

ABSTRACT

Children's right to participate in cultural and artistic life is enshrined in policy documents yet in practice, it is only considered when other basic rights have been fulfilled. Theatrical genres in ECD are privileged mainly for their functional values rather than artistic merits. Analyses of literary genres dominate scholarly works with less regard for the dynamics of performance which characterize indigenous theatre and children's artistic culture. With a focus on Ugenya Sub-County, the study sought to analyze the place of indigenous theatre in ECD by determining theatrical genres employed by children and caregivers, analyzing how children and caregivers engaged with indigenous theatre genres and establishing factors that enhanced or inhibited engagement with indigenous theatre. The study was guided by postcolonial theory as advanced by, Bhabha (1994), Spivak (1990) and Said (1978). Postcolonial theory facilitated the study in interrogating mainstream views on theatrical genres in ECD to conform only to Western models and literary aesthetics. This study is a descriptive study anchored on an ethnographic research design to capture the lived theatrical experiences of children and caregivers in ECD centres. The population of the study was children and caregivers in ECD centres and key informants from government departments. Single stage cluster sampling was used to draw a sample of 33 out of 111 ECD centres: a sample of 30%. All the children and caregivers in the sampled clusters were participants. 1,110 children were engaged through participant and non-participant observation and 78 caregivers were engaged through FGD aided by audio visual recordings. Purposive sampling was used to identify 2 key informants from government departments who were engaged through in-depth face to face interviews. Content analysis was applied in analyzing the data which was processed by generating categories, themes and patterns relevant to the research problem. From the analyses, interpretations were made, gaps identified and conclusions drawn. The data was mainly represented in narrative prose and visually displayed in tables. The findings of this study revealed that theatrical genres depicted a wide range and dynamism in their construction during performance thus deviating from mainstream ways regarding the classification of theatrical genres. Strengths such as the capacity of indigenous theatre to act in synergy with other interventions, adapt to contemporary ways and resilience in children's play culture were compromised by a combination of factors such as poor implementation of policies, the dominant Western, Christian narrative on ECD and the privileging of academic curricular.