningful educational experience. Ultimately, this policy contribution can play a pivotal role in improving the quality and accessibility of early childhood education in Zambia.

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 Copperbelt 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 five to six ages of learners.

1.10 Limitation of the study

One potential limitation of this study relates to the data collection method. It is recognised that some areas, particularly in the rain season, may be inaccessible by cars due to the lack of proper road infrastructure. However, the researcher was committed to overcoming this limitation by finding alternative ways and means to reach these areas. This involved utilising other modes of transportation or seeking assistance from local authorities or community members to ensure that data was collected from a diverse range of participants, including those in those impassable areas. The other possible limitation was that this study could not be generalised to other parts of Zambia. Despite these potential limitations, the study aimed to gather comprehensive data to provide a more inclusive understanding of the integration of indigenous songs in early childhood education in Ndola district.

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 centers. 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, emphasizing 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, emphasizing the importance of cultural context and active engagement in learning. Delimitations and limitations, clarifies the study's scope, focusing on early childhood education centers in Zambia, and acknowledges potential challenges such as resource constraints. Ethical Considerations details 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.

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 recognized 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, 2008). 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 (Menon, 2012). Likewise, in Nepal, traditional music is integrated into early education to support moral development and social bonding among young learners (Sharma, 2014). Kalansooriya and Wehigaldeniya (2023); Smith (2012) 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 (Chalmers, 2019; 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; Josh et al., 2017; 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).

Studies conducted in South Africa, Kenya, and Zambia highlight the significant role of indigenous songs in enhancing play-based learning within African contexts. According to Mkhombo (2019), music education equips learners with essential skills, including the ability to collaborate effectively, organise and manage themselves, and develop entrepreneurial competencies and attitudes that promote self-employment. Furthermore, indigenous songs provide culturally rooted lessons, enabling children to learn societal norms and values (Nampijja, 2023). Inyang (2022) emphasises that incorporating indigenous songs into learning enhances cultural understanding, promotes language development, fosters pride in heritage, and creates a positive learning environment. Additionally, such songs enable children to engage in playful learning while building cultural awareness, cultural identity, literacy, numeracy, and both fine and gross motor skills (Mukela, 2022; Kakoma, 2017; Kalinde, 2016).

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 (Frank, et al., 2020). 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. According to Kalinde (2016), when children are taught songs and games in their mother tongue, it helps them to learn language and communication skills, fosters cultural identity, and heritage among young learners, helps in cognitive and social skills acquisition. Indigenous songs help learners develop communication skills, fine and gross motor skills, cultural awareness, cultural identity, norms and values while developing cognitive and social emotional wellbeing (Kakoma, 2017, Matafwali & Mubanga, 2021; Mukela, 2022). These songs help children connect with their cultural heritage and foster a sense of belonging. According to Makumba (2005), the thought of a particular people cannot be understood without first appreciating and understanding their cultural background. Additionally, research in Zambia has shown that using indigenous songs in play-based activities enhances children's language skills, including vocabulary development, phonological awareness, and language fluency (Kakoma, 2017; Kalinde, 2016; Mukela, 2022). However, challenges such as limited access to resources and training for teachers need to be addressed to effectively integrate indigenous songs (Kalinde, 2016; Matafwali & Mubanga, 2021).

2.5 Research gap

Most of the studies reviewed in this section from the global, African and Zambia, none looked at the teacher experiences on the integration of (IS) into play based learning activities instead they focussed on different issues such as indigenous knowledge in general. Kakoma in his (2017) study focussed on the meaning of indigenous songs for pre-schoolers of Western province in Zambia. Further, Kaluba et.al (2021), aimed at finding out whether there was alignment between play-based learning activities and the curriculum, and found that there was no alignment. Furthermore, Kalinde, (2016) found that culturally play songs were not considered valid for teaching and learning but as mere entertainment, while Mukela (2022) interrogated the curriculum, teachers' guides and learners' activity books and found that indigenous songs were lacking in the materials stated above.

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, sampling procedure, target population, sample size, data collection procedure, data collection instruments, validity and reliability of data collection methods and instruments, and data collection procedure. 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 interpretive. 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

According to Brown (2008) and Yin (2012), a case study provides an opportunity for the researcher to learn from experiences within the context in which the activity is taking place. Merriam and Tisdell (2015), explained a “case” as an event, an entity an individual or even a unit of analysis and suggested multiple cases can be studied or included in the same study. According to Yin (2018), case study research allows for the exploration and understanding of complex issues within their natural settings, offering insights into practical problems. Similarly, Stake (1995) emphasised the importance of case studies in providing holistic and detailed perspectives, capturing the richness of real-life experiences.

Furthermore, Merriam (2009) argued that case studies facilitated the exploration of multifaceted phenomena, allowing researchers to delve deeply into unique situations and understand the intricacies of human behaviour and social interactions. Similarly, Creswell (2013) highlighted the significance of case study research in uncovering context-specific insights, which can inform theory-building and practical applications in diverse fields.

The study adopted a case design which allowed for in-depth exploration of a specific phenomenon within its real-life context (Coombs, 2022). Case studies according to Karlsson (2016), not only help in exploring the problems in real life but also in exploring complex social situations and exploring other possible influencers within the case that might not be captured through experimental designs or descriptive surveys. By focussing on five schools in Ndola District, Zambia, the researcher closely examined the unique cultural and educational dynamics that influenced the integration of indigenous songs in early childhood education. The case study approach allows the researcher to contextualize their findings within the local socio-cultural and education context (Brawn, 2008) and (Yin, 2018). Understanding the specific challenges, opportunities, and cultural sensitivities surrounding the use of indigenous songs is crucial for informing effective educational practice.

3.5 Sampling Method

The sampling methodology for this study employed a combination of purposive and expert sampling techniques. The primary objective was to select a well-rounded group of participants representing various roles within the education system and diverse geographical zones.

Initially, purposive sampling was used to select suitable schools from fifteen schools situated across zones 1 to 8. Five schools were chosen based on specific criteria relevant to the research goals, including willingness to participate, logistical accessibility, and availability of necessary resources (Smith, 2017).

Following the selection of schools, participants were identified using both purposive and expert sampling approaches. The final sample consisted of 15 individuals distributed across three stakeholder groups: Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers, administrators, and parents. From each school, one ECE teacher with at least five years of experience, one parent with a child in level three, and one administrator were selected. This approach ensured balanced representation of stakeholder groups and geographical zones, facilitating a comprehensive exploration of the integration of indigenous songs in early childhood education (Jones, 2019).

Participant selection was informed by their direct involvement in early childhood education, expertise in the field, and potential influence on the integration of indigenous songs. The researcher adhered to ethical standards and confidentiality throughout the recruitment process (Brown, 2018).

By combining purposive and expert sampling techniques, the study ensured a diverse and representative sample, enabling a thorough examination of the research objectives.

3.6 Sampling Procedure

The sampling procedure involved two stages namely, school selection and participant recruitment. For school selection, the researcher applied purposive sampling to identify five schools out of fifteen located in zones 1 to 8. The schools were chosen based on their willingness to participate, accessibility, and availability of resources.

After the schools were identified, participant recruitment began. The researcher obtained lists of eligible individuals (teachers, parents, and administrators) from the selected schools. The researcher purposively selected early childhood teachers ECE teachers or pre-school (Pre. Sch. Tr.) to least five years of experience and above. Administrators (ADMIN) among the head, deputy, and senior teachers in each school, the most experienced individual was selected and parents (P) with a child in level three were chosen.

This detailed procedure ensured that the sample comprised information-rich cases suitable for in-depth analysis of the integration of indigenous songs in early childhood education. The process

adhered to the ethical principles of voluntary participation and confidentiality (Kombo & Tromp, 2006; Creswell, 2013).

3.7 Target population

My target population comprised early childhood education ECE teachers and children, administrators and parents from the schools within zones 1 to 8. This comprises urban schools. By incorporating these groups of participants, the researcher aimed to comprehensively explore the teacher experiences on the integration of (IS) indigenous songs into play based learning activities in Ndola District of the Copperbelt province in Zambia.

3.8 Sample Size

Number of participants	Location in Ndola District
1 Pre-school teacher 1 Administrator 1 Parent	Zone one
1 Pre-school teacher 1 Administrator 1 Parent	Zone three
1 Pre-school teacher 1 Administrator 1 Parent	Zone four
1 Pre-school teacher 1 Administrator 1 Parent	Zone seven
1 Pre-school teacher 1 Administrator 1 Parent	Zone eight
Total - 15 participants	Five zones

A sample size as indicated by Creswell (2014) is a small proportion of the population that is selected for observation and analysis. Nakkeeran (2016) used the name ‘participants’ to refer to the sizable sample of a population. Therefore, throughout the study, the researcher made use of the

term ‘participants’ to refer to the sizable number of people selected to take part in the study. There is a lack of specific prescriptions in deciding the exact number of participants to take part in the study since the purpose of qualitative inquiry is to unravel the phenomenon in-depth rather than the generalisation of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study used a sample of 15 participants comprising ECE teachers, administrators and parents. Of the fifteen, 5 were ECE teachers, 5 administrators and 5 parents. During the study, there were 8 schools from 8 zones being zone 1,2,3,4,5,6,7 and 8. The researcher purposively picked the five schools from the rest.

3.9 Data Collection methods and instruments

Data collection includes the manner, and the instruments used to collect data. In this study, the researcher used in-depth interview method with semi-structured interviews guide, and audio recorder as tools, (Gray and Burns 2016), non-participant observation method with observation guide as a tool, (Gubrium and Holstein, 2001) and focus group discussions method with semi-structured interview guide and recorder as a tool, (Creswell, 2013). The study conducted semi-structured interviews with ECE teachers to explore their lived experiences in implementing play-based learning which helped to gain more information (Magaldi and Berler, 2020). Non-participant observations were conducted to gather data on pre-scholars' behaviours and interactions within their educational environments, with the observation guide as a tool (Gray and Burns, 2016; Creswell, 2014).

3.10. Data collection procedures

Before engaging in any activity involving the collection of data, the researcher collected an introductory letter from the University of Zambia, introducing him as a post graduate student intending to conduct a study at various ECE centres in Ndola district. The letter was presented to the University of Zambia Research Ethics Committee for clearance. Thereafter, the researcher presented his clearance letter to the provincial education officer (PEO) in the Copperbelt who authorised the District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) of Ndola District to cooperate with the researcher. The DEBS also instructed the zonal head teachers for the zones 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 to cooperate so that the research could be carried out.

After all the clearances were done, I conducted the research all by myself. The consent forms were distributed for the participants to read and understand. After reading and understanding the purpose

of the study, the consent forms were signed by each participant. This provided mutual and professional understanding between the participants and the researcher. The researcher's consent to use audio recorder was granted, which also enabled the researcher to comfortably think of the best next probing question as well as providing participants with more freedom to express their views freely in their own words (Health, Williamson, Williams, 2018). In case of consent decline by participants, the researcher had prepared to take notes as an alternative method whereby the interview guide were produced in a few layouts as a booklet with ample blank spaces between items for writing answers provided by the participants (Adams, 2015). The researcher was delighted to note that none of the participants declined to take part in study, that being the case, all interviews were recorded and sent to the supervisor for proof of originality of data.

Before the interview started, the researcher took a moment to explain the aim of the study and sought consent from the participant to take part. The views expressed in the interview were transcribed by the researcher using the notepads. Further to this, the use of the audio-recorder, after explaining and seeking consent from the participants was used to record the data by the researcher. Before observation started, the researcher informed the ECE teachers through the office of the Headteacher on the need to conduct a classroom observation on a fixed date. The researcher needed to come earlier before the class started to prepare for the session without disturbing the learners. The researcher sat at the back of the class to avoid disturbing the learning process.

3.10.1 Observation method

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 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 use of indigenous songs during conclusion of lessons as a way to recap the whole lesson.

3.10.2 In-depth interview method

Using the semi-structured interview guide as a tool, after lessons, the researcher took time to ask the teachers questions as shown in appendices A. The researcher did that to gather as much information as possible on teachers experiences on the integration of indigenous songs into play

based learning activities, types of indigenous songs used as well as the challenges they faced. Teachers gave out evident based information because the researcher was able to read their facial expressions and was able to relate to the observations he was conducting with them. After interviewing the teacher, the researcher went on to interview the administrator taking the same process as with the teacher. The researcher had to record all the proceedings of the discussions in order not to forget any point during the transcription process. The process took two months because sometimes there were events in schools and administrators had to attend to different meetings in the district so that meant change to the prior schedules. I also managed to reach all schools regardless of impossibilities to the fact that area councillors of affected road networks worked on them and became passable.

3.10.3 Focus group discussion method

Using the semi-structured interview guide as a tool, the researcher conducted a focus group meeting to gather insights on the teachers' experiences in the integration of indigenous songs into play based learning activities, types of songs used, and challenges teachers faced. The researcher gave chance to each parent to share their views on the topic at hand as is evidenced in chapter four of this study. The researcher recorded all the proceeding of the discussions for easy data transcription.

3.11. 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 quotation 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.

3.12 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.

3.13. 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.

3.14. 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.

3.15 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.

3.16. 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).

3.17 Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical guidelines, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for the participants' rights. All collected data was anonymised to protect the privacy of the participants. As Trochim (2006) notes, the principle of anonymity essentially means that the participant will remain anonymous throughout the study, even to the researchers themselves in some cases. Clearly, the anonymity standard is a stronger guarantee of privacy and very necessary. Withholding the identity of respondents ensured their safety as results generally reflected the views of their communities and not particular individuals or their institutions. As such, no names were used for identifying participants. Instead, codes of gender and designation were used to identify the different categories to be represented as follows: male parent (MP), female parent (FM), Pre. Sch. Tr. for teachers. ADMIN for administrators.

3.18 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 classroom observation, in- depth interviews and focus group discussions with fifteen participants which include: five pre-school teachers, five administrators and five parents. 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 and examples of indigenous songs used to integrate into play based learning activities and the challenges they face to integrate indigenous songs into play based learning activities in Zambian early childhood education centres in Ndola District, Zambia.

4.2 The school profile and participants

The study was conducted in five schools with ECE centres in Ndola District of the Copperbelt province in Zambia. Three participants were purposively selected from each school namely, an ECE teacher and an administrator and a parent. The participants were selected basing on the criterion that they had served for five years and above. This criterion was important to ensure that participants selected had experience in the use of indigenous songs into play based learning activities. Amongst the five ECE teachers selected to be interviewed, two were above 50 years while three were between 30 to 40 years, two were bachelor's degree holders while three were diploma holders in ECE and all the five were female. Out of the five administrators interviewed, one was a female with bachelor's degree while the rest were males with bachelor's degree and two Masters' degrees. Administrators had also different age ranges and qualifications. Three were above 50 years one was between 40 and 50 while the other one was between 30 and 40 years. Parents that were interviewed had also different ranges in age, qualifications and jobs. All of them were female with two having above 50 years, while the rest were between 30 and 40 years. Amongst them, two were primary school teachers with diplomas, one was a nurse and certificate holder, while the other two did not disclose anything about their educational background but they participated well 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:

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 4.3.1 Literacy and Language, 4.3.2. Numeracy, 4.3.3. Social studies, 4.3.4. Science, and 4.3.5. Expressive arts. Presentation of each sub theme in detail will follow the order laid above.

4.3.1 Literacy and Language

Most teachers attested that they have been using indigenous songs to teach phonics, phonemic awareness, listening skills, pronunciation, vocabulary and reading. They explained that it was easy to teach new vocabulary as well as vowels in local language because children were able to understand easily than when they were supposed to be taught in English because it would mean introducing two new phenomenon which would be the language itself and the concept to be learnt at the same time. Teachers 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 administrators, pre-school teachers and parents.

Admin.1. said that “teachers incorporate indigenous songs through the use of literacy. What I mean is under Literacy teachers can help learners improve listening skills, pronunciation, vocabulary and even sentence structure”. We like, there a song like, they are playing like (ashintilile kukamuti) /a/ ashintilile kukamuti, these are consonants and vowels that are taught to the learners using a very fun playful way, the learner will know how that letter is written, and how it is sounded.

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.5 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”. (Meaning at Tortoise’s village, there are kings with names, e. g. Who is this? /a/, who is this? /e/, who is this? /i/, who is this? /o/, who is this? /u/).

***P. 1** said that “they use indigenous songs to teach reading. I hear my child singing (Kapaso k ne mfumu- a batila ka, kapaso k nemfumu e batila ke, kapaso k nemfumu I batila Ki.”) (Meaning I hear my child singing a song starting with a consonant first and then he adds a vowel and sound them as one syllable. E.g. sounding the consonant K and adding the vowel sound /a/ will sound as or form syllable /ka/).*

***P.5** said, “During playtime, our children learn better with songs. I remember when my child learned the alphabet by singing ‘ashintilile,’ it was both fun and effective. They can demonstrate how letters are formed while they sing”.*

I also witnessed the teaching of vowel sounds as children sung and chanted. It was so fascinating to see how learners learnt how to sound out vowels in an interesting and playful manner. They attached some actions to each, and every vowel sounds and that helped them to remember them easily.

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 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”*

I 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 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.

4.3.3. Social studies (SS)

Under this subject, teachers stated that they teach children traditional and culture such as respect and appreciation to 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.”)*

***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 mumpanga, shaba nemisowa shingi, (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”.*

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, eflyo iya)”. Meaning you ask them if they understood the words in the song, thereafter, the lesson begins.”

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 do songs and games outside classroom. I also witnessed some lessons that were conducted outside classroom, and I agree with what the teachers were saying. 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 said that, “You can even sing a song like “Kabushi kalila-lila”, in that “Kabushi kalila-lila” the learners will develop physically because the whole body is

involved so they will develop physically, yes, even socialisation will be there, as they are interacting with their friends, they are socializing, even the morals will develop sometimes as they play one may fall, others may laugh at the one who has fallen others may say you! Don't laugh! As a teacher you can also chip in to say you should not laugh at your friends when they fall, you have to say sorry and the child who had fallen will feel better, even when she/ he was about to cry, will not cry, can you say sorry to your friend, the children will do that and the child with an issue will now feel better. So, as they are interacting there when they are playing, the language development will be there, even when they are doing the game, learners think critically, what am I going to do here? Which means the brain will work, they must think when doing that game." I witnessed a lot of rigour within the learners during the activity. Children were so excited, but they also hid to the rules governing the game. They performed the game with all the seriousness it needed. The learning here was holistic because almost all the domains were involved.

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; 4.2.1. Circle time, and 4.2.1. 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 “mulishani mwebana? Tuli bwino ba 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. Since early childhood education (ECE) lessons are highly integrated, these musical interludes signalled the transition to a new topic. Children were well-trained to organise and pack materials from the previous lesson before preparing for the next one. As i observed lessons, at times children moved to different subject corners, where lessons involved hands-on activities with various artifacts and the whole lesson would be conducted in that corner till the end. Some songs included physical movements, while others focused on developing literacy, numeracy, and other essential skills.

4.5. Storytelling and role-play

This was the third theme which comprised sub themes as 4.5.1 cultural awareness and cultural identity, 4.5.2. passing on values and morals and 4.5.3. heritage, history and freedom and 4.5.4. holistic development. The four sub themes have been explained in detail below.

Administrator 2. Stated that, storytelling was as ancient and old as creation itself. He further said that it was a way through which our forefathers demonstrated understanding of concepts of life such as morals, values, traditional and culture and continued passing them on from generation to generation. He stated that these were conducted during the night before going to bed and or in the afternoon when people were relaxing after performing all the necessary chores on a particular day. He narrated how his grandmother would tell them such stories and how she asked them questions such as, what did you like about the story and why? Who would the childlike be and not and why? What the great lesson of the story was? What message they got from the song imbedded in the story and many more. “He later stated that these

indigenous songs imbedded into stories had great teachings about every part of life that's why people who grew up with those values would not do things that we are seeing today such as arguing with elderly people, dressing in wired ways, nude pictures and many more”.

In support of the above narration **Pre.Sch. Tr. 4** said “we teach songs to do with traditional and culture which mainly teach values morals and cultural awareness. For example, I taught a song entitled “*ninani walya makanga yabene*” Meaning “who has eaten someone ‘s Guinea fowl?” which was teaching children do not steal.” She stated that storytelling and role-play were some of the strategies they used to integrate indigenous songs into play based learning activities in order for them to teach several educational concepts. She narrated how she managed to teach multiple educational concepts in an indigenous songs entitled “*ninani walya makanga yabene*”? In that song, the teacher taught number concepts, counting, new vocabulary, primary colours, and moral concepts such as integrity and honesty. She later asked children to draw the river, Guinea fowl, drowning woman, family, shade colours, trace through numbers and asked the learners to role-play the story, and when children did all these, they internalized all the norms, morals, educational concepts and values that came with it, which resulted in holistic learning.

This lesson was so captivating as children listened to the story and joined in the story song (ninani walya makanga yabene- namatenga). I watched children’s emotions shifting depending on the scene at a particular time. This lesson had a lot of teachings in it, I 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. 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 internalize 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.I. 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’.

4.5.3. 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. 4 and 5 cited songs like, “munshita ya cha-cha-cha”, (meaning during the times of struggle for independence) “cawama casokona na lelo ba Kaunda”

(meaning people were happy praising the first republican president Dr. Kenneth David Kaunda for leading his people to freedom) and the national anthem. Such songs celebrate liberation and the ideals of freedom helping children to connect with national identity and instilling in them sense of pride. Also, a song “wimona mamba panuma-nine nafyala imbeka” is one of the songs that can help in the preservation of heritage and historical knowledge. Such songs are usually sung at highly recommended traditional events since time in memorial and its message can instil into children’s norms and values acceptable to society”.

***Pre. Sch. Tr. 5** said, “for freedom, we teach songs like, “munshita ya cha- 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!”*

4.5.4. 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.

***Pre.Sch. Tr. 4.** said, “you know sir, if government was serious about all schools embracing the use of indigenous songs into play based learning activities, I am telling you we can have a different Zambia in the few years to come because by the time the children grow up, will know that hurting another person, animal, or even the environment was something inhuman, they would know that, am telling you. These songs and stories embedded in them have just the kind of unique teaching which sinks into children’s minds so naturally. If you observed carefully when I was narrating the story, some children were almost crying when it came to the turn of the woman who ate the two parts of the Guinea fowl because they wished she could say the truth so she could not die by being drowned in the river. That story was whole in itself because it had all the domains catered for in just one lesson, now imagine if every child in Zambia*

could get lessons like that every day! What kind of children would we raise? Culturally, morally, socially, spiritually and mentally upright children, let me just say holistically trained children. But if you went round all schools here in Ndola, you may be surprised that maybe out of 20 or 25 centres, only 6 or 8 or teaching using indigenous songs so, don't end here go further."

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 *0 sha cikaya'* in Bemba, with the sub themes as outlined below: 4.5.1 *call and response songs*, 4.5.2. *seasonal songs*, 4.5.3. *ceremonial and cultural songs*, 4.5.4. *rhymes and chanting songs*, 4.5.5. *folkloric or story songs*, and 4.5.6. *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.

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 kalubalala, ashintilile and namwene imbwili imo"*).

P.3 said: "we appreciate how the songs teach respect for our elders and help our children learn about our culture. Songs like 'ninani walya makanga yabene, kwali cilumendo" teach them important moral lessons about honesty, while other songs link them to our heritage, so they understand where they come from".

Pre.Sch. Tr. 1 said, “we incorporate indigenous songs in play and dance, and as children use the drums, shakers and guitars, will know how to play them and will develop their skills and body movements”.

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).

4.6.3. 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*, “

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*

amfumu”. 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.

4.6.4. 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.

P. 1 said that they use indigenous songs to teach reading. I hear my child singing (kapaso k ne mfumu- a batila ka, kapaso k nemfumu e batila ke, kapaso k nemfumu I batila Ki.)

P.5 said, “During playtime, our children learn better with songs. I remember when my child learned the alphabet by singing ‘ashintilile,’ it was both fun and effective. They can demonstrate how letters are formed while they sing”.

4.6.5. Folkloric or story songs

Teachers explained that folkloric or 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 “*ninani walya makanga yabene?*” She emphasised that,

‘Folkloric or 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.’

4.6.6. 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, “as children were singing those songs and dancing and the drum was there playing simply means that their gross motor skills are being developed, even in *Kabushi kalila-lila* they were holding the ball, that ball symbolises fine motor skills then the running around symbolises the gross motor skills development, they were following the rules so when we want to teach rules in class we still use *Kabushi kalila-lila* and most of the games and songs have rules”.

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. Teachers training in music, lack of resources and support 4, insufficient indigenous song materials, lack of administrative support, language barriers and understanding, challenges with local language proficiency, learners’ language barriers, cultural and conceptual challenges, lack of cultural understanding, and difficulty in adapting songs to curriculum.

4.7. 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.1. said, “yes, I was trained in music because the young ones learn better through play. Without music, you can’t teach the young ones, sometimes when you are teaching, children get bored, as a teacher, you must be sharp, you start a song to motivate them. This is so because learners learn easily when they sing songs that they

know, it's very easy for them to get the concept of what the teacher is teaching than when we use English.

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”.*

4.8. Lack of resources and support

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

4.8.1. Insufficient indigenous song materials

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

4.8.2. 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 guidance materially and even financially just because they came with secondary school mentality and were not aware on the importance of ECE.

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

Pre.Sch. Tr. 5 said, *“I just used my own money because if I wait for the school administration to provide for me this class will remain like this until we close, so I used my own money so that even when monitors come, I will not be booked as someone who is not serious with work. I don't know whether they will refund me or not.”*

Pre. Sch. Tr. 3 said, *“Nothing. Only during teacher group meetings where we source things. Because children should see these things on the charts in physical e.g. the guitar so that children can see and use.*

I witnessed that some teachers had mastery in the use of indigenous songs in play-based learning activities but teacher 3 had a lot of issues in dealing with integrating indigenous songs into play based learning activities. Though through the help of an assistant teacher she managed to teach and maintain class control. Indeed, it seems that she never underwent any training to do with this topic.

4.9. 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.

4.9.1. Challenges with local language proficiency

Teachers confessed that those who were not native speakers were not very conversant with local languages, making it difficult to teach indigenous songs accurately. They said that sometimes none among them would know completely the meaning of the song not until they consulted from those grounded with the language. Some stated that they were now professionals in the said language and would interpret all songs perfectly well.

4.9.2. Learners' language barriers

Some learners, especially those from English-speaking homes, struggle to understand and engage with songs in local languages. Parents are also pushing for English-language learning, viewing it as part of modern education, which creates additional pressure on teachers to focus on English rather than indigenous languages.

Pre.Sch.Tr. 4 said, "Yes. One of the challenges is that these indigenous songs as we saying indigenous, they are local, meaning using local language to teach them and we have children who are from the background where parents picked up the language of

English so when you teach the Bemba, to them it's meaningless because they want their children to sing songs that are modern because we are in the modern world".

4.10. Cultural and conceptual challenges

Some teachers stated that at first especially when they just came to the Copperbelt had difficulties stemming from differences in values, beliefs, and norms, as well as struggles in understanding complex or abstract ideas due to varying perspectives or interpretations, but now, this were different because they could understand the language and its meaning.

4.10.1. Lack of cultural understanding

Some teachers attested that they did not fully understand the words and meanings of indigenous songs because were not native speakers of that particular language which made it difficult for them to teach.

Admin. 2 said "Yaa, to be frank with you, at times I have problems with the ECE teachers as they come. You know the problem that is there is that, these teachers are being trained within urban areas, they have never been to rural areas or village, because you know this is where these indigenous songs are sung, but when they come by them not being in the village, it is difficult for them even to sing a song before of the class because they are not somehow acclimatized to those what, to those songs so it is somehow a challenge to these teachers, yes.

4.10.2. Difficulty in adapting songs to curriculum

Teachers clearly stated that they faced challenges in composing or adapting songs to fit specific learning topics or themes within the curriculum. This was so because the resources provided had only titles of songs so if you have not heard that particular song somewhere, you will be in for it. Below were some of the sentiments from the teachers:

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”.

Pre. Sch. Tr. 5 *“Yes, there are some challenges when you want to compose the song, it’s very difficult, you have to think so that you can compose that song”.*

Admin. 3 *said, “The challenges could be language. You know certain songs are... the very indigenous songs are done in local languages and then this teacher may not be conversant with a particular language for example, here in the Copperbelt in Ndola we use Bemba and the teacher is using a Nyanja song, the way you are pronouncing the words, not appreciate or maybe the language used or maybe the language used may not be aware of the meaning of that, so that is one of the challenges. The other challenge is, these songs are slowly dying, because most of these local songs are no longer rich as per say, as they were in the past because of the commercial aspect, people have commercialized these songs and that is one of the challenges also that teachers may be facing”.*

4.11 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.

However, the chapter also acknowledges challenges encountered by teachers in integrating indigenous songs, such as resource limitations, lack of formalised training, and balancing traditional content with modern educational standards. Despite these obstacles, the positive impact on learners' engagement, comprehension, and cultural identity underscores the value of sustaining and further exploring this pedagogical approach.

In conclusion, the integration of indigenous songs into play-based learning emerges as a powerful tool in early childhood education. It not only nurtures cognitive, linguistic and or numeracy skills but also strengthens cultural heritage, making learning both meaningful and contextually relevant for young learners. The findings set the stage for deeper reflection and action to overcome existing challenges and optimise 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 abstract scientific concepts to children's everyday experiences, making science more engaging and accessible. Furthermore, this view resonates well with Vygostky '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 Vygostky '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 Vygostky '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 Vygostky '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 collarets 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, Molefe 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 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, with the sub themes as outlined below: 4.5.1 *call and response songs*, 4.5.2. *seasonal songs*, 4.5.3. *ceremonial and cultural songs*, 4.5.4. *rhymes and chanting songs*, 4.5.5. *folkloric or story songs*, and 4.5.6. *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

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.

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 this (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); Simwinga (2017) highlighted how teacher 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.

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.

5.5.4. Rhymes and chants

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.

5.5.5. Folkloric or Story Songs

Folkloric or 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.

In Zambia, folkloric 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, folkloric 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 folkloric or 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 in line with Tomaselli (2021) who alluded to 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.

5.6. 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. Besides the teaching of Music, the argument that inadequate teacher preparedness impedes effective implementation including teaching through play-based learning, has also be reported in other fields including Social Studies (Mambwe, 2020; Mambwe, R., 2019, & Mambwe, et al., 2019).

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.

5.7. 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) and Mambwe (2020), 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 (Mambwe, 2020; Mambwe & Lufungulo, 2020; Mambwe, 2019, & Mambwe, et al., 2019). 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.

5.7.1. 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.

5.7.2. 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.

5.8. 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.

5.9.2. 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.

5.10. 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 reviewed 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, presenting its key findings in relation to the research objectives and questions. It also includes the researcher's conclusions and actionable recommendations for improving the integration of indigenous songs into play-based learning (PBL) in Zambian early childhood education. The discussion underscores 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 centers 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 invaluable tools for enhancing PBL activities in Zambian early childhood education. These songs foster engagement, creativity, and cultural pride while promoting holistic learning. Despite their significant benefits, challenges such as limited documentation, insufficient teacher training, and declining interest in indigenous traditions threaten their effective integration. The researcher emphasises the importance of preserving cultural heritage through the intentional and structured inclusion of indigenous songs in the educational system. A balance must be struck between tradition and modern pedagogy to ensure that learners benefit academically and culturally from these rich resources.

6.4. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to the education curriculum specialists and the Ministry of Education that they may consider:

- 1.To develop and implement comprehensive training programs for educators to enhance their ability to integrate indigenous songs effectively into PBL.
- 2.To incorporate indigenous songs into the national curriculum, providing structured guidelines for their use in early childhood education.
- 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 their acceptance and support among stakeholders.

Recommendations for further research

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

2. Curriculum specialist may collaborate with cultural custodians and educational institutions to document indigenous songs, creating a repository that teachers can access and use.

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
<p>1. Physical Layout</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom Setting – Talking Walls • Age Group • Availability of T/L resources related to indigenous songs (drums, shakers) 	
<p>2. Organization</p> <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 	
<p>3. Identification of indigenous songs/ Explanation of significance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional significance • Cultural significance • Historical heritage significance • Story telling • Linked to traditional or cultural Stories 	
<p>4. Teacher’s Role/Attitude</p>	

<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 	
<p>5.Children’s Role</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of Active Participation • Level of Passive Participation 	
<p>6.Nature of interaction between Teacher and children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Centred • Child/children centred 	
<p>7.Closing format</p>	

Appendices B: pre-school Teacher's 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, what type of music do you use?
 - 4b. If NO, explain why.

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 Early Childhood 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?
13. Conclusion: 9. Summarize key points discussed and express appreciation for their valuable insights. 10. Encourage any final comments or additional thoughts from the parents.

‘THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATION’