



# Role of Singing Games in Character Formation among Pre-Primary School Children

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this study was to establish the influence of singing games on the moral development of pre-primary school children. Specifically, the study sought to find out the influence of singing games on character formation among pre-primary school children. The study employed a descriptive survey design. The target population was 2,446 respondents, constituting 2000 pre-primary school children, 230 teachers, 215 parents, and the Kisii South Sub-County ECDE Director. Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table was used to obtain a sample of 331 respondents. Simple random sampling and purposive sampling were used. Questionnaires, interviews, and observation schedules were used as tools of data collection. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data were coded and categorized through the identification of themes and patterns. The study found that most of the children who entirely and actively participated in singing games at school had a positive change in their moral development through character formation, with a correlation value of  $r=.260$ . These findings signified that for society to have morally upright children, there is a need for emphasis on more singing games by curriculum designers and educators for effective moral development. The findings will be useful to teachers, educational policymakers and practitioners, and educators in fine-tuning their pedagogical approaches, allocating teaching and learning resources, developing and designing the curriculum, and assessing the effectiveness of singing games on moral development. Finally, this study would help enhance the existing literature upon which potential researchers will base related work.*

**Keywords:** *Character formation, Moral development, Pre-primary school, Singing games*

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## 1. Introduction

This is a sociological inquiry into the teaching of morals in schools through singing games. Olivia (2023) defines moral development as a process whereby individuals especially children cultivate ethics and principles which enable them embrace what is worthwhile in regard to the societal standards. McLeod (2015) adds that children construct standards of judging right and wrong in society based on laws and social and cultural norms. Battistich

(2008) adds that the moral development of an individual, involves the actualization of one's progressive development intellectually, socially, ethically, and emotionally. Singing plays a significant role in child development. Children must be in an environment that espouses singing because to them singing is a basic human behaviour (Welch, 2011). In this light, therefore, singing games play an integral part in moral development as espoused by Joyce (2011) who asserts that music, and specifically singing, bolster many attributes that instructors of early childhood value in the developing child.

Moral development in the world has been a challenge to many governments because morals have been on a downward trajectory. While the effect of this moral decline is evident in societies and among adult populations, schools, where learners spend most of their active hours of the day in pursuit of education, have not been spared. Indiscipline is at its peak (Akanga, 2014). The greatest dilemma for governments is having an educated citizenry that is undergoing a moral crisis, an issue that is noticeable through increased violence, corruption, financial malpractices, and a general lack of care for others and society. Basome (2018) adds that globally, morals have declined to the point that vices like homosexuality are being witnessed in and out of schools. Unfortunately, some religious leaders who are expected to entrench morals in the young generation practice and support the vices. There has been a substantial moral change in society, with the media being the major player in enhancing those changes.

The moral fabric, therefore, that once held society together is diminishing rapidly. Songs are significant in the entrenchment of the valued morals of society. They cultivate not only a sense of belonging and self-esteem among pre-primary school-going children, but also vital skills for their future. Although singing games is critical in inculcating moral values among pre-primary school children, society appears to disregard it. Due to this neglect, morality is in the doldrums. Different governments in the world have attempted to lay strategies and systems specifically to address moral decadence with little results, the Kenyan government inclusive.

Many studies have been carried out on the influence of singing games on cognitive aspects such as mathematical abilities, motivation in learning English skills like listening skills as well as narratives. But there is scant research in Kisii South Sub-County that has addressed the question of the influence of singing games on moral development. There is also little research that has examined the correlation that exists between singing games and character formation. This study sought to investigate the influence of singing games on character formation among pre-primary school-going children using a case study of Kisii South Sub-County Kenya. The findings will be useful to teachers, educational policymakers and practitioners, and educators in fine-tuning their pedagogical approaches, allocating teaching and learning resources, developing and designing the curriculum, and assessing the effectiveness of singing games on moral development.

This study was based on Piaget's theory of cognitive development (1936) and Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986). The Piagetian theory asserts that children assimilate morals best while in a group. During this stage, singing games elicit emotions and feelings that

deeply influence the affective domain of the child's development process. When children are instructed through singing games, assimilation occurs. Therefore, virtues of life skills like decision-making, cooperation, innovativeness, and self-awareness are best assimilated at this stage. Children like singing, and therefore, when singing games are used, it naturally sets up a natural interaction with the environment, thus constructing and reconstructing the expected norms of society.

Albert Bandura's theory is relevant to this study because individuals select their behaviour and monitor themselves. Individuals then decide wisely on the action to take keeping in mind the outcomes. Due to the consequences, individuals make choices on moral behaviour that will lead to the desired outcomes, such as honesty, humility, gratitude, respect, and responsibility. Through singing games, the child will evaluate his thought and action, be involved in the activities and with determination and effort compare them with the expected goals which are the values of the society. The child will make the right choices and be motivated to achieve more for the good of society.

## 2. Literature Review

Character is an intrinsic part of human life that is manifested by a person through his or her day-to-day behaviour (Gunawan, 2017). Character formation, or moral upbringing, is effectively achieved through moral education. It is in this light that studies have been carried out on singing games and character formation.

In the western countries moral development is in dilemma. Their acculturation has probably hit a dead end not only economically, technologically and environmentally but also politically (Hunt, 2011). Societies, due to moral decadence, have become wicked because both religion and spirituality have lost their significance or are less valued (Arthur & Carr, 2013). The effects of technology have contributed to the ambiguities and extreme turnaround in the structure of society, which have increasingly marginalized religion and spirituality (Arthur & Carr, 2013). Character formation through singing games is significant in moral entrenchment.

Research carried out on moral values and character-building education in folklore: *lubuk emas* in Indonesia by Sipahutari et al. (2021) averred that folklore strengthened character education for students with their literary works. The researchers wanted to highlight the significance of moral values and character formation through folklore, entitled *Lubuk Emas*. *Lubuk Emas* is a folklore that originates from North Sumatra Province in Indonesia. The researchers employed library research methods. They concluded that the moral values that were learned from

the folklore enhanced the children's character and personality and contained enormous moral content (Sipahutari et al., 2021).

Research was carried out by Kristanto (2020) on Javanese traditional songs for early childhood character education to aid in developing audiovisual media from traditional Javanese songs. The study employed an educational design-based research approach. The study had the objective of developing character at the stage of early childhood through audiovisual Javanese songs. The study employed an experimental design with a control group. The research used 71 respondents in one experimental control class. The findings revealed that there was a higher value placed on character development in the experimental class than in the control group. The research concluded that Javanese traditional songs were essential media for inculcating valued character in children when integrated through learning. These songs would have a significant influence on the character of the child thereby building the nation's noble and valued morals (Kristanto 2020).

Herliyana and Rosmiati (2018) carried out research on Developing National Character of Young Learners by Use of Songs and Traditional Dances in Indonesia. The study aimed at finding out the effectiveness of instructional pedagogies in the formation of nationalistic character in young children using Indonesian songs and traditional dances. The research employed a qualitative research method. The researchers employed observation, interview, and document analysis as techniques of data collection. The subjects of the study were teachers, principals, and children aged between 4-6 years of age. The findings revealed that the nation's valued character was effectively inculcated in the child if songs and traditional dances of Indonesia were infused into teaching not only in class, but also at play-group activities.

In Indonesia, Indriyati and Permana (2019) note the significance of moral development and argue that children are the next generation of families, thus a need to prepare them from an early age to have good character. Character education is expected to be espoused as early as the age of 2 years because it is at that stage that children are introduced to socialization (Indriyati & Permana, 2019). The Swedish government highlighted the vitality of songs in the development of the child. Its national curriculum states that singing games should serve as both content and method in pre-primary school activities. Communication by different forms of expression, such as pictures, song and music, drama, rhythm, dance, and movement, as well as spoken and written language, provide both the contents and methods to be used by the pre-primary school instructors in promoting the moral development and learning of the child (National Agency of Education, 2010).

To establish character development and social reconstruction in music education of the twentieth century, Hash (2015) utilised periodicals and articles presented in meetings to show the role of music in shaping society. The research concluded that music promoted social and political values in the classroom. It promoted the development of interactive skills such as self-control, self-confidence, conflict resolution, social tolerance, and empathy.

Research carried out by Dzansi (2002) on manifestations of Ghanaian indigenous culture in children's singing games sought to establish the significance of singing in the entrenchment of culture. The researcher employed participation and observation as tools for collecting data. For four months, the researcher collected data from three schools and one neighbourhood in Ghana. She concluded that through the performance of indigenous games by children in a class, teachers could employ them in teaching aspects of indigenous culture. This would enable them to be accepted in society. By having children clap, tap, jump, and dance to their singing games, teachers used those elements of music from every game to achieve the objectives of their lessons. The games also exposed the Ghanaian communities' cultural diversity to not only students but also teachers. Addo (2013) adds that singing games become a means of inculcating socializing patterns in adult life, thereby achieving moral development due to their repetitive nature, and through this, they develop the cognitive ability of the child (Addo, 2013). They enhance the holistic development of the child. The child gains understanding, knowledge and skills by imitating, observing and practicing through the singing games of the community (Adjepong, 2020).

Esimone and Ojukwu (2014) noted the significance of entrenching morals in children through indigenous singing games of the Igbo people. To attain the objectives of the study, the researchers adopted a survey and bibliography as the methodology. They concluded that an African child can assimilate accepted societal norms, ideals, and attitudes through traditional music arts that are entrenched in formal education in school. They added that training an Igbo child through folk singing games laid a firm foundation on which not even outside forces and rapid technologies could erode the key moral values already imbued in the child at the early developmental stages of life. Esimone and Ojukwu (2014) further concluded that Igbo folk singing games served as an effective conduit for inculcating morals to the youths since the music enhanced effortless discernment and awareness.

There exist glaring gaps that have led to moral decay in Kenya. Society has emphasized the rights of children without holding them accountable. This has bred a

generation full of egos. Consequently, it has bred a young generation that lacks the virtue of patience and is thus in need of instant gratification (Ngugi, 2021). This has led to a compromised society. In their research, Malinda et al. (2017) recognize schools as centres where the moral foundations of the learners are laid because learners spend more time in schools. They aver that schools are required to prepare learners physically, socially, emotionally, morally and spiritually. However, Malinda et al. (2017) underline long ineffective, ill-conceived and failed efforts on how moral education should be implemented in Kenyan schools.

Singing games play a significant role in children's character development (Weche, 2009). He adds that singing games are crucial because they directly teach individuals the expected values. Through this, the child develops socially and morally. The researcher employed a self-observing approach and active participation. In his study on children's singing games from Luhya, he averred that the creativity of children through singing games communicated the aesthetic values of the Luhya people.

In research on children's poetry and personality development, Monanti (2014) averred that children's play songs form part of the body of verbal arts in any community's oral repertoire. Having noted the high level of juvenile delinquency, he argued that children's play songs or children's poetry would play a significant role in forming an acceptable character in an individual. He sampled four traditional children's play songs from the Abagusii community. In his research, he used the library research method. He employed observation and oral interviews as tools for collecting data. He concluded that song texts can construct the mindset of the child and consequently entrench the cherished character of society. He added that if the entrenchment began early in a child's life through songs, the right attitudes and personality traits would be inculcated.

Based on the empirical literature, it was deduced that there were glaring gaps that ought to be bridged. Most of the studies reviewed had not employed questionnaires as a tool of data collection. For instance, Sipahutar et al. (2021) used library research methods, while Hash (2015), adopted periodicals and articles. Herliyana and Rosmiati (2018) employed observation, interview, and document analysis. Kristanto (2020) used an experimental design in the research. Weche (2009) failed to determine the influence of singing games on moral development among pre-primary school-going children. He used a self-observation method and participation, thereby making it difficult to analyse data quantitatively. Monanti (2014) too failed to ascertain the role of singing games in moral development in pre-primary school-going children. He used the library research method in his study and

employed observation and oral interviews as tools of data collection.

### 3. Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. A descriptive survey design is a method that describes the phenomenon accurately and systematically without manipulating the variables. This design was selected because, according to Mugenda and Mugenda (2008), it is used to obtain data useful in evaluating the present practice through the description of the existing phenomenon by asking individuals about their perceptions, attitudes, and values. Orodho and Kombo (2005) agree by adding that descriptive survey design is vital in that it collects information about people's attitudes, opinions, habits, and other possible behaviour. This design is, therefore, essential because it constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data (Kothari, 2004).

The target population was 2,446 people, which consisted of all the 230 pre-primary teachers, 215 parents, 2000 pre-primary school children, and the Director of Early Childhood Education in Kisii South Sub-County. Stratified random sampling was employed to categorize schools into zones. The sample size was calculated using the table of Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Krejcie and Morgan (1970) is a table that aids the researcher in determining a sample size. It is significant because it ensures that the representative sample required in empirical research from a given population is achieved. Simple random sampling technique was used to select a sample from each zone to obtain 271 pre-primary school children and 31 teachers. Finally, purposive sampling was used to select 28 parents and the Kisii South-Sub County ECDE Director. Data was collected using questionnaires, interviews and observation schedules. Validity of research instruments was evaluated to establish the relevance of each item in the instruments. Test re-test method was used to establish the reliability of the questionnaire whereby Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was used to examine the internal consistency and inter-item correlations. Test re-test method involves the evaluation of the consistency of two results from the same participant after some duration of time. This method ensures that the results collected from the individual or participant are identical, illustrative and steady progressively. Inter-rater reliability was used to test the stability and consistency of the observation schedule. Thematic analysis method was employed to analyse qualitative data by identifying common themes, patterns, and relationships among the respondents with respect to the codes identified at the coding stage. Quantitatively, data was analysed using the descriptive statistics using SPSS version 22 plus, such as mean, standard deviation, and frequency. The study also

employed Pearson product-moment correlation to establish the relationship between singing games and character formation.

Before the commencement of the study, the study proposal was approved by Kisii University. The researcher then received a letter from the university allowing him to conduct the research. The researcher sought a research permit from the National Commission of Science Technology and Innovation. He proceeded to the field and requested permission from individuals in authority (e.g., the head teacher) to get access to study participants. An explanation to the respondents on the purpose of the study was carried out, thereby requesting them to participate in the study.

The researcher subjected the participants to an informed consent letter before they were engaged in the research. The researcher guaranteed the respondents that their

identities would be treated confidentially. This was achieved by assigning the participants code names. The researcher also informed parents of their children's engagement in the research prior to the actual day of observation. This was done through the children's teachers. During data collection, utmost respect for the participants was observed. The participants were not exposed to any risks. Special consideration was accorded to the minors and special groups. During data analysis, investigators delinked names from the responses during the coding and recording process.

## 4. Results and Discussion

This study sought to establish measures of character formation through observation and teacher questionnaires. The responses were as shown in table 1.

**Table 1 Distribution of character formation among pre-school children through an observation schedule and teacher's questionnaire.**

Variables	Values	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Teachers' view on character formation</b>	Strongly Agree	9	31.0
	Agree	9	31.0
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	4	13.8
	Disagree	3	10.3
	Strongly Disagree	4	13.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Observers' view on;</b>			
<b>Humility and respect</b>	Waiting for their turn to perform	152	61.3
	Appreciating others by clapping and cheering	64	25.8
	Signing off	32	12.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Right decision</b>	Giving one another a chance to play	149	60.1
	Able to take the right positions in the play or in the game.	99	39.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Responsibility and discipline</b>	Obedying game rules and following them	117	47.2
	Carrying out activities correctly and independently.	61	24.6
	Working with others uniformly	70	28.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The Table 1 shows how character formation among pre-school children was distributed after obtaining responses from children observation schedules and teachers' questionnaires. The teachers' view on the character formation was measured on a five-point Likert scale; 1 Strongly Agree, 2 Agree, 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4

Disagree and lastly 5 Strongly Disagree. Thus, most of the teachers (18) representing 62.0%, either agreed or strongly agreed that indeed character formation among the pre-school children was evident. This indicated that most of the children were able to show moral development through character formation. Only 4 out of

29 teachers, equated to 13.8%, doubted whether character formation was clearly being shown by pupils. A population of 7 teachers, representing 24.1 percent of the population, disagreed and strongly disagreed that there was no character formation noted from the observation carried out.

For the researcher to measure character formation in pre-school children, three factors were used to measure the variable: humility and respect, right decisions and responsibility, and discipline. To measure humility and respect as indicators of character formation, the researcher used responses like; children waiting for their turn to perform, appreciating others, and signing off the stage. The results demonstrate that more than a half of the pre-school pupils were able to wait for their turn to perform, which translated to 61.3% with a frequency of 152. 64 out of 248 pupils, representing 25.8%, were observed appreciating others by clapping and cheering. 12.9% of the pre-school children displayed an act of humility and respect by signing off. These findings agreed with Yenias (2019), who argued that it is in school where character formation is notably shaped. Pre-school children acquire several values espoused in character formation as a factor in moral development, such as the virtues of respect, courtesy, honesty, forgiveness, patience, and obeying the rules of the game.

The Director of Early Childhood and Development Education in Kisii South Sub-County supported the indicator of character formation through factors of humility and respect. (Translated):

*“The content of singing games would convey elements of gratitude, humility, honesty, and respect. Further, in some playing games, children thank those who have participated during their turn and respect them as they participate. They show them honesty and humility as they patiently wait for them to conclude their participation”.*

The interview schedule for the parents of the pre-school children in Kisii South Sub-County supported this by noting that:

*“The aspect of humility and respect can be seen through sharing of ideas since the children have different capabilities, total involvement of the children in the singing game, children being patient to wait for their turn to perform and able to appreciate others while they are*

*performing and even after by cheering them”.*

These findings agree with Mullen (2019), who argues that through singing games, children learn to follow rules, respect each other, and exhibit constructs of cooperation. These children can sing uniformly and transition smoothly from one section to another (Mullen, 2019). This implied that preschool children could uphold the virtue of respect by following the laid down rules and regulations.

The second factor in character formation was the right decision, which was measured by two responses; giving one another a chance to play and being able to take the right positions in the play or in the game. Majority of the preschool children, 149 out of 248, exhibited the act of giving one another a chance to play. This represented 60.1%. This means that most of the pupils were espousing constructs that inculcate morals. These findings agree with Cristanto (2020) who opines that character formation for moral development can effectively be done through singing activities in pre-primary school. 39.9% of the represented pupils were observed taking the right positions in the game as trained by their teachers. Through the display of these values, it is noted that the 248 pre-school children affirmed that indeed singing games as part of their schooling curriculum has improved their moral development. The interview schedules with parents of the pre-school children supported this, as one parent said that “A good child who is well mannered has to wait for his/her turn to perform as taught by their trainers and also accept that there is room for correction when found on the wrong side.”

The third element to be observed was showing discipline and responsibility during singing games. This was based on obedience and adherence to the game rules, carrying out activities on their own correctly and working with others cohesively. Almost half of the pupils were able to display obedience to the game rules by following them. This translated to 47.2%. This indicates that the pupils were able to sing and act cohesively as per the observation. Carrying out activities correctly and uniformly was evident with a cumulative of 61 pupils (24.6%). This signifies that these pre-school children not only obeyed the rules of the game but also did other activities like cleaning the place of training with minimum supervision. 28.2% exhibited the ability to work with others uniformly for effective singing games with their leaders. The interview with the Director of ECDE Kisii South Sub-County said that: “Every participating child is held accountable for his/her actions in singing activities. Children learn to confine themselves to the rules of the game. This fosters the aspect of discipline and responsibility among them”.

These findings agreed with Mutinda and Muhoro (2022), who argued that singing games foster self-control and cultivate an atmosphere for learning and a sense of responsibility. The findings of this study were supported by Yenias (2019), who argued that it is in school where character formation is shaped. Pre-school children acquire several values espoused in character formation as a factor for moral development such as the virtue of respect, courtesy, honesty, forgiveness, patience, and obeying rules of the game. The findings agree with Hariswari and

Iswidayanti (2019) who opined that it is through singing games that children entrench values of unity and responsibility. Dzansi (2002) added that singing games entrenches the societal values when effectively utilized.

### Correlation between Singing Games and character formation

The study sought to find the correlation between singing games and character formation. This is shown in table 2.

**Table 2 Correlation between singing games and character formation**

		Singing games	Character formation
<b>Singing games</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.260**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	248	248
<b>Character formation</b>	Pearson Correlation	.260**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	248	248

\*\* . The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 indicates how the two variables: independent variable, singing games, and the dependent variable, character formation among pre-school children are correlated in Kisii South Sub-County, Kisii County. The correlation was analysed using the Pearson correlation coefficient statistic method because it checked the power of association that existed between the two variables that were observed on equal duration and environment. Table 1 statistic correlation, therefore, indicated that there is a weak positive relationship between character formation among pre-school children and singing games with a Pearson correlation ( $r = 0.260$ ) on a sample size of  $N = 248$ . This implies that, any change in character formation among pre-school children leads to a weak positive correlation value of (.260) change in singing game. There was weak positive correlation between character formation and singing games because there are other indicators like family background that influence moral development among pre-school children. Significance test showed that the relationship was statistically significant since the  $p$ -value  $< 0.01$  level of significance. The positive correlation means that when there is more emphasis in singing games among pre-school children, influence of moral development is noted positively through character formation. This correlation also implies that if there is reduction in participation of children in singing games at pre-school level it consequently impacts negatively the children's moral development through character formation. From the findings, it was established that most of the children who entirely and actively participated in the singing games at school indicated a

positive change in their moral development through character formation because they developed values of responsibility, diligence, and honesty (Hidayati et al. 2018).

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to establish the role singing games play in moral development among pre-school children in Kisii South Sub-County, Kisii County, Kenya. Specifically, the study was to establish the role of singing games on character formation among pre-school children using Kisii South Sub County. It was found that most of the children who entirely and actively participated in the singing games at school indicated a positive change in their moral development through character formation. This was achieved when children were observed embracing virtues like gratitude, humility, honesty, self-control, determination and respect through the activities that they were involved in. This study agreed with Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development, especially in the pre-operational stage. This theory asserts that children assimilate morals best while in a group. During this stage, singing games elicit emotions and feelings that deeply influence the affective domain of the child's development process. When children are instructed through singing games, assimilation occurs.

The study also agreed with Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory, especially in self-evaluation, self-reaction and self-efficacy. Children select their behaviour and monitor themselves. Children decide wisely on the action to take, keeping in mind the outcomes. Due to the consequences, the children make choices on moral behaviour that will lead to the desired outcomes, such as honesty, humility, gratitude, respect, and being responsible. Through singing games, the child will evaluate his or her thoughts and actions, be involved in the activities, and with determination and effort compare it with the expected goals, which are the values of the society. The child will make the right choices and be motivated to achieve more for the good of society.

## 5.2 Recommendations

The study recommends that the Ministry of Education should develop teachers' regular pedagogical workshops and seminars that incorporate singing games in their instructional set ups. Through experienced presenters, teachers in the service will be well equipped with the most recent pedagogies of entrenching morals in children. Additionally, the Ministry of Education, through policy makers and practitioners should offer guidance on the allocation of learning and teaching resources involving setting up the necessary infrastructural facilities and social amenities in every learning institution to enhance the performance of singing games. These facilities and social amenities play a critical role in enhancing the entrenchment of morals.

It is recommended that government should support educators in assessing the effectiveness of singing games on moral development through extensive application of the content and motivation of learners through the practical aspect of the curriculum and hopefully encourage further research in this area. Therefore, comprehensive utilization of singing games influence moral development because the findings revealed that pre-school children who were fully introduced to singing games at their tender age displayed improvement in their character formation, social cohesion and life skills.

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