

The aesthetics of the Okanga dance of the Enu-ani people of Delta State

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Abstract

This study investigates the aesthetics of the Okanga dance, a traditional performance of the Enu-ani people in Delta State, Nigeria, elucidating its cultural and artistic essence. Anchored in the theoretical frameworks of aesthetics and performance, the research examines elements such as music, costumes, movements, body language, and formations. Employing qualitative methods—participant observation, interviews, and multimedia documentation—the findings reveal Okanga dance as a dynamic interplay of rhythmic traditional music, vibrant costumes adorned with intricate designs, fluid and symbolic movements, expressive body language, and coordinated group formations. These elements collectively reinforce the dance's role as a medium for cultural expression and non-verbal communication, deeply rooted in the socio-economic and spiritual lives of the Enu-ani people. The study underscores the significance of Okanga dance in fostering communal identity and cultural continuity, advocating for its adaptation and preservation amid globalisation. Recommendations include integrating Okanga dance into professional choreography, promoting research through academic and cultural initiatives, and supporting its documentation via national festivals to protect this intangible heritage. The conclusions affirm that Okanga dance is not merely an art form but a repository of cultural memory and identity, offering a powerful medium for promoting Igbo cultural values globally. The dance can transcend local boundaries by leveraging its aesthetic and performative elements, enabling broader recognition and appreciation. This research is a foundation for further explorations in African traditional dance studies and provides actionable insights for cultural policymakers and educators committed to preserving indigenous art forms.

Keywords: Okanga Dance, Enu-ani Culture, Dance Aesthetics, Traditional Igbo Performance

Introduction

Dance is an art form involving body movements in rhythm to music or beats, used for expression, social interaction, or worship (Bakare, 1994). It serves as a means of non-verbal communication, evident in imitating animal movements, retelling hunting experiences, and the rhythmic behaviours seen in mating or hunting animals (Thompson, 1974). The definition of dance is influenced by social, cultural, aesthetic, and moral frameworks. For this presentation, *dance* will be defined as a human activity involving body movements in response to rhythm or music, which can be vibrant for spiritual communication and social interaction (Graham, 1998). Dance can be considered a derivative art form from music, with many dances accompanied by music that dictates the steps (Nwala, 1985). Music enhances human expression of mood and attitude, just as dance visually represents and recreates these feelings through movements (Omatsola, 1998). Dance and music are inseparably linked, complementing each other (Schechner, 1985). Although some dance experts advocate for dance without music through mime, this relies on mental imagination to express feelings through meaningful movements (Turner, 1988).

Dance is an ephemeral, performance-based art. Nearly all communities in Nigeria have distinct forms of dance, each within its ritual origin, social milieu, and functional objectives (Okeke, 2016). These dances are dynamic, constantly evolving and reflecting the cultural state of the region (Asante & Asante, 1990). African dance, deeply embedded in culture and life, is classified into ritual and social categories. Ritual dance is rooted in religious aspects, using symbols, music, and metaphors, while social dance, usually for entertainment or moral cleansing, has less severe content and form (Goffman, 1969). In Igbo, dance is intertwined with the people's socio-economic lives. The Enu-ani people in the Eastern part of the Niger Delta are predominantly farmers, and their dances reflect their socio-economic life, tied to the fertile land of the region (Kofworola, 1987). Dance embodies the symbolic and cultural aspects of the people, uniting communities through shared identity, faith, and values (Feibleman, 1949). Enu-ani people often dance at festivals like the Iwu festival of Ogwashi-uku and Ubulu-uku to honour their deity or give thanks for received favours (Nwala, 1985).

Aesthetics, derived from the Greek word 'aisthanestai' meaning 'perception', is a mode of intellectual energy applied to actual cases to judge dance performances (Kelly, 1998). Aesthetics and dance are inseparable; a good dance is inherently beautiful. The aesthetics of African dance primarily lie in its presentation, which reveals each element of aesthetics, including music, costume, make-up, and accoutrements, playing vital roles in traditional and technically choreographed dance (Graham, 1998). Performance integrates skills and knowledge to produce valuable results involving either individuals or teams, characterised by the quality and effectiveness of their performance (Elger, 2015). This paper proposes to appreciate the beauty of Okanga dance, a traditional dance of the Enu-ani people in Delta State.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two primary theoretical frameworks: aesthetics and performance theories. These frameworks provide the conceptual tools to analyse and appreciate the Okanga dance's artistic and performative qualities. Aesthetics, a branch of philosophy, examines the nature of beauty, art, and taste and the creation and appreciation of beauty. Derived from the Greek word *aisthanestai*, meaning 'perception,' aesthetics was first formally conceptualised by Alexander Baumgarten in 1737 (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2021). Baumgarten described aesthetics as a mode of intellectual energy applied to actual cases, which can be used to judge art forms, including dance. Aesthetics involves critical reflection on art, culture, and

nature, focusing on sensory or emotional values, often called judgments of sentiment and taste (Kelly, 1998). This framework is pertinent to this study as it helps assess the visual and sensory appeal of the Okanga dance, considering factors such as beauty, grace, and artistic coherence.

Beauty in aesthetics is intrinsic and often linked to the pleasure of engaging with an art form. As Nehamas (2015) posits, finding something beautiful is akin to believing that integrating it into one's life will enhance one's overall well-being. This perspective underscores the value placed on the Okanga dance by the Enu-ani people, where the dance is not merely a form of entertainment but a vital cultural expression that enhances communal and spiritual life. The theoretical underpinnings of aesthetics also involve understanding the harmony and balance within an art form. Feibleman (1949) articulates this by explaining that beauty is the qualitative aspect of the intrinsic relations of things, while goodness refers to the extrinsic relations. This distinction helps evaluate the Okanga dance, which combines rhythmic music, intricate costumes, and symbolic movements to create a harmonious and aesthetically pleasing performance.

Performance theory, developed by scholars like Victor Turner and Richard Schechner, explores the performative nature of societal events and daily life. Turner (1988) emphasised the performative aspect of rituals and social interactions, suggesting that performance codes govern these activities. Schechner (1985) further articulated that performance should be viewed as a cross-cultural phenomenon encompassing everyday life, social rituals, and artistic expressions. Performance theory is crucial for understanding how individuals present themselves and their actions within a societal context. Goffman (1959) introduced that life is a performance, where individuals constantly manage their impressions to fit societal expectations. This theoretical lens applies to the Okanga dance, as the dancers perform for entertainment and convey cultural values and social norms through their movements and expressions. Schechner's framework includes vital principles such as the presentation of self, restored behaviour, and expressive culture. He argues that performance studies are inherently interdisciplinary and intercultural, which is evident in the Okanga dance's ability to convey complex cultural narratives through choreography (Schechner, 1985). The dance embodies restored behaviour, reenacting traditional movements to preserve and communicate cultural heritage.

Elger (2002) expands on performance theory by introducing concepts such as performance mindset, immersion, and reflective practice. He asserts that achieving optimal performance involves engaging performers in a positive emotional state, immersing them in enriching environments, and encouraging reflective practice. These principles are evident in the Okanga dance, where performers are deeply immersed in the cultural and spiritual significance of the dance, leading to a highly expressive and meaningful performance. Performance theory also highlights the importance of community and collaboration in enhancing performance quality. According to Schechner (1985), a performance's success relies on the collective effort of the participants, which aligns with the communal nature of the Okanga dance. The dance involves the performers and the audience, who actively participate and contribute to the overall experience. The theoretical frameworks of aesthetics and performance provide a comprehensive basis for analysing the Okanga dance. Aesthetics allows for the appreciation of the dance's beauty and sensory appeal, while performance theory offers insights into the social and cultural dynamics that underpin the dance. Together, these frameworks enable a deeper understanding of the Okanga dance as an artistic and cultural phenomenon.

In recent years, dance aesthetics has seen significant advancements, particularly in integrating digital media and globalisation. Scholars like Foster (2011) and Lepecki (2016) have explored the dynamic nature of traditional dances in a contemporary context, focusing on how these forms evolve in response to global audiences and technological mediation. Foster's work on corporeality in dance highlights how the

body becomes a site of cultural negotiation. It is particularly relevant to the Okanga dance as it moves from a localised ritual form to a performative spectacle accessible to wider audiences. Similarly, Lepecki's (2016) exploration of dance's political and cultural implications can provide deeper insights into the performative aspects of the Okanga dance, especially in how it conveys socio-political messages through symbolic movements.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design to explore the aesthetics of Okanga dance among the Enu-ani people. The qualitative approach was chosen due to its effectiveness in providing in-depth insights into cultural practices and the meanings attributed to them (Creswell, 2014). The research design included participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and the collection of oral histories, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the dance's aesthetic and cultural significance. Participant observation was a crucial method used in this study. The researcher attended festivals and ceremonies where Okanga dance was performed, engaging actively and passively in the events. This method allowed for collecting detailed, first-hand accounts of the dance's execution and the audience's reactions, essential for understanding its aesthetic appeal (Spradley, 1980). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with various stakeholders, including dance performers, cultural custodians, and members of the Enu-ani community. Approximately thirty individuals were interviewed, including three cultural custodians and several dance masters and mistresses. This approach provided rich, qualitative data, as respondents could elaborate on their experiences and perspectives regarding Okanga dance (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Oral histories were collected to capture the historical and cultural context of Okanga dance. These narratives were gathered from older members of the community, who provided valuable insights into the evolution and significance of the dance. Oral histories are particularly useful in ethnographic studies for preserving and understanding indigenous knowledge and practices (Perks & Thomson, 2015).

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who could provide the most relevant and insightful information regarding Okanga dance. This method ensured that the sample included individuals with deep knowledge and experience related to the dance, thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the findings (Patton, 2015). The primary research instruments included observation checklists, interview guides, and recording devices (audio and video). These tools facilitated the systematic data collection, ensuring that all relevant aspects of the dance and its performance were documented comprehensively (Bernard, 2017). Observation checklists were used to systematically record the various elements of Okanga dance, such as costume, music, choreography, and audience interaction. This tool helped maintain consistency and focus during field observations (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). Semi-structured interview guides were developed to ensure that key topics were covered while allowing flexibility for participants to express their views freely. The guides included questions about the history, significance, and aesthetic elements of Okanga dance (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The data collection process was conducted in three phases:

1. **Pre-Field Preparation:** This phase involved developing research instruments, obtaining ethical approval, and familiarising with the cultural context. The researcher, being a native of the region, used her knowledge of the local language and customs to build rapport with participants, facilitating a smoother data collection process (Creswell, 2014).
2. **Fieldwork:** During the fieldwork phase, the researcher attended several festivals and ceremonies, observed and participated in Okanga dance performances, and conducted interviews and oral history sessions. Detailed field notes were taken, and all performances and interviews were recorded using audio and video

equipment to ensure accurate documentation (Emerson et al., 2011). 3. Post-Fieldwork Analysis: The recordings and notes were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis after data collection. This involved coding the data to identify patterns and themes related to the aesthetics and cultural significance of Okanga dance. The analysis was guided by the theoretical frameworks of aesthetics and performance (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The data analysis process involved a thematic analysis of the transcriptions from interviews, participant observations, and oral histories. Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework for thematic analysis, the researcher first familiarised herself with the data through repeated readings of field notes and interview transcripts. Next, initial codes were generated based on recurring patterns related to key aesthetic elements, such as music, costume, and choreography. The data were then organised into broader themes, such as 'cultural symbolism in dance' and 'ritualistic functions of music.' These themes were reviewed and refined through peer debriefing sessions with experts in African dance studies to ensure the reliability of the findings. This rigorous coding process allowed for identifying overt and subtle aesthetic principles in the Okanga dance, enhancing the depth of the analysis. The study's thematic analysis ensures that the aesthetic elements discussed are grounded in systematic and verifiable qualitative data.

Main Analysis

The Enu-ani people are the Igbo-speaking inhabitants of Delta State. Their diverse origins contribute to a rich cultural tapestry that includes influences from Nshi in Anambra State and Benin in Edo State. For instance, Ogwashi-Ukwu, one of the prominent Enu-ani towns, has roots in these areas, with many villages referred to as 'Umu Nshi,' meaning Nshi children. This bicultural heritage is evident in their cultural expressions, including costume, dance, mime, music, norms, and kingship, which can be traced to Igbo and Edo origins. Okanga dance is a vigorous and dynamic funeral dance traditionally performed for the burial of older men and warriors, though it has also been used for older women. This dance is an integral part of the funeral rites, intended to appease and celebrate the spirits of the deceased ancestors. Elaborate funeral rites are necessary to secure the goodwill of these spirits, ensuring they continue to guide and protect the living. As one respondent noted, "Okanga gives pleasure to the spirit of the dead, ensuring their goodwill" (Personal Interview, 2023). The dance uses specific musical instruments such as talking drums, small metal, and wooden gongs. These instruments are played by professional Okanga players and members of the deceased's family, who are part of the dancers participating actively, highlighting the communal involvement in the performance. Traditional staging systems for Okanga dance include arena and semi-circle configurations, where performers are surrounded by the audience, creating an intimate and immersive experience (Nwankwo, 2018).

Audience engagement is a crucial aspect of Okanga dance. The dance captivates spectators with its creative movements and cultural significance. Audience reactions vary depending on the occasion, but there is always a communal involvement where members and friends of the deceased join in the dance, enhancing the participatory nature of the event. During the "Igba-Ilo" ceremony, for instance, Okanga dancers, often from the deceased's family, form a line of 8 to 10 rows, leading a procession through the streets. The audience usually joins in, responding to songs and synchronising their movements with the drum beats (Okeke, 2016). The "inye-nni" rite, or feeding of the dead, is performed under the high beat of drumming by the Okanga musicians. The head of the group breaks the last meal, which is presented on an earthen plate, and places it on the coffin. This rite symbolises the last feeding from the deceased's wife, culminating in the "Iya-Isi" rite, which physically separates the widow from her dead husband. During this rite, two strong women from the Umu-Ada group

carry the widow around the coffin, lowering her buttocks at the four corners. This poignant ceremony underscores the deep cultural roots and the emotional resonance of the Okanga dance (Ezeala, 2015).

The aesthetic elements of Okanga dance, such as music, costume, dance movements, body language, and dance formation, are deeply intertwined with theoretical concepts of aesthetics and performance. **Music:** The rhythmic beat, created by traditional instruments like the metal gong, talking drums, and samba drums, sets the pace for the dance. As Ilozue (2015) explains, "The combination of these instruments creates a unique and captivating sound that engages the audience." This musical rhythm not only guides the dancers' movements but also enhances the aesthetic appeal of the performance. **Costume:** The vibrant and bold colours of the costumes, such as red, yellow, green, and blue, symbolise the cultural identity of the Igbo people. The intricate designs and patterns, often adorned with embroidery and beading, add richness and texture to the visual presentation (Okeke, 2016). As one dancer mentioned, "Our costumes tell the story of our heritage and bring our history to life" (Personal Interview, 2023). **Dance Movements:** The fluidity and grace of the dance movements, characterised by rhythmic synchronisation with the music, are integral to the aesthetic appeal of Okanga dance. Each gesture and movement is symbolic, conveying specific cultural messages. For instance, some movements express joy and celebration, while others convey solemnity or reverence (Nwankwo, 2018). This symbolic use of dance movements aligns with the performance theory's emphasis on non-verbal communication and social signalling (Goffman, 1969). **Body Language:** Facial expressions, posture, and hand gestures enhance the dance's emotional and spiritual essence. Facial expressions communicate emotions, from joy to sorrow, creating a deeper connection with the audience. "The expressions on the dancers' faces tell a story that words cannot," remarked a spectator (Observation Notes, 2023). This aspect of body language is crucial in conveying the cultural values of the Igbo people, emphasising strength, resilience, and community (Ilozue, 2015). **Dance Formation:** The use of group formations, such as circles or lines, and the strategic use of space and symmetry add depth and texture to the dance. These formations enhance the visual appeal and reflect the cultural importance of community and cooperation. The dynamic changes in formation during the dance create an engaging visual experience for the audience, highlighting the adaptability and flexibility valued in Igbo culture (Okeke, 2016).

The empirical findings from observations and interviews provide strong support for the theoretical insights into the aesthetics and performance of Okanga dance. For example, the music's rhythmic beats and call-and-response techniques align with the aesthetic principles of engaging the audience and creating a sense of unity. The elaborate costumes and symbolic dance movements reflect the aesthetic theory's emphasis on beauty and cultural significance. In practice, these theoretical concepts manifest vividly in the performances observed. During one festival, the intricate patterns of the dancers' movements and the vibrant costumes created a mesmerising spectacle that captivated the audience. The participatory nature of the dance, where audience members joined the dancers, illustrated the social and communal aspects emphasised in performance theory. Moreover, integrating ritualistic elements, such as the "inye-nni" and "Iya-Isi" rites, underscores the deep cultural and spiritual connections inherent in Okanga dance. These elements not only enhance the aesthetic experience but also serve to reinforce the cultural identity and communal bonds of the Enu-ani people.

Theory and Empirical Findings

This section connects theoretical discussions with empirical observations of Okanga dance, comprehensively understanding its aesthetic and performative elements. The

theories of aesthetics and performance serve as the foundation for analysing the dance's various components, such as music, costume, dance movements, body language, and dance formations. Music is an essential component of Okanga dance, characterised by its rhythmic beats created using traditional musical instruments. The primary instruments include the metal gong, talking drums, and samba drums. The *agogo* (metal gong in Enu-ani) provides the melody, while the talking and samba drums set the rhythmic pace. This combination of instruments creates a unique and captivating sound that guides the dancers' movements and engages the audience (Ilozue, 2015).

The use of rhythm in Okanga dance music is particularly noteworthy. The consistent and infectious beat the various instruments produce ensures synchronisation among the dancers. This rhythmic unity creates an immersive experience for the audience, enhancing the overall aesthetic appeal of the performance (Nwankwo, 2018). Call-and-response techniques are another significant element of Okanga dance music. This involves a lead singer or musician singing or playing a phrase, followed by a response from the rest of the group. This interaction adds depth and complexity to the music, fostering community and unity among the performers (Ezeala, 2015). The lyrics of Okanga dance music, often in the Igbo language, are poetic and metaphorical, conveying cultural narratives and messages. These lyrics enhance the music's authenticity and cultural relevance, contributing to the dance's overall aesthetics (Okeke, 2016).

Costumes in Okanga dance are designed to enhance the visual appeal and reflect cultural identity. Traditionally, Enu-ani dancers wear *akwa ocha* (white cloth). However, due to the high maintenance of white cloth, dancers from different villages have adopted bright-coloured red, yellow, green, and blue fabrics. These colours symbolise cultural identity and infuse the dance with vibrancy and energy (Okeke, 2016). Costumes are often adorned with intricate embroidery, beading, and other embellishments, adding richness and texture. These designs draw from Igbo cultural heritage, enhancing the dance's aesthetic appeal (Ezeala, 2015). Make-up, another critical component, is applied in bold, bright colours like red and black. These colours are used in distinctive patterns unique to Okanga dance, unifying the group's appearance. Facial markings using *uli*, a natural dye, symbolise cultural values and beliefs, reinforcing cultural identity and tradition (Nwankwo, 2018; Ilozue, 2015).

The dance movements in Okanga dance are characterised by fluidity and grace, with dancers moving rhythmically and in sync with the music. These movements are smooth and natural, integral to the dance's aesthetic appeal (Ezeala, 2015). Gestures and symbolism play crucial roles in Okanga dance movements. Each gesture conveys cultural messages or values, such as joy, reverence, or solemnity. This symbolic use of movements adds meaning to the performance, making it a rich cultural expression (Nwankwo, 2018). Group dynamics and cooperation are emphasised in Okanga dance. Dancers move in unison, contributing to the dance's overall aesthetic appeal. The choreography often involves multiple dancers, each playing a specific role, demonstrating the importance of community and collective performance (Ilozue, 2015). The synchronisation of movements with music highlights the importance of rhythm and timing. Dancers carefully choreograph their movements to match the music's beat and tempo, creating a harmonious and engaging performance (Okeke, 2016).

Body language in Okanga dance includes facial expressions, posture, and hand gestures, all used to convey the dance's emotional and spiritual essence. Facial expressions communicate emotions like joy, sorrow, and reverence, connecting the dancers and the audience (Ezeala, 2015). Posture in Okanga dance is upright and balanced, emanating movements from the centre of gravity. This posture reflects strength, resilience, and cultural values while allowing for fluid and graceful movements (Ilozue, 2015). Hand gestures in Okanga dance express various emotions and ideas, each with a specific meaning. For instance, a raised hand might symbolise victory, while a downward hand could indicate humility or submission. These gestures

add complexity and depth to the dance, allowing nuanced expression (Nwankwo, 2018). Spatial awareness and movement are crucial in Okanga dance. Dancers move purposefully and intentionally, contributing to the dance's aesthetic appeal. The choreography creates dynamic visual experiences, with dancers moving in and out of different formations, reflecting cultural values of community and cooperation (Okeke, 2016).

Dance formations in Okanga dance involve group patterns that add depth and texture to the performance. Dancers form circles, lines, or semi-circles, each formation conveying different meanings and emotions. Group formations emphasise cooperation and community cultural values (Ezeala, 2015). Spatial design in Okanga dance is intentional, with movements contributing to the overall aesthetic appeal. The spatial arrangement creates depth and perspective, enhancing the performance's visual engagement (Nwankwo, 2018). Symmetry and asymmetry are used in dance formations to create balance and harmony or tension and contrast. These elements add complexity to the dance, allowing for expressive and nuanced performances (Okeke, 2016). Formation changes are dynamic and engaging, with dancers moving between patterns to convey emotions and meanings. These changes reflect adaptability and flexibility, vital cultural values among the Igbo people (Ilozue, 2015).

The integration of contemporary dance aesthetics reinforces the cultural significance of Okanga dance but also highlights its adaptability in a globalised world. By employing performance theory in conjunction with modern aesthetic principles, this study reveals that Okanga dance, while deeply rooted in local tradition, possesses the potential for reinterpretation and recontextualisation. These findings underscore the importance of further interdisciplinary research to explore how traditional African dances can maintain cultural integrity while engaging with modern artistic and globalised platforms.

Conclusion

Igbo music, dance, and aesthetics have gained recognition on a global scale, demonstrating the rich cultural heritage and performative values embedded within traditional Igbo dances. Okanga dance, a traditional Igbo dance from the Enu-ani people of Delta State, epitomises these aesthetic and performative standards. The main objective of this research was to provide a comprehensive understanding of the aesthetic values of Okanga dance and how these findings can serve as practical tools for researchers and cultural development experts interested in preserving and promoting this cultural heritage. The study reveals that Okanga dance is a complex interplay of music, costume, dance movement, body language, and dance formation. These elements contribute to the overall aesthetic experience, making Okanga dance a captivating and meaningful performance. Music in Okanga dance is characterised by rhythmic beats and traditional instruments such as the *agogo*, talking drums, and samba drums, creating an engaging auditory experience (Ilozue, 2015; Nwankwo, 2018). The costumes, with their bright colours and intricate designs, enhance the visual appeal, reflecting the cultural identity of the Igbo people (Ezeala, 2015; Okeke, 2016). Dance movements emphasise fluidity, gestures, and group dynamics, while body language, including facial expressions and posture, conveys the emotional and spiritual essence of the dance (Ezeala, 2015; Ilozue, 2015; Nwankwo, 2018). Dance formations create visually appealing patterns and shapes, adding depth and texture to the performance (Okeke, 2016).

The connection between theoretical frameworks and empirical findings is crucial in understanding Okanga dance. Aesthetics, as a philosophical inquiry, provides a lens through which to evaluate the beauty and artistic value of the dance (Graham, 1998). On the other hand, performance theory offers insights into the performative nature of

societal actions and interactions (Schechner, 1985; Turner, 1988). These theories underscore the importance of presentation, cultural context, and performative excellence in Okanga dance. Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed to preserve and promote Okanga dance:

1. Cultural Sensitivity and Adaptation: When performing Okanga dance for audiences unfamiliar with the myths and customs of the Enu-ani people, removing any elements that might be considered offensive is essential. This ensures cultural sensitivity and broadens the appeal of the dance (Bakare, 1994).
2. Global Relevance: Professional choreographers should explore and recreate Okanga dance, emphasising its aesthetic values while adapting it to global audiences. This approach can help transform the dance into an appreciable form worldwide (Asante & Asante, 1990).
3. Support for Dance Research: Dance research must be promoted through educational institutions, the Ministry of Arts and Culture, and the National Orientation Agency. This can lead to discovering and celebrating more Nigerian dances, enriching the global dance landscape (Kofworola, 1987).
4. National Dance Festivals: In addition to the National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFEST) and a few state carnivals, more national festivals incorporating traditional dances and music are needed. Such events can foster national cohesion and unity by bringing together diverse cultural expressions (Turner, 1988).
5. Documentation and Preservation: Given dance's ephemeral nature, it is essential to document and preserve traditional dances to protect cultural heritage. Efforts should be made to classify and archive information related to Okanga dance, ensuring its survival for future generations (Omatsola, 1998).

The study concludes that Okanga dance is a vibrant cultural expression and a valuable asset that can contribute to cultural preservation and promotion. By understanding and harnessing its aesthetic and performative elements, Okanga dance can gain recognition and appreciation locally and globally. This research provides a foundation for further studies and practical applications in the field of cultural development, ensuring that the rich heritage of the Enu-ani people continues to thrive.

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