

# 1 Dance, A Sociological Tool in a Child's Moral Development: 2 Dancing Monster and Uzoas Aparadigm

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## 6 **Abstract**

7 The use of dance in contemporary society has seriously gone beyond mere movement of the  
8 body and entertainment. Before now, parents and teachers in secondary and primary schools  
10 see the essence of dance as a mere form of recreation, relaxation and body flexibility amongst  
11 the pupils, thereby de-emphasizing the socio-communitive purpose of dance. However, from  
12 the scholarly research point of view, dance in children's theatre was and still remains an  
13 indispensable tool in developing their sociological, psychological and religious co-existence  
14 amongst themselves in school. At this juncture, interpretative dance movements become a  
15 didactic tool in sensitizing the children from saying no to evil and embracing good deeds. In  
16 other to understand and achieve the sociological essence of dance in child's development, a  
17 qualitative analysis will be carried out on (The Dancing Monster and Uzor) as a working  
18 metaphor. This paper, therefore, will critically look at the sociological potency of dance in  
19 children's theatre.

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21 *Index terms—*

## 22 **1 Introduction**

23 The family is an important social institution that functions as the organizer and stabilizer of social values of a  
24 given society. The University of the Family therefore makes it the primary social institution common in every  
25 communal enclave. Thus, the family according to Mezireobi is: A social group in which there are sexually  
26 cohabiting men and women with possibly off-springs or children resulting from the cohabitation (171).

27 This definition obviously reveals three different members of the family -the father, mother and the children.  
28 The father and mother are independent adults capable of fending for themselves, while the child is a minor, who  
29 is helpless and depends on the parents for support and upbringing. Evidently, the child is the weakest member  
30 of the family. The place of the child in the family entitles him to social welfare, participation, protection and  
31 survival rights. But the question to be answered is: What makes one a child? Canice Nwosu observes that a  
32 child is;

33 A designated member of the family, whose status attracts certain degrees of sentiments, these sentiments cannot  
34 be ignored when the family is changing, because the family is an important social institution that functions as  
35 an organizer and stabilizer of social values of a given society (31). The right of the child therefore comprises the  
36 entitlements, privileges and obligations of the child as stated by conventions, natural justices, fair play and laws  
37 of the land. The deplorable state of most families in Africa notwithstanding government and nongovernmental  
38 organizations in Africa, appear to be responding to the global call to better the conditions of the child. The  
39 United Nations report on the state of the World's Children (2012) lends credence to this clarion call when it  
40 called on the international community to undertake the urgent actions that are necessary to realize the rights of  
41 every child everywhere without exception. Hodges confirms that; Child movement gained recognition only in the  
42 90s but it advocates the autonomy of children and constructs them as free agents capable of walking important  
43 decisions regarding their own lives (60)

44 The child is a minor and is commonly recognized in most cultures as a subordinate status. Thus in most  
45 communities, children are meant to be seen and not to be heard; even when they are even heard, the views  
46 expressed by them may not carry much weight when placed against the views expressed by adults. In some  
47 culture, birth order can affect a child's behaviour, personality and position in the family. Karen affirms that;  
48 The importance of birth order has its effect on a child's behaviour, personality and performance (2).

49 It is widely understood that during the preschool period, that young children begin to understand who they  
50 are in relation to others. It is at this timethat they move away from their parents, expanding social relationships  
51 and taking on the developmental task of building friendships with peers through communicative dance movement  
52 that will always serve as a watchdog to them in their daily activities towards their effective growth. The social  
53 use of communicative dance movement by children at their tender age, promotes a range of cognitive and learning  
54 skills such as taking turns, cues, sharing and understanding the perspectives of others. Pugh as cited by Deans  
55 Jan observes that; Social dance is for all children, it broadly educates, it embraces all aspects of dance that have  
56 educational value, it increases aesthetic education and it affects the total education of the child. (24)

57 Dance based on its sociological potency educates and inspires the young. It stretches the body and the mind  
58 of children to it helps them see beyond their superficial state and inspires them to develop a critical mind towards  
59 understanding what gave risk to the emergence and sustainability of any dance movement being thought to them.  
60 Deans expresses that; Social dance can be seen as the interpretation and expression of a child's ideas, feelings and  
61 sensory impressions expressed symbolically through natural, spontaneous and individual movement forms (143).

62 Dance as a sociological tool has at its core 'dance as an art' which brings into focus a framework that  
63 includes; creating, performing and appreciating. This framework provides opportunities for children to explore  
64 and communicate ideas, thoughts and feelings and at the same time involve themselves in creative thinking  
65 including imagining, improvising, problem solving, developing a movement vocabulary, decision making, selecting,  
66 sequencing, refining and appreciating. Smith Autard maintains that;

67 In relation to children viewing the dance of others, such an experience allows for the development of more  
68 sophisticated sensory awareness and encourages meta-cognition through an analytical process that involves the  
69 use of descriptive language, interpretation and critical judgments that fosters reflection upon personal creations  
70 and those of others (217).

71 The use of dance in children's theatre based on these scholarly findings is a holistic and integrated experience  
72 where children's cognitive, social and emotional learning is closely linked to their very aesthetic experience.

## 73 **2 II. The Essence of Awareness of Dance in Children's Theatre**

74 The core aim of awareness of dance in children's theatre is to educate the children that dance as an art form goes  
75 beyond mere movement of body or a teacher trying to put some steps together; rather, the use of dance while  
76 teaching the children helps them to understand its sociological effects of dance in their school curriculum base  
77 on the following; a. Dance as art represents creative self-expression through the medium of human movement.  
78 The essence of dance is to feel, create, compose, interpret, perform and respond. Smith John states that "dance  
79 in children's theatre is the physical expression of an idea developed though a process of research, inquiry and  
80 movement discovery" (24). So as the children inquire into dance, they gain skills in creating, performing, viewing  
81 and responding using traditional materials or latest technologies as working metaphors. b. The purpose of dance  
82 education in pre-school through high school is to broadly educate the children/ students in dance to appreciate  
83 dance as an art form and also promote physical activity for fitness. c. For the children to see and appreciate  
84 their bodies as communicative tools. When all these are understood, then the essence of awareness of dance in  
85 children's theatre becomes an indispensable tool.

## 86 **3 III.**

### 87 The Sociological Benefits of Dance on Child's Development

88 This gives a critical overview on how dance contributes in various forms towards the developmental stages of  
89 child's growth. The sociological benefits of dance in children's growth takes the communicative, corrective and  
90 interpretative essence of dance closer to the parents of the children or the society at large, who are ignorant at  
91 times about the importance of dance on a child's growth. Nellie Ma Caslin maintains that; Dance in particular  
92 integrates kinesthetic learning with motivating preschool children to not conceptualize abstract process. They  
93 primarily learn to think in the concrete reality of movement. Thus, learning the art of dance helps young children  
94 develop knowledge, skill and understanding about the world (54).

95 So sociological benefits of dance in child's growth can come in various forms such as; Based on these, the  
96 sociological benefits of dance in children's theatre encourage independent initiative and self-esteem and also  
97 contributes to a substantial enrichment in the teaching-learning process and in acquisition of cognitive and  
98 socio-emotional skills.

## 99 **4 IV.**

100 Elements to be considered in contextualizing dance in children's theatre There are some dance movements that  
101 are not meant for everybody, not of any aesthetics, and strictly out of bound for non-indigenes. The children are  
102 taught that, when such dance movements are being performed, it is strictly to actualize its ideal purpose. At

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103 this point also, the children are meant to understand that the dance movement becomes strictly for the initiates  
104 who are well trained in the choreographic movement of the dance and know how to interpret the communicative  
105 potency of the movement. b) Folklore Folklore serves as an important tool in creating dance movement in  
106 children's theatre. Some of the dance movements when contextualized in children theatre are reenacting the  
107 popular folklore stories into dance movements. The re-enactment of folklore into serious dance movements  
108 presents it as a didactic tool in the lives of developing children's moral standard.

## 109 **5 c) Occupation**

110 The people's occupation also affects their style, form and pattern of dancing. It is from the various dance  
111 styles or movements that people can differentiate where each dance performance emerges. The occupation of a  
112 particular community clarifies what gave rise to its dance movements and also it automatically aids in exposing  
113 the sociological potency behind the creation of that particular dance movement.

## 114 **6 V.**

115 Dance, a Sociological Tool in a Child's Moral Development: The Dancing Monster and Uzo as a Paradigm a)  
116 Synopsis This is a practical class production of 3rd year students in Theatre Arts, NnamdiAzikiwe University,  
117 Awka. It is a fifteen minutes dance production that centers on sensitizing the children using children's theatre  
118 performance on the side effects of disobedience, greed, lying, fighting and stealing. In the dance performance (the  
119 dancing monster & Uzo), Uzo being the lead character is a victim of all these vices. The mother of Uzo is seen as  
120 the person that misled him, According to the mother, Uzo is 'always right in anything he does, so he should not  
121 be punished at all'. In order to show how much she loves Uzo, she fondly calls him the "Special Egg". The over-  
122 protective nature of his mother, which his father is not in support of eventually lands Uzo into serious problems  
123 which he later regrets.

## 124 **7 VI.**

125 An Interpretation on the Sociological Essence in the Dancing Monster and Uzo Towards Child's Moral  
126 Development a) Favouritism Uzo is the only child and son of his parents and is highly favoured by his mother in  
127 so many ways. The issue of favouritism by Uzo's mother makes him to see himself as a "golden child" that cannot  
128 be touched by anybody. Based on the rhythmic dance movement, Uzo's mother semiotically assures him that 'he  
129 is free to do anything and as far as she exists that nobody born by a woman can harm or harass him including  
130 his father'.

## 131 **8 b) Clash of Interest**

132 This is the conflicting interest between the both parents on either to correct him or spare him. The symbolic  
133 dance movement of his father shows punishment and correction, while that of his mother shows that it is an  
134 abomination to flog or punish her son. On several occasions in the scenes of the dance performance, the mother  
135 is seen fighting her husband for beating or harassing their only child. This clash of interest really makes Uzo to  
136 see his father as a beast, while he sees the mother as a priceless treasure on earth.

137 Volume XV Issue II Version I The dance movement here portrays Uzo as a "professional liar". His high level of  
138 lies at any given time is always portrayed by the tempo of the drum. It was made clear in the performance that  
139 each time he lies, the tempo of the drum will go high and drop back again. Based on the symbolic interpretative  
140 movement of Uzo on stage, he was caught severally stealing, bullying or trying to commit one offence or the  
141 other. In any of the offences he commits, the mother is always there to protect him and make him feel that he  
142 is right. The mother can go any length to fight anybody that calls her son whom she fondly calls "special egg,"  
143 a liar. The protection and over assurance from the mother motivates Uzo to continue lying at free will.

144 VII.

## 145 **9 The Dancing Monster**

146 The dancing monster is just an imaginary symbolic figure. It is like a punishment that awaits any child that  
147 decides to disobey his/her parents. At a point in the dance performance, Uzo was so stubborn and so much under  
148 the protection of her mother that the father is no longer comfortable. As a result, his father decides to correct  
149 his son, his only child and make him independent and positive-minded. To help he achieve this, he employs  
150 some strong young men who kidnap Uzo, flog him rhythmically for 3 days to serve as a form of corrective  
151 punishment.

152 When Uzo was released, he turned a new leaf and his mother, having recovered from the shock of not seeing  
153 her son for days, then decides to de-emphasize the so much attachment she has on her son and embrace the adage  
154 of 'spare the rod and spoil the child'.

**155 10 VIII.**

**156 11 Conclusion**

**157** The essence of dance in children's theatre is to awaken their conscious that even though they are been entertained,  
**158** they should also understand and appreciate dance based on its informative potency. The core importance of dance  
**159** in the performance, sociologically, is to develop the children religiously, mentally and morally to run away from  
evil and accept virtues as their working maxim. <sup>1</sup>



Figure 1:

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