Psychosocial Significance of Music Among Rural Communities of the Bekwarra People, Bekwarra Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract
Music is embedded in communal life and can serve as a medium through which cultural knowledge, identity, social relationships, and collective values are communicated. This study examines adult and youth perceptions of the psychosocial significance of music among rural Bekwarra communities in Bekwarra Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria. The analysis is based on field responses to nine statements, with 225 adult respondents and 225 youth respondents. The four-point response categories—strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree, were used in the analysis. Descriptive analysis involving percentages and item means and standard deviations using a 1–4 coding scheme was applied. Pearson chi-square tests of independence compared the full four-category response distributions of adults and youths separately for each statement. Adults expressed the highest combined agreement on music as a source of peace (59.1%), while youth expressed the highest agreement on music for cultural cohesion/integration (61.3%). The adult–youth response distributions differed significantly for cultural transmission, $\chi^2(3)=15.51$, $p=.001$; onomastics/environmental learning, $\chi^2(3)=13.07$, $p=.004$; cultural cohesion/integration, $\chi^2(3)=25.47$, $p<.001$; music as a source of peace, $\chi^2(3)=13.36$, $p=.004$; and music as a source of communal disharmony, $\chi^2(3)=18.36$, $p<.001$. Differences were not statistically significant for the other four statements at the .05 level. These results suggest that age-group perspectives are not uniform across all perceived functions of music. aggregate frequency tables also limit the analysis to item-specific group comparisons. adjustment, while four items do not show statistically significant differences at the adjusted threshold. The findings support a nuanced interpretation of music as a social and cultural practice that may be experienced as cohesive or divisive depending on context.

Keywords: *Bekwarra; community music; cultural identity; music and social cohesion; psychosocial significance; social sustainability*

1. Introduction

Music is more than an aesthetic activity: in many communities it is a social practice through which people express belonging, transmit collective memory, mark life-cycle events, negotiate relationships, and communicate shared or contested values. Songs, rhythms, performance settings, and the occasions on which music is performed can preserve accounts of a community's

past while also giving members a language for interpreting present-day experiences. Music's social significance therefore depends not only on sound or performance, but also on who participates, what is performed, where it occurs, and how listeners interpret it.

Research across cultural settings provides evidence that music can be associated with social connection and emotional well-being. Boer and Abubakar (2014), using cross-sectional data from 760 young people in Kenya, the Philippines, New Zealand, and Germany, found that musical activities within families and peer groups were associated with cohesion in those relationships. The cross-cultural design is important because it indicates that musical practices operate within particular cultural and developmental contexts rather than having identical effects everywhere. The study does not, however, establish that all music or all musical occasions necessarily produce cohesion.

Research on group singing similarly suggests that collective musical participation can be related to social bonding. In a seven-month study of newly formed adult education classes, Pearce et al. (2016) compared singing groups with creative-writing and craft groups. Their results showed that collective bonding was associated with aspects of flourishing, anxiety, and physical health, although the study did not establish that singing was superior to all other group activities. This distinction matters: music can provide opportunities for shared participation, but the social outcomes depend on the setting, the quality of participation, and the relationships among participants.

More recent conceptual work stresses that music-based engagement can support intercultural understanding, inclusion, and social cohesion, while also cautioning that these outcomes should not be assumed automatically. Crooke et al. (2024) proposed a framework for understanding how musical participation may enable interaction across cultural boundaries. Their work supports examining music as a possible site of relationship-building, but it also highlights the need to consider the social conditions under which musical engagement occurs.

In local and indigenous contexts, oral music may carry meanings that are difficult to capture through a generalised account of entertainment. Songs can refer to lineage, place, moral expectations, local history, work, celebrations, conflict, reconciliation, and environmental knowledge. Such functions are particularly relevant in communities where oral communication and collective performance remain important channels for sharing knowledge across generations. At the same time, music can be used to ridicule, exclude, stigmatise, mobilise antagonism, or intensify divisions. An analysis that considers only positive responses would therefore provide an incomplete account of music's psychosocial significance.

The present study focuses on the rural communities of the Bekwarra people in Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. It examines nine perceptions relating to cultural transmission, social reconstruction, onomastics and environmental learning, cultural identity, character and personality development, cultural cohesion/integration, peace, communal disharmony, and cultural disembeddedness. Including both adults and youths allows the study to examine whether response patterns vary by age group. This is important because adults and youths may experience cultural practices differently, even when they inhabit the same community.

The analysis covers all four response categories: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree rather than reporting agreement alone. This approach recognises that disagreement is substantively meaningful and that a statement may attract both endorsement and rejection within a community. Item-level comparisons between adults and youths were made using the complete

four-category distributions, while descriptive means were treated as summaries of an ordinal response scale and interpreted cautiously.

Against this background, the study contributes a focused account of how adult and youth respondents perceive the possible social and cultural functions of music in Bekwarra communities. It does not assume in advance that music is uniformly beneficial or harmful. Instead, it examines the balance of agreement and disagreement across the nine statements and identifies where the adult and youth response distributions differ.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Music is commonly associated with cultural continuity and communal life, yet its psychosocial significance cannot be assumed to be uniformly positive. The same musical practices that preserve language, history, identity, and shared values may also be used to criticise, ridicule, exclude, or mobilise hostility. Understanding music's place in community life therefore requires attention to both cohesive and divisive possibilities.

A further problem is that claims about the social role of music are often stated broadly, without showing whether community members agree with particular claims or whether different age groups hold similar views. Adults and youths may attach different meanings to music's role in cultural transmission, social reconstruction, identity, peace, and communal disharmony. If such differences are overlooked, cultural programmes may be designed around assumptions that do not reflect the perspectives of the people they are intended to serve.

For Bekwarra communities, the field data provide an opportunity to compare adult and youth perceptions across nine specific statements while retaining all four Likert categories. The research problem is to determine the pattern of endorsement and rejection across these statements and establish which adult–youth response distributions differ statistically.

1.2 Aim and Objectives

The aim is to examine the psychosocial significance of music among rural communities of the Bekwarra people in Bekwarra Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria.

1. To describe residents' perceptions of music as a medium of cultural transmission and social reconstruction.
2. To examine perceived relationships between music and cultural identity, character development, cohesion and peace.
3. To investigate whether residents also perceive music as capable of contributing to communal disharmony or cultural disembeddedness.
4. To compare the perceptions of adult and youth respondents, subject to the availability of valid respondent-level data.
5. To consider the implications of contemporary musical influences for the intergenerational transmission of Bekwarra musical traditions.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How do residents perceive the role of music in cultural transmission and social reconstruction?
2. How do residents perceive music's relationship with cultural identity, character development, social cohesion and peace?
3. To what extent do residents recognise potentially divisive effects of music?
4. Do adult and youth respondents differ in their perceptions of the psychosocial functions of

music?
5. How might contemporary musical influences affect the continuity of indigenous Bekwarra musical practices?

1.4 Research Hypotheses
The following null hypotheses guide the statistical comparisons:
i. There is no statistically significant difference between adult and youth respondents in their overall perceived psychosocial significance of music.
ii. There is no statistically significant association between age group and response pattern across the specified psychosocial dimensions of music.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Theoretical Review
2.1.1 Ethnomusicological functional perspective
Merriam's (1964) ethnomusicological approach treats music as a cultural and social behaviour whose meaning emerges from the interaction of musical sound, ideas about music and musical behaviour. This perspective supports examining songs not only for their musical characteristics but also for their uses in ceremonies, work, worship, storytelling, socialisation and collective memory. Applied to Bekwarra communities, it directs attention to the contexts in which music is performed, who is permitted to perform it, the messages it communicates and the cultural knowledge carried through perform.

2.1.2 Social identity theory
Social identity theory proposes that people ance
partly define themselves through membership in social groups and that group boundaries can influence belonging, attitudes and intergroup relations (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Music can signal group membership through language, rhythm, repertoire, instruments, dress and performance setting. Shared music may reinforce belonging, but group-specific musical symbols may also distinguish insiders from outsiders. This dual possibility is important when investigating both cohesion and communal disharmony.

2.1.3 Social bonding and synchrony perspective
Research on social bonding proposes that coordinated musical activity can increase perceived closeness through shared attention, synchronised movement and collective emotional experience. Dunbar et al. (2012) and Pearce et al. (2016) discuss evidence linking group music-making with social connectedness, while Pearce et al. (2016) also show that the effects may depend on context and comparison activity. This perspective supports examining participation in communal singing and performance as a possible pathway to connection, without treating the relationship as universal or automatically causal.

2.1.4 Cultural transmission perspective
Cultural transmission concerns how knowledge, values, practices and symbolic forms pass between people and generations. Music can function as an informal educational medium when songs preserve historical narratives, norms, proverbs, language and shared memories. This perspective makes intergenerational learning a relevant dimension of the present study,

especially where older cultural custodians and younger residents may differ in musical exposure or participation.

2.2 Conceptual Review

2.2.1 Music and psychosocial significance

Psychosocial significance refers here to the perceived emotional and social functions of musical activity. It includes emotional expression, belonging, identity, social interaction, cultural continuity and perceived effects on community relationships. These are related but distinct outcomes: a respondent may value music for cultural preservation while remaining uncertain about its effects on peace or personality development.

2.2.2 Cultural transmission and identity

Indigenous songs can preserve linguistic expressions, histories, values, collective memories and ceremonial knowledge. Their social value depends partly on whether community members continue to learn, perform and interpret them. Contemporary music need not inevitably displace indigenous music; the relationship may involve adaptation, hybridisation, selective borrowing or declining participation.

2.2.3 Social cohesion, peace and possible division

Social cohesion concerns trust, belonging, cooperation and perceived connection among members of a community. Music may create shared experiences and opportunities for interaction, but its effects are contingent. Crooke et al. (2024) propose a framework for understanding how intercultural music engagement may support social cohesion and understanding, while also drawing attention to the conditions shaping these outcomes. A balanced study should therefore examine both integrative and divisive possibilities.

2.2.4 Age, gender and socioeconomic context

Age, gender, education, occupation, income, access to digital media and participation in cultural events may shape musical preferences and perceived meanings. These characteristics should be measured clearly and analysed only where the sample and data support such comparisons. The present analysis focuses on the adult–youth response distributions available in the study tables.

2.3 Empirical Review

The studies below provide relevant empirical or review-based evidence. Their samples and methods are reported as described in the cited publications; they are not direct evidence about Bekwarra residents.

2.3.1 Boer and Abubakar (2014)

Research topic: “Music listening in families and peer groups: Benefits for young people's social cohesion and emotional well-being across four cultures.” Location: four cultural settings—Kenya, the Philippines, New Zealand and Germany. Population and sample: young people in adolescence and young adulthood; the article reports a sample of 760 participants. Design and sampling: cross-cultural quantitative survey examining music-related family and peer rituals; the study used a comparative design across cultural contexts. Main results: musical listening and discussion within family and peer groups were associated with aspects of social cohesion and emotional well-being, with cultural context relevant to the relationships. Relevance: this study

supports examining music as a social practice rather than mere entertainment and provides a comparative basis for investigating age-group perceptions. Its findings cannot be generalised directly to Bekwarra communities.

2.3.2 Pearce et al. (2016)

Research topic: "Is group singing special? Health, well-being and social bonds in community-based adult education classes." Location: community-based adult education classes in the United Kingdom. Population and sample: 135 adults across seven newly formed classes—84 in four singing classes and 51 in three comparison classes involving crafts or creative writing. Design and sampling: seven-month quasi-experimental field study with repeated self-report measures at months 1, 3 and 7; classes were not randomly assigned. Main results: health, well-being and life satisfaction improved over time in both conditions. Collective bonding was associated with flourishing, lower anxiety and better physical health, but the authors did not find that singing necessarily improved health and well-being more than other activities. Relevance: the study cautions against simplistic causal claims and supports measuring perceived social bonding separately from other psychosocial outcomes.

2.3.3 Pearce et al. (2016), competitive and cooperative singing

Research topic: "Singing together or apart: The effect of competitive and cooperative singing on social bonding within and between sub-groups of a university fraternity." Location: a university fraternity setting in the Netherlands. Population and sample: university-aged fraternity members; 88 participants were included in the reported experiment. Design and sampling: semi-naturalistic experimental comparison in which small teams sang cooperatively or competitively with teams from the same or different subgroups. Main results: participants reported increased closeness to teams from different subgroups after singing; competition could reduce closeness within a familiar subgroup. Relevance: this evidence supports the study's balanced treatment of music as potentially bonding or divisive, depending on the social context.

2.3.4 Pearce et al. (2016), group size and social bonding

Research topic: "Group music performance causes elevated pain thresholds and social bonding in small and large groups of singers." Location: a community choir setting in the United Kingdom. Population and sample: community choir participants in small subchoirs of approximately 20–80 people and a combined large group of 232. Design and sampling: pre–post measurement around a 90-minute singing rehearsal, using self-reported bonding and pain-threshold measures. Main results: inclusion, connectivity, positive affect and pain thresholds increased after singing; the large group showed a greater change in social closeness, although baseline and post-session closeness were higher in small groups. Relevance: the findings suggest that collective musical participation may facilitate bonding at different group sizes, but they do not establish that all musical practices or all communities experience the same effects.

2.3.5 Uche (2025)

Research topic: "Preserving Oshimili cultural identity amidst modern influences on Nigerian indigenous music traditions." Location: Oshimili communities in Nigeria. Population and sample: 35 interviewees, comprising 20 males and 15 females, including cultural carriers and interlocutors. Design and sampling: ethnographic approach using oral interviews and documentary/literature sources; the article describes purposive selection of relevant informants.

Main results: indigenous music was reported to support cultural learning, social interaction, transmission of norms and values, and preservation of cultural identity amid contemporary influences. Relevance: this Nigerian study offers a contextually closer comparison and supports examining how musical practices contribute to cultural continuity. Its qualitative findings should complement, not replace, evidence from Bekwarra respondents.

2.3.6 Systematic review of musical interventions and prosociality

Research topic: "Promoting Prosociality and Health through Musical Interventions with Groups at Risk of Social Exclusion: A Systematic Review." Location: international literature, with studies from different settings. Population and sample: 11 studies met the review's inclusion criteria following a systematic search of five databases for literature published between 2000 and 2021. Design: systematic review using PRISMA-oriented procedures. Main results: the reviewed interventions suggested that music-based activities can encourage participation, integration and prosocial outcomes, although programmes and measures varied. Relevance: the review supports the plausibility of psychosocial pathways while reinforcing the need to describe specific musical activities, populations and outcome measures rather than treating music as a uniform intervention.

2.4 Synthesis and Research Gap

The reviewed literature indicates that music can participate in cultural transmission, identity formation, emotional expression and social bonding. However, outcomes vary with the musical activity, social setting, group boundaries and research design. Much of the available empirical evidence comes from settings outside rural Bekwarra communities, and studies of community singing or music-listening rituals do not necessarily represent indigenous ceremonial music. A focused investigation of Bekwarra residents could therefore add context-specific insight into how people understand traditional music in relation to cohesion, peace and cultural continuity.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

The proposed framework treats musical practices as the starting point for psychosocial pathways—such as emotional expression, shared experience and social interaction, which may be associated with perceived outcomes including cultural transmission, identity, belonging, cohesion and peace. Age, gender, education, socioeconomic circumstances, cultural setting and exposure to contemporary media may shape these relationships. The framework is conceptual; it does not establish causation.

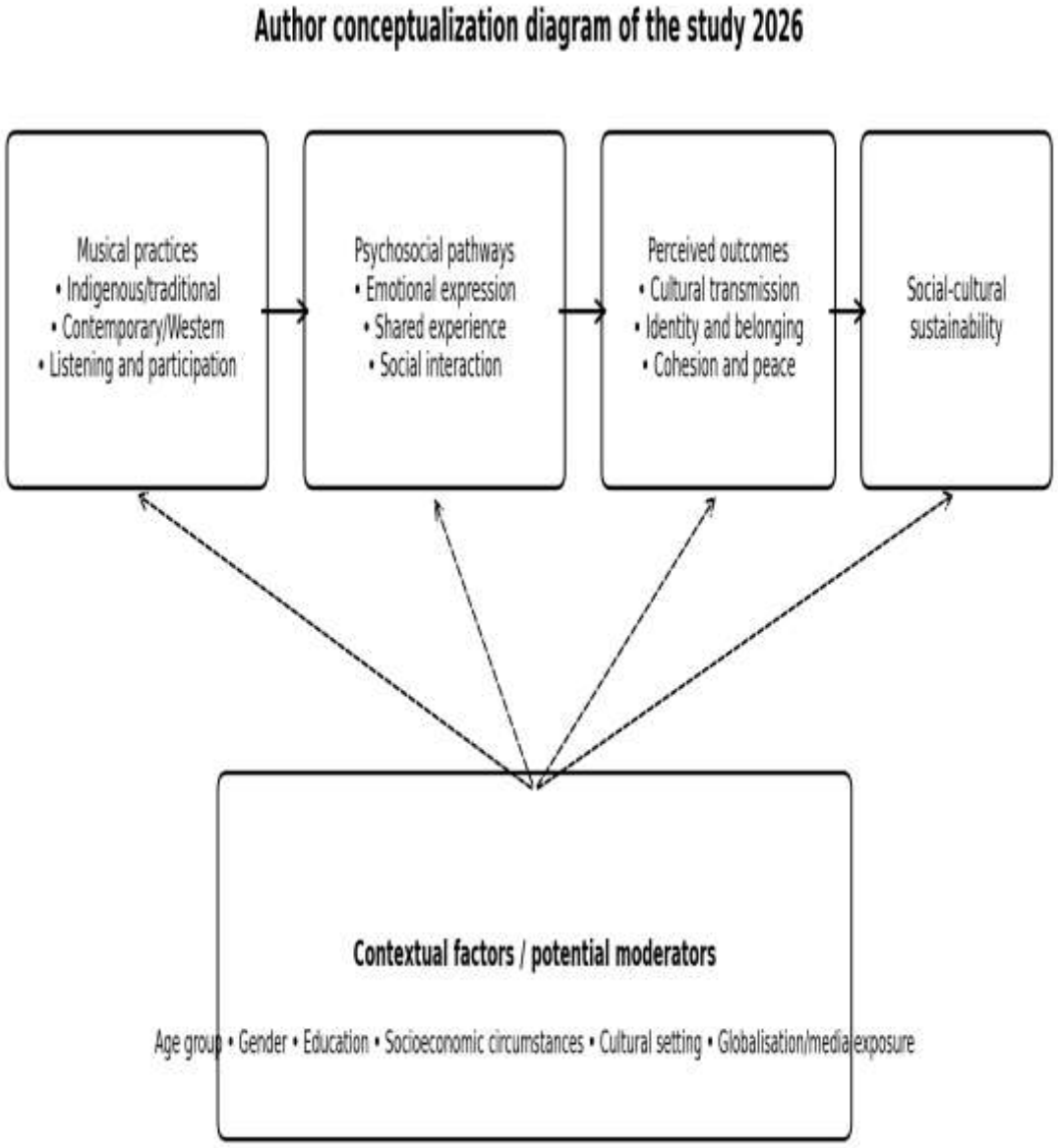


Figure *1. Author conceptualization diagram of the study 2026*

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a cross-sectional descriptive survey design to examine the psychosocial significance of music among rural communities of the Bekwarra people in Bekwarra Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria. The design was considered appropriate because it

enabled the researchers to obtain information on respondents' perceptions of the cultural, social, and psychological functions of music at a particular period. It also facilitated comparisons between adult and youth respondents regarding the perceived contributions of music to cultural transmission, social reconstruction, cultural identity, character development, social cohesion, peace, and communal disharmony.

The study employed a quantitative approach, using structured responses to assess the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with statements relating to the psychosocial significance of music. The analysis incorporated descriptive statistics and inferential statistical procedures to examine response patterns and determine whether differences existed between adults and youths. The cross-sectional design provided a basis for describing respondents' perceptions and comparing the two groups; however, it did not establish causal relationships between musical practices and the social or psychological outcomes considered.

3.2 Study Area

The study is situated in Bekwarra Local Government Area in the northern part of Cross River State, Nigeria. Bekwarra is a rural setting in which farming, community ceremonies, festivals and other collective activities form part of social life.

Geopolitically too, it is one of the five LGAs that make up the Northern Senatorial zone, others being Obudu, Obanliku, Ogoja and Yala Local Government Area, respectively. Ecologically, it lies within the tropical savanna biome with two distinct regimes of weather, namely, wet and dry seasons. It lies within a characteristically grass land ecosystems, properly in the guinea savanna vegetation belt. The people are arable farmers engaged in the cultivation of arable cultivars such as yam, cassava, groundnut and variety of other tuberous crops. The people are of the Bantu negroid stock engaged in sedentary lifestyle. Locationally, it is bounded by Obudu Local Government Area to the North, Ogoja Local Government Area, to the South and east and Yala Local Government Area to the West.

The selection of Bekwarra as the study area was informed by the relevance of indigenous musical practices to cultural identity and community life. Examining the perceptions of adults and youths within this setting provided an opportunity to investigate how different age groups understand the functions of music in preserving cultural traditions, strengthening social relationships, promoting peace, and potentially contributing to social divisions.

3.3 Population, Sample and Sampling

The target population comprised residents of Bekwarra Local Government Area within the reported age range of 12–60 years. The study focused on two respondent categories: adults and youths. This categorisation enabled the researchers to examine similarities and differences in the perceptions of respondents from different age groups concerning the psychosocial significance of music. The population was relevant to the study because adults and youths may differ in their exposure to indigenous musical traditions, participation in community cultural activities, and experiences of contemporary musical influences. Comparing their responses therefore provided a basis for assessing whether perceptions of the cultural and social functions of music varied between the two groups.

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

The study adopted a sample of 450 respondents drawn from rural communities in Bekwarra Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria. The sample comprised 225 adults and 225 youths, representing equal allocations to the two respondent groups. The selection of respondents was intended to obtain information on their perceptions of the psychosocial significance of music, particularly its roles in cultural transmission, social reconstruction, cultural identity, character development, social cohesion, peace, communal disharmony, and cultural disembeddedness. The sampling procedure involved the purposive selection of six council wards within the study area. Following the selection of the wards, household listing was undertaken to facilitate the identification of eligible respondents. The sampling process also incorporated stratification based on age, sex, and literacy characteristics. A cap-and-draw procedure was subsequently used to select respondents from the identified categories.

The final sample consisted of 225 adults and 225 youths, giving a total of 450 respondents. This equal allocation provided a basis for comparing the response distributions of the two groups across the nine statements relating to the psychosocial significance of music.

Given the purposive selection of the council wards, the findings are interpreted primarily in relation to the communities covered by the study.

3.4. Instrument and Measurement

Data were obtained using a structured questionnaire designed to elicit respondents' perceptions of the psychosocial significance of music. The instrument comprised nine statements addressing the following dimensions:

Music as a basis for cultural transmission.
Music as a basis for social reconstruction.
Onomastics and environmental learning.
Music as a tool for cultural identity.
Music for character and personality development.
Music for cultural cohesion and integration.
Music as a source of peace.
Music as a source of communal disharmony.
Music as a means of cultural disembeddedness.

Responses were measured on a four-point Likert-type scale consisting of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The four response options enabled respondents to express varying degrees of agreement or disagreement with each statement.

The use of a four-point scale provided a consistent framework for summarising respondents' perceptions and comparing the response patterns of adults and youths.

3.5 Validity and Reliability of the Research Instrument

Validity of the Instrument

The validity of the research instrument was established through expert judgement in Measurement and Evaluation. Experts in the field examined the questionnaire items to assess their relevance, clarity, and suitability for measuring respondents' perceptions of the psychosocial significance of music. The assessment focused on the extent to which the items adequately represented the study's objectives and covered the relevant dimensions, including cultural transmission, social reconstruction, environmental learning, cultural identity, character and personality development, cultural cohesion and integration, peace, communal disharmony,

and cultural disembeddedness. The experts' judgements informed the suitability of the instrument for data collection.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the research instrument was established using Cronbach's alpha coefficient to assess its overall internal consistency. The instrument yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.85, indicating a high level of internal consistency among the questionnaire items. This coefficient suggests that the items demonstrated a satisfactory degree of consistency in measuring the dimensions of the psychosocial significance of music investigated in the study. Consequently, the instrument was considered sufficiently reliable for the study.

3.6 Data Collection Ethics

The study involved human participants and therefore required appropriate attention to informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the protection of respondents' interests. Participants should have been informed about the purpose of the study and the nature of their involvement, and their participation should have been voluntary.

Given the reported inclusion of respondents aged 12–17 years, the ethical procedures should also address parental or guardian consent and age-appropriate assent, where applicable. The researchers should identify the ethics committee or institutional authority that reviewed the study, if approval was obtained, and provide the relevant approval reference where available.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process involved administering the questionnaire to the selected adult and youth respondents in the study area. The questionnaire was used to obtain responses to the nine statements relating to cultural transmission, social reconstruction, environmental learning, cultural identity, character development, social cohesion, peace, communal disharmony, and cultural disembeddedness. Where interviews were required to facilitate respondents' understanding of the questions, the items and response options needed to be presented consistently to minimise differences arising from the mode of administration. Responses were recorded according to the four-point scale, and the resulting frequencies were organised separately for adults and youths. Following data collection, the responses were organised into frequency distributions for each statement and respondent group. Each item had a reported total of 225 adult responses and 225 youth responses. The frequency tables formed the basis for calculating percentages, descriptive statistics, and the statistical comparisons presented in the results.

3.8 Data Analysis

The data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Frequencies and percentages were used to summarise the distribution of responses across the four Likert categories for each statement. This approach made it possible to determine the proportions of adult and youth respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with each statement and the proportions who disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Item means and standard deviations were calculated from the category frequencies using this coding scheme. The means provided a numerical summary of the response distributions, while the standard deviations indicated the extent of variation in responses. Because the response

categories are ordinal, the means were interpreted as descriptive summaries rather than as proof that the distances between categories were precisely equal.

To examine whether adults and youths differed in their responses, Pearson's chi-square test of independence was applied separately to each of the nine statements. For each item, a two-by-four contingency table was constructed, with respondent group (adult or youth) forming the rows and the four response categories forming the columns. The test assessed whether the distribution of responses was statistically associated with respondent group.

The null hypothesis for each test stated that the distribution of responses to the relevant statement did not differ significantly between adults and youths. The alternative hypothesis stated that the response distribution differed between the two groups.

The tests were evaluated at the conventional 5% significance level. Because nine separate item-level comparisons were conducted, a Bonferroni-adjusted significance threshold of approximately 0.0056 (0.05 divided by nine) was also applied to reduce the likelihood of false-positive findings arising from multiple testing. The resulting chi-square statistics, degrees of freedom, and p-values were used to determine which response distributions differed significantly between the groups.

The chi-square tests were based on the complete four-category distributions; they did not collapse the data into agreement and disagreement categories. This preserved the distinctions between agreement, strong agreement, disagreement, and strong disagreement.

The interpretation of these tests assumes that the adult and youth groups constitute independent samples and that the frequency counts are correctly recorded. The tests identify differences in response distributions but do not, by themselves, establish the causes of those differences or demonstrate that music produces particular social outcomes.

4. Results

5. Method of analysis

For each group and item, category percentages were calculated using 225 as the denominator. An item mean was calculated by coding SD=1, D=2, A=3, and SA=4; the sample standard deviation was calculated from the category frequencies. For each item, a 2 × 4 Pearson chi-square test of independence compared adult and youth counts across A, SA, D, and SD. The tests use the complete distribution and do not collapse disagreement into an ignored category. The smallest expected cell count was checked for each test; all expected counts exceeded five. The tests assume independent adult and youth samples and accurate counts. The aggregate tables do not permit respondent-level modelling or analysis of associations among answers from the same individual.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and adult–youth comparisons for the four-point response scale

Statement	Adult A+SA %	Adult D+SD %	Adult M (SD)	Youth A+SA %	Youth D+SD %	Youth M (SD)	$\chi^2(3)$, p
Music as a basis for cultural transmission	55.6	44.4	2.57 (1.20)	55.1	44.9	2.62 (1.05)	15.51, 0.001
Music as a basis for social reconstruction	52.4	47.6	2.47 (1.16)	52.0	48.0	2.45 (1.12)	1.17, 0.760
Onomastics and environmental learning	46.2	53.8	2.49 (1.11)	56.0	44.0	2.58 (1.18)	13.07, 0.004
Music as a tool for cultural identity	45.3	54.7	2.35 (1.12)	47.1	52.9	2.39 (1.09)	0.53, 0.912
Music for character and personality development	44.9	55.1	2.40 (1.13)	54.7	45.3	2.55 (1.19)	7.63, 0.054
Music for cultural cohesion/integration	48.4	51.6	2.45 (1.15)	61.3	38.7	2.82 (0.98)	25.47, <.001
Music as a source of peace	59.1	40.9	2.72 (1.07)	58.7	41.3	2.58 (1.17)	13.36, 0.004
Music as a source of communal disharmony	56.9	43.1	2.57 (1.20)	58.2	41.8	2.72 (1.05)	18.36, <.001
Music as a means of cultural disembeddedness	52.4	47.6	2.50 (1.18)	51.1	48.9	2.49 (1.09)	5.15, 0.161

Note. A = agree; SA = strongly agree; D = disagree; SD = strongly disagree. Means use SD=1, D=2, A=3,SA=4. Agreement percentages combine A and SA; disagreement percentages combine D and SD, but the chi-square tests use all four categories separately.

4.2 Descriptive Results

Adults showed their highest combined agreement with music as a source of peace (59.1%), followed by music as a source of communal disharmony (56.9%) and music as a basis for cultural transmission (55.6%). This simultaneous endorsement of peace and disharmony is not necessarily contradictory: respondents may recognise that music can contribute to solidarity in some contexts and conflict in others. Adult agreement was below 50% for onomastics/environmental learning (46.2%), cultural identity (45.3%), character/personality development (44.9%), and cultural cohesion/integration (48.4%).

Among youths, the highest combined agreement was for music as a means of cultural cohesion/integration (61.3%), followed by music as a source of peace (58.7%), communal disharmony (58.2%), and onomastics/environmental learning (56.0%). Youth agreement was lowest for cultural identity (47.1%). These patterns show why disagreement should be reported: for several statements, a substantial proportion of respondents selected D or SD. For example,

53.8% of adults disagreed with the onomastics/environmental-learning statement, while 52.9% of youths disagreed with the cultural-identity statement.

4.3 Hypothesis Tests

At the conventional .05 level, five items showed statistically significant differences in the full response distribution between adults and youths: cultural transmission, onomastics/environmental learning, cultural cohesion/integration, music as a source of peace, and music as a source of communal disharmony. Applying the Bonferroni threshold of .0056, these same five results remain statistically significant. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected for these five items and not rejected for social reconstruction, cultural identity, character/personality development, or cultural disembeddedness.

Table 2: Results of the Analysis of Hypothesis

Statement	χ^2	df	p-value	Decision at α=.0056
Music as a basis for cultural transmission	15.507	3	0.0014	Reject H_0
Music as a basis for social reconstruction	1.171	3	0.7600	Do not reject H_0
Onomastics and environmental learning	13.072	3	0.0045	Reject H_0
Music as a tool for cultural identity	0.530	3	0.9122	Do not reject H_0
Music for character and personality development	7.625	3	0.0544	Do not reject H_0
Music for cultural cohesion/integration	25.467	3	<.001	Reject H_0
Music as a source of peace	13.357	3	0.0039	Reject H_0
Music as a source of communal disharmony	18.360	3	<.001	Reject H_0
Music as a means of cultural disembeddedness	5.153	3	0.1609	Do not reject H_0

The significant chi-square test indicates that the pattern across the four response categories differs between adult and youth groups; it does not by itself show which category accounts for the difference or prove that age caused the difference.

6. Conclusion:

The field results show that adult and youth respondents perceive multiple psychosocial functions of music in Bekwarra communities, including cultural transmission, cohesion, peace, and communal disharmony. Descriptive agreement and disagreement patterns vary by statement. Item-specific chi-square tests indicate adult–youth differences in five of the nine response distributions after a Bonferroni adjustment, while four items do not show statistically significant differences at the adjusted threshold. The findings support a nuanced interpretation of music as a social and cultural practice that may be experienced as cohesive or divisive depending on context.

7. Discussion of the findings:

The findings indicate that respondents do not view music through a single, uniformly positive lens. Both groups reported substantial agreement that music can support peace, while also acknowledging its possible association with communal disharmony. This dual pattern is consistent with a contextual understanding of music: its social effects may depend on the lyrics, performance occasion, group identities involved, and whether the event promotes shared participation or antagonism. The present frequency tables establish perceptions, not the causal effects of music on peace or conflict. The significant adult–youth difference for cultural transmission suggests that the distribution of views about music's role in passing culture across generations is not identical in the two groups. Boer and Abubakar (2014) found that musical rituals were associated with family and peer cohesion across four countries, while also identifying cultural and developmental variation. Their findings support the relevance of examining age groups separately, although their cross-cultural youth sample and measures differ from the Bekwarra statements and should not be treated as direct replication. The difference for onomastics and environmental learning indicates variation in how adults and youths respond to the claim that music provides a source of place-related and environmental learning. The adult group had a majority in the disagreement categories (53.8%), whereas the youth group had a majority in the agreement categories (56.0%). This is a notable descriptive contrast. However, the item wording may combine multiple ideas—onomastics, place, and environmental learning—so the instrument may need refinement to ensure respondents interpret it consistently. Separate items could measure place names, local environmental knowledge, and cultural memory independently. Youths reported greater agreement than adults with music for cultural cohesion/integration, and the full response distributions differed significantly. This pattern is compatible with literature suggesting that musical participation can create shared experiences and social bonds. Pearce et al. (2016) found that collective bonding was associated with some well-being outcomes in community-based adult education classes, although singing did not clearly outperform other group activities. Crooke et al. (2024) likewise emphasise that music can offer a site for intercultural engagement and cohesion, but the outcome depends on the nature of engagement. Thus, the present results support the importance of investigating music as a perceived resource for cohesion, not the claim that it automatically produces integration.

The adult–youth distributions also differed for music as a source of peace. Agreement percentages were similar (59.1% for adults and 58.7% for youths), yet the chi-square test was significant because a test of the full distribution considers how responses are spread across all four categories, not merely the combined agreement total. This is an important analytical point: two groups can have nearly identical A+SA percentages but differ in the balance between A and SA, or between D and SD. Accordingly, full-category tests are more informative than comparing

agreement percentages alone. The significant difference for communal disharmony should be interpreted carefully. It does not mean that music causes conflict, only that adults and youths distributed their responses differently across the four options. Music may express existing tensions, reinforce group boundaries, or be used in conflict narratives; it may also facilitate reconciliation and collective identity. Qualitative interviews about particular songs, events, and contexts would help explain why respondents associate music with either peace or disharmony.

No statistically significant group difference was detected for social reconstruction, cultural identity, character/personality development, or cultural disembeddedness after the specified correction. This does not prove that adults and youths hold exactly the same views. It means that these aggregate tables do not provide sufficient evidence of a group difference at the adjusted threshold. In addition, the meaning of 'cultural disembeddedness' may be unfamiliar or interpreted in different ways; future instrument testing should define abstract terms in language that is locally meaningful.

The findings suggest that the psychosocial significance of music in Bekwarra communities is best discussed as a set of specific, potentially context-dependent functions rather than a single global effect. The analysis also demonstrates the value of retaining disagreement categories. A paper reporting only A and SA would hide the sizeable dissent evident in several items and could overstate consensus.

8. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

i. **Preservation of Indigenous Music:** Community leaders, cultural custodians, and music educators should promote the preservation and intergenerational transmission of indigenous Bekwarra music through cultural festivals, storytelling, community performances, and school-based music education.

ii. **Promotion of Peace and Social Harmony:** Traditional institutions, youth organisations, and community development agencies should encourage musical activities that promote peaceful coexistence, reconciliation, mutual understanding, and unity among community members.

iii. **Integration of Music into Cultural Education:** Schools and cultural organisations should incorporate indigenous songs that communicate local history, environmental knowledge, cultural values, and moral lessons into educational programmes to strengthen cultural identity and intergenerational learning.

iv. **Enhanced Youth Participation:** Cultural organisations should provide greater opportunities for young people to participate in traditional musical performances, festivals, and collaborative activities with adults and elders to strengthen cultural cohesion and integration.

v. **Prevention of Music-Related Communal Disharmony:** Musicians, event organisers, traditional leaders, and youth groups should discourage musical expressions that promote hostility, ridicule, or intergroup antagonism and encourage songs that foster tolerance, dialogue, and peaceful relationships.

vi. **Further Research on Music and Social Development:** Researchers should investigate the

specific musical practices, lyrics, and performance contexts associated with cultural transmission, peace, social cohesion, and communal disharmony. Future studies should also clarify concepts such as onomastics, environmental learning, and cultural disembeddedness to improve measurement and interpretation.

9. Implications for Practice and Policy

For music education, the study's framework supports locally grounded teaching that includes indigenous repertoire, performance contexts and community knowledge. For cultural policy, it suggests that documentation and transmission efforts should be developed with cultural custodians rather than imposed externally. For community development, music may offer a platform for dialogue and collective participation, but interventions should be assessed rather than presumed effective. For research practice, the study highlights the importance of transparent data management and reporting.

10. Contribution to Knowledge

The study contributes a context-specific conceptualisation of music as a multidimensional psychosocial practice among rural Bekwarra communities, connecting musical participation with cultural transmission, identity, emotional expression, social cohesion and possible social division. The framework also identifies age and other contextual characteristics as potential moderators.

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