

Songs: An Expression of Venda Women's Emotion

P. E. Matshidze¹ and E. K. Klu²

¹*Department of Indigenous Knowledge Systems, ²Department of English,
University of Venda, South Africa*
E-mail: ¹<pfarello@univen.ac.za>, ²<asongkwesi@gmail.com>

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ABSTRACT Life today is full of stress and anxiety in both rural and urban areas. There is anecdotal evidence that music reduces adverse physiological and psychological stress. As women make the transition into womanhood they are likely to have challenges associated with their neonatal family. This paper explores how Venda women express their emotions through music. This qualitative aimed at gathering an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the rationale for such behaviour. Different songs were recorded and analyzed. The results showed that songs provided a sense of independence, which in turn contributes to a Venda woman's self-discovery and sense of identity. Songs can also serve as a creative outlet to control emotions and find ways of coping with difficult situations.

INTRODUCTION

According to McEntire (2015:180), people are living under stressful conditions, especially in metropolitan areas because of unemployment, poverty and the lack of basic amenities. This is not new in most rural areas, it has been in existence since time immemorial. In rural areas, women may decide to sing songs that comfort them as a way of dealing with the problem they are experiencing. It is a matter of fact that people have an inclination towards listening to music as a way of expressing one's self (Plamer 2010: 249; Xing et al. 2015: 625). Music, Venda songs in particular, are a way through which Venda women ventilate when they are unhappy. One is able to deduce their emotions from the lyrics of the songs. If a Venda woman is unhappy or she would like to address an issue bothering her, she will communicate through songs. This liberates worries and concerns and an "inner peace" journey begins. The sounds of the songs seem to cleanse her (Yao and Algase 2008: 109; Aldridge and Fachner 2013: 97).

What is Music Therapy?

According to Drapeau et al. (2009: 344), it is a way of reaching a patient and forming a patient-therapist connection through the medium of sound and music. Each individual music therapy patient has a set of therapeutic goals—anything from improved motor co-ordination to mental recovery—and music is used to try and achieve these goals. Often compared to occu-

pational therapy and physical therapy, music therapy simply uses music as its equipment. Traditional techniques such as music therapy are not only cheaper, but they can be just as effective as the most intensive medications (Van den Tol and Edwards 2013:450).

Functions of Music and Songs

According to Haviland and Gordon (1993: 42), songs are used for functions such as personal expression, communication, upliftment of human spirit, religious purposes, group identity, a way to pass on traditions, propaganda, dance, a form of protest, an agent of social change and storytelling. In most African customs, people express themselves through songs and dance. The lyrics of songs usually express the feelings of people about a certain subject or event. Often the event, which the song is about, and the facts and circumstances surrounding the event reflect the true meaning of the lyrics. Songs can also be sung to discourage actions that are not acceptable by a society. Thus, Stayt (1931: 109) opines that songs are used to exhibit people's emotions and behaviour. This sentiment is also echoed by Bradshaw et al. (2011: 115), who maintain that through music, people are able to express themselves and it serves as a pain reliever. Bradshaw et al. (2011: 115) further indicate that ethnomusicology helps heal some deep wounds.

During music sessions, songs are used as a creative and non-verbal medium through which specific difficulties are addressed. One of the

strengths of music therapy is that it allows people to express themselves even when words seem impossible. Thus through songs Venda women express themselves in situations wherein they cannot ordinarily voice their grievances.

At most times music helps Venda women to voice out their feelings. This form of expression allows them to release their frustration and possibly find an alternative means of communication. Thus ethnomusicology provides an avenue for the expression of their emotions. Music therapy is not beneficial to women only but it is also an effective way for older members of a household to know how they relate to each other. For these adults, the relaxing and de-stressing ability that ethnomusicology contributes helps a lot to alleviate pain (Cochrane 2011: 1489).

Kyung et al. (2013: 88) maintain that humans intrinsically respond to music, regardless of creed, colour or disability as such, music therapy is used to reach certain sets of outcomes. The techniques used include improvisation, singing, composing, listening, performance and movement to express oneself. Thus a voice is given to that which a person cannot express and this sets off the healing process. Helping people emotionally is quite important through music because such people are being assisted to cope with and overcome some of their difficulties. Also music reveals a lot about the society in which it is created be it a traditional song of an indigenous people, a Strauss waltz, a gospel song or a rock video. It reflects experience by creating feelings and responses in the listener. Like many art forms, music mirrors society, at times it raises questions about societal norms and values, and it has the power to bring about change. Thus one function of music is to sell products and feelings.

What psychological functions does music serve in everyday life? The literature leads one to conclude that the social functions of music are manifested in three principal ways: that is, in the management of self-identity, interpersonal relationships and mood. People normally turn to music to uplift themselves even further in happy times, or seek the comfort of music when melancholy strikes. However, in recent times researchers have sought to explain and quantify the way music impacts a person at an emotional level. Researching the links between melody and the mind indicates that listening to and playing music actually can alter how the brain, and there-

fore the body functions (Yao and Algase 2008: 108; Zhaoli et al. 2011: 160).

METHODOLOGY

The study is carried out in the qualitative paradigm because it sets out to describe, translate and reveal the characteristics of naturally occurring phenomenon in society as well as getting a holistic view of the phenomena. Banister et al. (1994: 13) and also Creswell (2003: 104) are of the view that qualitative research is an attempt to capture the sense that lies within, and that structures what a person says about what s/he does, an exploration, elaboration and systematization of the significance of an identified phenomenon as well as an illuminative representation of the meaning of a delimited issue or problem. According to Mouton et al. (1999: 56), this type of approach facilitates the process of interaction between the researcher and the target group. Thus, qualitative research seeks out the 'why', not the 'how' of its topic through the analysis of unstructured information-things like interview transcripts, emails, notes, feedback forms, photos and videos.

Two data collection techniques were used to collect data for this study, that is, participant observation and semi-structured interviews. The researchers used participant observation, which combines participation in the lives of the people under study with the maintenance of a professional distance that allows objective observation and recording of data. The researchers also observed, asked questions and jotted down what they saw and heard. The researchers also used semi-structured interviews. This is a common method of data collection to inform the researcher about the participants' social life. This helps the researchers understand the closed worlds of individuals, families and communities. This type of methodology helps maximize the flow of valid reliable information (Fetterman 1998: 56).

Data Analysis

The researchers used a digital voice recorder and a notebook, with the consent of the respondents, in order to capture the information from the respondents. Data was collected for the study in Tshivenda and later translated into English. The researchers analyzed the transcribed

data using the seven steps proposed by Creswell (2009: 132). All transcripts were carefully read by the researchers in order to get the whole sense. Songs with the same theme were transcribed and put under the same category.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

King et al. (2015:630) opines that people use songs to vent out their frustrations and anger. It is also a common cause that when people are happy they also play music. Thus, music plays a therapeutic role in one's life. There are different songs that are sung in different contexts, for example, songs that are sung when a woman wishes to communicate a message to the in-laws. Ordinarily, a woman may not say something that is bothering her to her in-laws directly because she may be considered as ill-mannered. A woman may feel she is being treated unfairly if, for example, she is given tons of mealies to pound in order to provide mealie-meal for the whole family. This is quite a tedious task and she can ventilate by singing such songs.

Songs Sung When a Woman Wants to Convey a Message to Her in-Laws

Song 1

U sinda ndi sinda ndi ndothe 'I pound mealies alone'
U la ndi mabotshe mabotshe 'Those who eat, eat
 with a mouth full of
 food'

When a woman is doing a difficult chore, she sings in order to lessen the burden. She sings this song very slowly so that each and everyone in the household understands what she is singing about. The singing is usually done at dawn when everything is still and there is less noise. The woman could be singing from a strategic point where the one that is being addressed will be able to get the message, particularly the mother-in-law.

Song 2

Mbili! Nne ndi sinda I pound while I am seated
ndo dzula
Mbilu yanga I duga mulilo My heart is in turmoil
Mbilu yanga I lwa My heart is fighting with
na khana the chest
Inwe iri litsha u shuma It says I must stop work
Inwe iri shuma shuma It says I must continue
 work

Vhuhadzi ndi nama ya thole Marriage life is difficult to
 handle
Ha fhufhuma ria fhunzhela If anything goes wrong we
 are in trouble
Vhuhadzi a vhu na muthakhi Marriage life does not have
 a perfectionist
Nne ndi sinda ndo beba I pound mealies with a baby
nwana on my back
Nge a hanwa nga makhulu Her granny does not like to
 carry her
Vhe makhulu wawe ndi She says my back is her
mutana granny

This is an internal dialogue where a woman is pounding mealies in the early hours of the morning. It is different from the first scenario because she is pounding with a baby on her back. The mother-in-law does not bother babysitting while she is engaged in doing household chores. The woman seems very depressed because she keeps on saying, "my heart is in turmoil". "Even if you do well nobody recognises you", hence, she says, "there is no one who is perfect in marriage life."

Songs Sung When a Mother-in-Law Wants to Convey a Message to the Bride as a Way of Reprimanding Her Not to Leave the Marital Home Due to Family Conflicts

It is common cause that couples sometimes experience conflict in their marriage. This might even lead to the wife abandoning the marital home to go back to live with her parents. Among the vuhVenda if such a situation arises there has to be a mediator between the two families. If the mediation works and the wife returns to her marital home, the mother-in-law might communicate with her through a song such as below:

Song 3

Mbuyavhuhadzi mbuyelela 'The one who has forsaken
 the marital home you
 have come back again'
Yo vhuela zwila zwa 'You have thought of what
madekwe happened yester night'
Yo vhuela zwone mbuelela 'You have come back for
 it'
Yo vhuela zwila zwa madekwe 'You have thought of what
 happened yester night'

This song suggests that the woman has come back for sexual intercourse. It is mostly sung by the in-laws, particularly, if they were not in favour of the woman returning to her marital home. This is also a way in which the in-laws alert the daughter-in-law that staying alone is not acceptable because when she was back

home she thought about her husband. This is one way of discouraging her from forsaking her marital home in future.

Another song may be sung reminding the woman that she is no longer a girl. If she decides and has consented to marriage she must behave likewise.

Song 4

<i>Ni songo ri ndi mulovha</i>	'Do not think it is yesterday'
<i>No ima dzikhoneni</i>	'Standing at street corners'
<i>Ni tshi amba nga lufuno</i>	'Talking about love'
<i>Namusi ni musadzi</i>	'Today you are a married woman'
<i>Na vhone ni vha vhudze</i>	'You must tell them'
<i>Uri namusi ni musadzi</i>	'That you are now a married woman'
<i>Na sa ralo a ni nga u fhati</i>	'If you do not do that you will never have a family'
<i>Namusi ni musadzi</i>	'Today you are a married woman'

Songs Sung When a Mother-in-Law Wants to Convey a Message to the Bride if she is Unable to Conceive

According to Olivier et al. (1995:109), when an African woman is married, the in-laws invest in her reproductive capacities. Their expectation is that when she is married she is going to give birth. If this expectation is not met, then they become very frustrated. The practice would be if the woman is unable to give birth, her sister is married to the husband in order to procreate on her behalf, a practice referred to as surrogate. This situation brings shame to the family. The disappointment is often reflected in songs. The mother-in-law and/or her relatives may sing the following song.

Song 5

<i>Matakadza mbiluni</i>	What makes the heart happy is a baby'
<i>ndi nwana</i>	
<i>O tshutshu baby, ndi nwana</i>	Oh baby, is a baby'

Songs Sung When a Woman Wants to Convey a Message to the In-Laws if the Husband has neglected her

In some cases, a woman would find out that her husband has abandoned her and maybe he does not even have sexual intercourse with her

any longer. This might happen if the husband is having extramarital affairs. Instead of the wife confronting the husband about the issue, she might decide to vent her frustration in a song. The song might not be addressed to the husband but to the mother-in-law who might seem to be in favour of the extramarital affair. She asks for a string to tie her vagina so that she will no longer feel aroused.

Song 6

<i>Inwi mawee zwo dovha</i>	'Mother, that thing is happening again'
<i>Ni nga mpha lutale nda</i>	'Please give me a string to tie with
<i>vhofha ngalwo</i>	
<i>Zwo dovha</i>	'It has happened again.'
<i>Mpheni lutale ndi vhofhe</i>	Give me a string to tie with
<i>ngalwo zwo dovha</i>	
<i>Zwo dovha</i>	'It has happened again.'
<i>Tsha afha a tshi vhudzwi</i>	What is here cannot be told to anyone
<i>muthu</i>	
<i>Zwo dovha</i>	'It has happened again.'

Songs Sung By a Man's Concubine to Convey a Message to the Wife to Remind Her that She is in Love with Her Husband

Women may sing songs in order to provoke a concubine's wife. Suppose a man is having an extramarital affair, his concubine may try to show the wife that she is truly in love with the husband. When there is traditional dance (*malende*), the woman may sing a song trying to show the depth of their love.

Song 7

<i>A si lwone holu lwanga,</i>	'My love is overwhelming,
<i>lu atsa</i>	it is so great'
<i>Lufuno lwo tuwa na</i>	'My love is going down the
<i>bada wee</i>	road'
<i>Lu a tsa</i>	'It is going down, we are madly in love'
<i>A si luya lu khou tuwa</i>	'There it is going'
<i>Lu a tsa</i>	'It is going down, we are madly in love'

Songs Sung When a Woman Wants to Convey a Message to the Husband's Concubine to Show Disgust of the Affair

Song 8

<i>Nduni yanga, ahee ndo</i>	'In my hut, I have found you'
<i>li wana</i>	
<i>A thi funi mariphoza</i>	'I do not like plastic women shoes'

Nduni yanga, ahee ndo li wana

'In my hut, I have found you'

Nduni yanga thi funi mahihi

'In my hut, I do not like to hear sounds of lovers'

Vho nkhakhela

'You have wronged me'

A jealous wife who thinks that her husband is cheating may indicate that she suspects that he might be having an affair.

Song 9

Heleli wee he leli

Heleli wee he leli'

Kha vha vule gethe nne ri tshimbile

'Open the gate I want to go'

Vhasadzi vha fphano

'These women proposes, they

vha na luambiso vha

want to take

vho toda u ndzhiela

Taki's father (my husband)'

Khotsi aTaki

Vhasadzi vha fphano

When you find them in a

na vha wana halwani

shebeen, they ask

todou ri ni vha fhe zukwa

a five cent piece'

Heleli wee he leli

Heleli wee he leli'

Kha vha vule gethe

'Open the gate I want to go'

nne ri tshimbile

CONCLUSION

Songs shape people and society in many ways. They are the vehicles for literature and poetic expressions. Songs are also instruments used to propagate oral history, myths and beliefs shared by a community and this is transmitted from generation to generation. Women have been oppressed since time immemorial, and they are not so vocal about issues that relate to them. They may not voice their feelings and they would bottle those feelings. Therefore, most women would use songs as an outlet to vent their true feelings. Thus, it is important to pay attention to the lyrics of a song instead of just listening superficially.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Music therapy should be encouraged, as it is a relatively cheap means of relieving people of their pains. Music therapy should also be considered as an alternative to seeking medical care. When people sing for whatever reason, care should be taken it is context appropriate.

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