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## Harnessing the Power of Indigenous Zulu Music to Promote Language, Culture, and Diversity

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### ABSTRACT

Indigenous Zulu music is a reflection of the Zulu people's cultural and environmental surroundings, incorporating natural sounds and rhythms that highlight their close relationship with nature. This article explores how this music promotes language, culture, and diversity within the Zulu community. Drawing on Cultural Ecology Theory, which underscores the link between culture and the environment, the study examines how Zulu music adapts to these contexts. Methodologically, this qualitative study relied on secondary data from accredited scholarly sources, including journals, books, online government bulletins, and academic databases. The systematic review process ensured data reliability and validity, emphasising the role of indigenous Zulu music in preserving language and cultural identity. The findings reveal that Zulu music, through its songs and performances, celebrates the Zulu language and conveys significant stories and myths. This cultural expression serves as a means of preservation, ensuring the continuity of Zulu heritage. Moreover, the article discusses how integrating Zulu music into modern contexts sustains cultural diversity in South Africa. By blending traditional and contemporary music, Zulu musicians broaden their audience and share their cultural richness. This integration fosters cultural sustainability and dialogue, enriching the cultural landscape. In conclusion, indigenous Zulu music plays a vital role in preserving language, culture, and diversity among the Zulu community. Through its celebration of language and cultural heritage, Zulu music fosters intercultural understanding and represents the cultural richness of the Zulu people.

**Keywords:** Cultural preservation; Diversity promotion; Indigenous music; Language promotion; Traditional Zulu music

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## 1. Introduction

It is crucial to begin this study by emphasising the foundational role of indigenous music in preserving and promoting cultural heritage. Within South Africa, Zulu music emerges as a particularly dynamic tradition deeply interwoven into the cultural tapestry of the Zulu people. As one of the country's largest ethnic groups, the Zulu have a longstanding tradition of music and dance as integral elements of their cultural practices (Bafford, 2023; Mason, 2014; Nkabinde, 1997; Yende and Ngema, 2022). Yende and Ngema (2023) underscore that traditional Zulu music is marked by rhythmic drumming, intricate vocal harmonies, and spirited dancing, all serving as expressions of communal identity and values. Through music, the Zulu pass down stories, traditions, and cultural practices from one generation to the next, reinforcing their sense of belonging and identity (Yende and Ngema, 2023).

Language holds a pivotal role in culture, serving as a conduit for transmitting cultural knowledge and values (Kozak et al., 2023). Zulu music, often featuring lyrical content in the Zulu language, plays a vital role in preserving and promoting the Zulu language. Through songs and chants, Zulu musicians celebrate their language, utilising it as a medium for storytelling, social commentary, and cultural expression (Dickie, 2017). Engagement with Zulu music not only allows audiences to appreciate the linguistic beauty but also offers insight into the rich cultural heritage it embodies.

Despite some scholars acknowledging the cultural significance of Zulu music, there remains a notable gap in comprehensive research regarding its role in promoting language, culture, and diversity (Dickie, 2017; Mason, 2014; Nkabinde, 1997; Yende and Ngema, 2022). Existing studies often concentrate solely on the musical aspects of Zulu music, neglecting its broader cultural and social impacts (Gwervevande and Mthombeni, 2023; Yende, 2023). This article aims to bridge this gap by presenting a holistic examination of indigenous Zulu music and its implications for language, culture, and diversity promotion.

The motivation behind this article stems from the acknowledgment of the significance of indigenous music in preserving cultural heritage and fostering diversity. By highlighting the unique qualities of Zulu music and its potential as a tool for social cohesion, this article seeks to raise awareness about the value of indigenous musical traditions. Through this exploration, we aspire to stimulate further research and appreciation of the cultural richness of Zulu music and its contributions to the broader discourse on cultural preservation and diversity promotion. Therefore, the following questions were developed:

How is traditional Zulu music passed down from older generations to younger ones?

(b) How does indigenous Zulu music reflect and adapt to the cultural and environmental contexts of the Zulu people?

(c) In what ways does indigenous Zulu music promote language preservation and cultural identity among the Zulu community?

(d) How does the integration of indigenous Zulu music in modern contexts contribute to cultural sustainability and diversity promotion in South Africa?

(e) What is the broader cultural and social impact of Zulu music?

## 2. Theoretical framework

In this article, the Cultural Ecology Theory, along with frameworks like the UNESCO and ICCROM conventions on intangible cultural heritage, Traditional Knowledge Systems (TKS), and heritage values, were employed to examine how indigenous Zulu music promotes language, culture, and diversity (UNESCO, 2016; Wijesuriya, 2020). This comprehensive approach allows for a deeper understanding of the relationship between Zulu music, culture, and the environment, highlighting its role in preserving cultural heritage and promoting diversity. Cultural Ecology Theory, developed by Julian Steward in the mid-20th century, offers a framework for understanding how cultures adapt to and interact with their environment (Berry, 1979;

Meena, 2022; Steward, 1955). It challenges the notion of environmental determinism, which posits that environmental factors alone determine human behaviour and culture. Instead, Cultural Ecology Theory suggests that cultures evolve in response to their environment, shaping and being shaped by it.

In the context of Zulu music, this theory provides insights into how the music reflects and adapts to the cultural and environmental contexts of the Zulu people. For example, traditional Zulu music often incorporates natural sounds, such as animal noises or sounds from the natural environment, reflecting the close relationship between the Zulu people and their surroundings (Waluya, et.al, 2023; Xulu, 1992). This aspect of Zulu music highlights the cultural significance of the environment in shaping Zulu musical traditions. Moreover, the application of Cultural Ecology Theory to Zulu music helps explore how it contributes to cultural sustainability and resilience. By preserving and promoting traditional musical practices, Zulu music helps maintain a connection to the cultural heritage of the Zulu people, even amidst modernization and globalization. This aspect of cultural sustainability is crucial for maintaining a sense of identity and belonging among the Zulu people, as well as for ensuring the continued transmission of cultural knowledge and traditions to future generations.

Additionally, incorporating frameworks like the UNESCO and ICCROM conventions on intangible cultural heritage, Traditional Knowledge Systems (TKS), and heritage values enrich the analysis of Zulu music's cultural significance (UNESCO, 2016; Wijesuriya, 2020). These conventions recognize the importance of intangible cultural heritage, including traditional music, in preserving cultural diversity and promoting intercultural dialogue (UNESCO, 2016). By aligning with these conventions, the study acknowledges the broader implications of Zulu music beyond its immediate cultural context. In conclusion, the application of Cultural Ecology Theory, along with frameworks like the UNESCO and ICCROM conventions, provides a comprehensive approach to understanding the role of indigenous Zulu music

in promoting language, culture, and diversity. It highlights the dynamic relationship between Zulu music, culture, and the environment, emphasising its importance in preserving cultural heritage and fostering cultural sustainability.

### **3. Methodology**

This study employed a qualitative research method, complemented by a critical desktop literature review, to investigate the role of indigenous Zulu music in promoting language, culture, and diversity. The qualitative approach was chosen for its ability to provide in-depth insights and understanding of complex social phenomena, such as the impact of music on cultural identity and social cohesion (Bonczyk, 2011; Lacey, et. al, 2011). The critical desktop literature review involved gathering existing literature from scholarly journal articles, academic textbooks, credible academic websites, and trusted databases. This comprehensive search strategy ensured that a wide range of perspectives and insights were considered in the study. The sources included Google Scholar, Sabinet African Journals, Sage Journals, ResearchGate, EBSCO, ProQuest, Web of Science, and Semantic Scholar, among others (Bonczyk, 2011; Lacey, et. al, 2011).

In analysing the gathered data, a systematic literature pruning process was employed, utilising descriptive analysis to extract relevant information pertaining to indigenous music, language, culture, and diversity (Lacey, et. al, 2011). This process helped to identify key themes and trends in the literature, providing a solid foundation for the study's findings. To ensure the reliability and validity of the findings, a triangulation approach was utilised. Triangulation involves using multiple sources of data or methods to corroborate findings and enhance the credibility of the study. In this case, it helped to eliminate bias and ensure the accuracy of the data collected, strengthening the overall rigour of the study. Overall, the qualitative research method, coupled with the critical desktop literature review and triangulation approach, was deemed suitable for investigating the role of indigenous Zulu music in

promoting language, culture, and diversity. These methods allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the topic, leading to meaningful arguments, discussions, conclusions, and recommendations.

#### **4. Contextualising the findings of this article**

It is prudent to foreground the findings of this article by acknowledging that existing studies often focus on the musical aspects of Zulu music, overlooking its broader cultural and social impacts. However, the findings in the present study were largely based on previous research. To contribute a new aspect or insight to the topic, this study explores the role of Zulu music in fostering intergenerational connections and transmitting cultural values across generations. Specifically, it investigates how traditional Zulu music is passed down from older generations to younger ones and how it contributes to the preservation of cultural knowledge and traditions within the Zulu community.

Mkhombo (2019) emphasised the importance of traditional Zulu music as a medium for intergenerational transmission of cultural values and practices. Through songs, dances, and musical performances, older members of the Zulu community impart knowledge about the significance of different musical elements and their role in cultural expression. This process helps to strengthen the cultural identity of younger generations and ensures the continuity of traditional practices within the community. Furthermore, Zulu music serves as a form of cultural memory, preserving historical events, myths, and stories that are important to the Zulu people. Netshivhambe (2023) notes that Zulu songs often convey messages about the history and heritage of the Zulu community, serving as repositories of cultural knowledge. By analysing the lyrical content and thematic elements of traditional Zulu songs, this study aims to uncover how these songs transmit important cultural narratives from one generation to the next.

Additionally, the study explores how Zulu music is used in contemporary contexts to address current

social issues and promote cultural revitalization and pride among young Zulu people. Yende (2023) argues that Zulu musicians are increasingly incorporating elements of traditional Zulu music into modern music genres, creating a fusion of sounds that is both innovative and reflective of the country's multicultural heritage. This integration helps to ensure that traditional Zulu music remains a vibrant and living art form, rather than a relic of the past. In conclusion, this study sheds light on the broader cultural and social impacts of Zulu music, highlighting its role in fostering intergenerational connections, preserving cultural knowledge, and promoting cultural revitalization. By exploring these aspects, the study contributes new insights to the existing literature on Zulu music and underscores its importance in shaping the cultural identity of the Zulu community.

##### **4.1 How is traditional Zulu music passed down from older generations to younger ones?**

The transmission of traditional Zulu music from older to younger generations is a multifaceted process deeply ingrained in the cultural fabric of the Zulu community. Elder members of the community, revered for their knowledge and experience, serve as the primary custodians of traditional Zulu music (Yende and Ngema, 2022). They pass down their musical expertise to younger generations through informal mentoring and guidance. In everyday interactions, elders share stories, anecdotes, and teachings related to Zulu music, imparting not just the technical aspects but also the cultural significance and historical context of the music. This informal education is further reinforced during communal gatherings and celebrations, where elders lead musical performances and provide hands-on instruction to younger participants. Ceremonial events, such as weddings, funerals, and initiation rites, are pivotal moments for the transmission of traditional Zulu music (Mapaya & Mugovhani, 2014). These occasions are steeped in cultural significance and serve as natural settings for the teaching and learning of traditional songs, dances,



and musical rituals. Younger generations actively participate in these events, absorbing the nuances of Zulu music and internalising its importance in their cultural heritage.

Formal education also plays a role in the transmission of traditional Zulu music. Schools and community centres offer music classes that focus on traditional Zulu instruments, songs, and dances (Mapaya, 2014). These structured lessons provide a more systematic approach to learning traditional music, ensuring that the next generation has the necessary skills and knowledge to carry forward these musical traditions. Furthermore, cultural institutions and organizations dedicated to preserving Zulu heritage actively promote the transmission of traditional music (Mtshali, 2018). They organise workshops, seminars, and performances that engage young people and provide them with opportunities to learn about and participate in traditional Zulu music. These initiatives not only foster a deeper appreciation for Zulu culture but also empower young people to become ambassadors for their cultural heritage.

In conclusion, the transmission of traditional Zulu music is a dynamic process that encompasses various forms of teaching and learning. It is through this intergenerational exchange of knowledge and skills that the rich cultural heritage of the Zulu people is preserved and passed down to future generations, ensuring that traditional Zulu music remains a vibrant and integral part of Zulu identity.

#### **4.2 How does indigenous Zulu music reflect and adapt to the cultural and environmental contexts of the Zulu people?**

Indigenous Zulu music is deeply rooted in the cultural and environmental contexts of the Zulu people, serving as a profound expression of their identity and heritage (Mtshelwane, 2016; Nkabinde, 1997; Xulu, 1992). Historically, Zulu music played a central role in the fabric of daily life, intertwined with social, cultural, and spiritual practices. It was not only a form of entertainment but also a means of communication, storytelling, and preserving historical narratives. For instance,

Amahubo akwaZulu (Zulu hymns) were used to convey religious messages and teachings, reflecting the spiritual beliefs of the Zulu people (Yende and Ngema, 2022). These hymns often incorporated elements of traditional Zulu music, such as rhythmic drumming and vocal harmonies, creating a powerful and evocative form of musical expression.

Zulu music reflects the rich cultural traditions of the Zulu people through its lyrical content, rhythmic patterns, and vocal harmonies. The songs often convey stories, myths, and historical events that are significant to the Zulu community, serving as a way to preserve and transmit cultural knowledge from generation to generation (Scheub, 1985). These songs are not merely musical compositions but also cultural artifacts that carry the history and heritage of the Zulu people, embodying their experiences, beliefs, and values.

Moreover, indigenous Zulu music is deeply connected to the natural environment. Traditional Zulu music incorporates sounds from nature, such as the chirping of birds, the rustling of leaves, or the flow of water. These natural sounds are not just musical elements but also symbolic of the Zulu people's profound respect for nature and their recognition of the environment as a source of inspiration and spirituality (Dickie, 2019; Yende and Ngema, 2022). The incorporation of these natural sounds in Zulu music is a testament to the Zulu people's close relationship with the environment, highlighting their deep connection to the land and its resources. In contemporary times, Zulu music has evolved and diversified, incorporating influences from other musical traditions and genres. Modern Zulu musicians often blend traditional Zulu music with elements of jazz, hip-hop, or gospel music, creating a fusion that is both innovative and rooted in tradition. This adaptation allows Zulu music to remain relevant and appealing to a diverse audience while still retaining its cultural authenticity and significance (Yende and Ngema, 2022).

Data indicates a noticeable change in the popularity of Zulu music, with a significant increase in its reach and influence. This can be attributed

to the integration of modern styles, which has broadened the audience for Zulu music and made it more accessible to a wider range of listeners. The ability of Zulu musicians to adapt and innovate while maintaining the essence of their cultural heritage has been instrumental in the music's continued relevance and appeal. Indigenous Zulu music is a powerful expression of the cultural and environmental contexts of the Zulu people. Its evolution and adaptation over time reflect the resilience and creativity of the Zulu people in preserving and promoting their cultural heritage.

#### **4.3 In what ways does indigenous Zulu music promote language preservation and cultural identity among the Zulu community?**

Indigenous Zulu music serves as a cornerstone in the preservation and promotion of language preservation and cultural identity among the Zulu community. This music acts as a conduit for celebrating and transmitting the Zulu language, ensuring its vitality for future generations (Mkhombo, 2019; Netshivhambe, 2023). Through intricate songs, chants, and performances, Zulu musicians showcase the linguistic beauty and cultural depth of the Zulu language, emphasising its central role in Zulu culture and identity. A pivotal aspect of indigenous Zulu music's language preservation role lies in its lyrical content. Zulu songs feature lyrics replete with the Zulu language, utilising poetic and expressive language to convey narratives, articulate emotions, and recount stories (Gunner, 1984; Dickie, 2017a). These songs effectively serve as oral literature, creatively conserving and transmitting the Zulu language. By integrating the Zulu language into their musical compositions, Zulu musicians actively contribute to the language's preservation and propagation, ensuring its continual vitality and integration into Zulu culture.

Furthermore, indigenous Zulu music plays a significant role in reinforcing cultural identity by celebrating and showcasing the distinctive cultural heritage of the Zulu people. Through their musical expressions, Zulu musicians articulate the values, beliefs, and traditions intrinsic to Zulu culture,

thereby spotlighting the cultural identity of the Zulu community (Akrofi, et al., 2006; Yende, 2023). This music serves as a potent form of cultural expression, providing the Zulu community with a creative platform to celebrate and affirm their cultural distinctiveness. Moreover, indigenous Zulu music serves as a vital tool for cultural education and transmission, particularly in the context of traditional ceremonies and rituals. Zulu music frequently accompanies significant cultural events such as weddings, funerals, and initiation ceremonies, where it serves to educate and reinforce cultural values and practices (Nkabinde, 1997; Xulu, 1992; Yende and Ngema, 2022). Through these musical performances, Zulu music aids in the continuity and transmission of cultural knowledge and traditions across generations, thereby fortifying the cultural identity of the Zulu community.

In summary, indigenous Zulu music plays a pivotal role in promoting language preservation and cultural identity among the Zulu community. Through its lyrical content, celebration of cultural heritage, and contribution to cultural education and transmission, Zulu music serves as a potent vehicle for conserving and promoting the Zulu language and cultural identity, ensuring its enduring vibrancy and relevance in contemporary society.

#### **4.4 How does the integration of indigenous Zulu music in modern contexts contribute to cultural sustainability and diversity promotion in South Africa?**

The integration of indigenous Zulu music into modern contexts contributes significantly to cultural sustainability and diversity promotion in South Africa. This integration not only helps to preserve and promote traditional Zulu music but also enriches the cultural landscape of South Africa by showcasing the diversity of its musical traditions and promoting intercultural dialogue (Buthelezi, 2016; Mkhombo, 2019; Netshivhambe, 2023; Yende, 2023). One of the key ways in which the integration of indigenous Zulu music contributes to cultural sustainability is by ensuring the continued relevance and vitality

of traditional musical practices (Buthelezi, 2016; Mkhombo, 2019). By incorporating elements of traditional Zulu music into modern music genres, such as jazz, hip-hop, or gospel, Zulu musicians reach a wider audience and introduce them to the rich cultural heritage of the Zulu people. This integration helps to ensure that traditional Zulu music remains a vibrant and living art form, rather than a relic of the past (Yende and Ngema, 2022).

Furthermore, the integration of indigenous Zulu music in modern contexts promotes cultural diversity by showcasing the unique musical traditions of the Zulu people. South Africa is home to a rich diversity of musical styles and traditions, and the integration of Zulu music helps to highlight this diversity and promote cross-cultural understanding and appreciation (Ameck, 2005; Buthelezi, 2016; Mason, 2014; Yende and Ngema, 2022). By incorporating elements of Zulu music into modern music genres, South African musicians create a fusion of sounds that is both innovative and reflective of the country's multicultural heritage. Moreover, the integration of indigenous Zulu music in modern contexts promotes intercultural dialogue by bringing together musicians from different cultural backgrounds (Mkhombo, 2019; Yende and Yende, 2022). Collaborations between Zulu musicians and musicians from other cultural backgrounds have resulted in the creation of new musical styles that blend elements of traditional Zulu music with contemporary influences (Buthelezi, 2016; Mkhombo, 2019). These collaborations break down cultural barriers and foster a greater appreciation for the cultural diversity of South Africa.

Additionally, the integration of indigenous Zulu music in modern contexts can have economic benefits, particularly in terms of cultural tourism. South Africa is a popular destination for cultural tourists, many of whom are interested in experiencing the country's rich cultural heritage firsthand. By incorporating elements of Zulu music into modern music venues and festivals, South Africa can attract a greater number of cultural tourists and generate revenue that can be reinvested in the preservation

and promotion of traditional Zulu music (Yende and Yende, 2022). In conclusion, the integration of indigenous Zulu music in modern contexts contributes significantly to cultural sustainability and diversity promotion in South Africa. By ensuring the continued relevance of traditional Zulu music, promoting cultural diversity, fostering intercultural dialogue, and generating economic benefits, this integration helps to ensure that the rich cultural heritage of the Zulu people continues to thrive and evolve in the modern world.

### *Examples of Zulu instruments*

In Zulu music, instruments such as isigubhu (drum) (see **Figure 1**) and umakhweyane (zulu bow) are not just tools for creating music; they are cultural artifacts that embody the essence of Zulu heritage and tradition. Isigubhu stands out as a symbol of communal rhythm and unity. Crafted from animal skin stretched over a wooden frame, this large drum's deep, resonant tones provide the foundational rhythm of Zulu music. Its presence is felt not just in its sound but also in its cultural significance, representing the heartbeat of the Zulu community and echoing the rhythms of daily life (Mapaya, 2014).



**Figure 1.** Isigubhu (Drum).

Umakhweyana, a traditional Zulu musical instrument, plays a significant role in Zulu culture and music (see **Figure 2**). This bow instrument consists of a bow-shaped wooden resonator with a single string, typically crafted from animal sinew or plant fibers, producing a distinctive melodic

sound when plucked (Joseph, 1987; Tracey, 2015). Traditionally, the umakhweyana is prominently featured during ceremonial and celebratory events, including weddings, funerals, and traditional festivals. Its music is believed to serve as a conduit between the living and ancestral spirits, thus holding profound spiritual and cultural significance within Zulu practices (Joseph, 1987; Tracey, 2015).

Beyond its musical contributions, the umakhweyana symbolises Zulu cultural identity and heritage, showcasing unique sound qualities and playing techniques that differentiate it from other instruments. This highlights the creativity and skill of Zulu musicians (Tracey, 2015). Despite its traditional origins, the umakhweyana remains relevant in contemporary Zulu music, illustrating its enduring legacy and continued importance in preserving Zulu cultural heritage.



**Figure 2.** Umakhweyana (Zulu bow).

These instruments are more than just musical tools; they are cultural artifacts that connect past, present, and future generations of Zulu people. Through their sounds, Zulu music tells a story of resilience, creativity, and cultural pride, ensuring that the heritage of the Zulu people remains vibrant and alive for generations to come.

#### **4.5 Broader cultural and social impacts of Zulu music**

Zulu music has had a profound cultural and social impact, not only within the Zulu community but also

in South Africa and beyond. One of the key cultural impacts of Zulu music is its role in preserving and promoting Zulu language, culture, and heritage. Through its lyrics, melodies, and rhythms, Zulu music celebrates the Zulu language and cultural traditions, ensuring their continuity and vitality (Gunner, 1984; Dickie, 2017a). The music serves as a medium for storytelling, conveying historical narratives, myths, and legends that are integral to Zulu identity (Gunner, 1984; Dickie, 2017a). By keeping these stories alive, Zulu music contributes to the preservation of the Zulu cultural heritage for future generations. Furthermore, Zulu music plays a significant role in promoting cultural identity and pride among the Zulu community. It serves as a symbol of Zulu cultural distinctiveness, highlighting the unique traditions, values, and beliefs of the Zulu people (Yende, 2023). Through their music, Zulu musicians express their sense of belonging and solidarity with the Zulu community, fostering a strong sense of cultural identity among listeners.

Moreover, Zulu music has played a crucial role in social mobilization and activism, particularly during the apartheid era in South Africa. Songs such as “Senzeni Na?” (“What Have We Done?”) became anthems of the anti-apartheid movement, rallying people together and giving voice to their struggles and aspirations (Gunner, 1984; Dickie, 2017; Mapaya, 2014). Zulu music served as a form of protest against oppression and injustice, inspiring hope and resilience among the oppressed communities. In contemporary times, Zulu music continues to have a significant impact on South African society, contributing to its cultural diversity and richness. The fusion of traditional Zulu music with modern genres has created a vibrant and dynamic music scene that appeals to a wide audience, both locally and internationally (Mkhombo, 2019). Zulu musicians such as Ladysmith Black Mambazo and Busi Mhlongo have achieved international acclaim, bringing Zulu music to global audiences and showcasing its cultural richness and diversity. In conclusion, Zulu music has had a profound impact on culture and society, preserving and promoting



Zulu language, culture, and heritage, fostering cultural identity and pride, and serving as a catalyst for social mobilization and activism. Its influence extends beyond the Zulu community, enriching the cultural fabric of South Africa and the world.

## 5. Discussions

The study's findings underscored the profound cultural significance of indigenous Zulu music, which has served as a vital link to the heritage, language, and traditions of the Zulu people. Through the lens of Cultural Ecology Theory and contemporary frameworks like the UNESCO and ICCROM conventions on intangible cultural heritage, Traditional Knowledge Systems (TKS), and heritage values, the study shed light on the intricate relationship between Zulu music, culture, and the environment. Cultural Ecology Theory, as pioneered by Julian Steward, offered a compelling framework for understanding how Zulu music reflected and adapted to the cultural and environmental contexts of the Zulu people. For instance, the incorporation of natural sounds in traditional Zulu music, such as animal noises or sounds from the natural environment, spoke to the deep connection between the Zulu community and their surroundings (Waluya et al., 2023; Xulu, 1992).

The UNESCO and ICCROM conventions on intangible cultural heritage underscored the importance of preserving traditional music, including Zulu music, as a means of safeguarding cultural heritage for future generations. This recognition highlighted the role of Traditional Knowledge Systems (TKS) in transmitting and preserving Zulu music, with elders passing down their musical knowledge through informal mentoring and guidance. Heritage values associated with Zulu music, particularly its role in connecting the living with ancestral spirits, were fundamental to the cultural identity of the Zulu community. Zulu music, as highlighted in the study, played a crucial role in promoting cultural sustainability and resilience by preserving and promoting traditional musical practices, thereby maintaining a link to the cultural

heritage of the Zulu people amidst modernization and globalization.

The transmission of traditional Zulu music from older to younger generations was deeply ingrained in the fabric of the Zulu community. Elder members served as custodians of Zulu music, passing down their knowledge through informal mentoring and guidance. Ceremonial events, such as weddings and funerals, played a pivotal role in this transmission, providing natural settings for the teaching and learning of traditional songs, dances, and musical rituals (Mapaya & Mugovhani, 2014; Mtshali, 2018). Formal education also contributed to the transmission of traditional Zulu music, with schools and community centres offering music classes that focused on traditional Zulu instruments, songs, and dances. Cultural institutions and organizations dedicated to preserving Zulu heritage further promoted the transmission of traditional music through workshops, seminars, and performances (Mtshali, 2018).

The integration of indigenous Zulu music into modern contexts played a significant role in cultural sustainability and diversity promotion in South Africa. By incorporating elements of traditional Zulu music into modern genres, Zulu musicians reached a wider audience and introduced them to the rich cultural heritage of the Zulu people. This integration ensured that traditional Zulu music remained a vibrant art form, while also promoting cultural diversity and fostering intercultural dialogue (Buthelezi, 2016; Mkhombo, 2019; Netshivhambe, 2023; Yende, 2023). In conclusion, the study highlighted the importance of indigenous Zulu music in preserving and promoting Zulu culture, language, and heritage. Through its integration into modern contexts and its transmission to future generations, Zulu music continued to play a crucial role in ensuring the continuity and vibrancy of Zulu cultural identity.

## 6.3 Conclusion and recommendations

In conclusion, this article has explored the significance of indigenous Zulu music in promoting

language, culture, and diversity among the Zulu community. Through a thorough examination of the cultural and environmental contexts of Zulu music, as well as its integration into modern contexts, several key insights have emerged. Firstly, indigenous Zulu music serves as a powerful tool for language preservation and cultural identity. By incorporating the Zulu language into their music, Zulu musicians celebrate the beauty and richness of their language, ensuring its continued vitality and relevance in Zulu culture. Moreover, Zulu music conveys stories, myths, and historical events that are significant to the Zulu people, serving as a form of cultural preservation and transmission. Secondly, the integration of indigenous Zulu music into modern contexts contributes to cultural sustainability and diversity promotion in South Africa. By blending traditional Zulu music with elements of contemporary music genres, Zulu musicians can reach a wider audience and introduce them to the rich cultural heritage of the Zulu people. This integration helps to ensure the continued relevance and vitality of traditional Zulu music, while also promoting intercultural dialogue and understanding.

Additionally, indigenous Zulu music reflects and adapts to the cultural and environmental contexts of the Zulu people, illustrating the key concepts of Cultural Ecology Theory. The incorporation of natural sounds and rhythms into Zulu music highlights the close relationship between the Zulu people and their surroundings, showcasing the cultural significance of the environment in shaping Zulu musical traditions. Moreover, the findings of this article suggest several implications for future research and practice. Firstly, there is a need for further research into the role of indigenous Zulu music in promoting cultural sustainability and diversity. Future studies could explore the impact of Zulu music on social cohesion, identity formation, and community resilience among the Zulu people.

Furthermore, there is a need for greater recognition and support for indigenous Zulu music within South Africa and beyond. Policies and initiatives that promote the preservation and promotion of

traditional Zulu music could help to ensure its continued relevance and vitality in the modern world. Overall, this article highlights the importance of indigenous Zulu music in promoting language, culture, and diversity among the Zulu community. Through its celebration of the Zulu language, preservation of cultural heritage, and adaptation to modern contexts, Zulu music serves as a powerful expression of the interdependence between culture and the environment, enriching the cultural landscape of South Africa and promoting cross-cultural understanding and appreciation.

In light of the findings and insights presented in this article, several recommendations can be made to further promote the use of indigenous Zulu music to preserve language, culture, and diversity in the Zulu community. Firstly, there is a need for greater support and recognition of indigenous Zulu musicians and their work. This could include providing funding and resources for musicians to create and perform traditional Zulu music, as well as creating platforms for them to showcase their work to a wider audience. Secondly, there is a need for educational initiatives that incorporate indigenous Zulu music into the curriculum. By introducing students to traditional Zulu music at an early age, schools can help to ensure that the next generation is familiar with and appreciative of their cultural heritage. This could involve incorporating Zulu music into music education programs, as well as organising cultural exchange programs that expose students to different musical traditions.

Furthermore, there is a need for research and documentation of indigenous Zulu music. This could involve conducting interviews with traditional Zulu musicians to document their stories and experiences, as well as recording and archiving traditional Zulu music for future generations. By preserving and documenting indigenous Zulu music, researchers and musicians can help to ensure that it remains a vibrant and living part of Zulu culture.

Finally, there is a need for greater collaboration between Zulu musicians and artists from other cultural backgrounds. By working together,

musicians can create new and innovative music that blends elements of traditional Zulu music with contemporary styles. This collaboration not only helps to promote cultural diversity but also fosters intercultural dialogue and understanding. Overall, by implementing these recommendations, we can help to ensure that indigenous Zulu music continues to play a vital role in preserving language, culture, and diversity among the Zulu community. Through its celebration of the Zulu language, preservation of cultural heritage, and promotion of intercultural dialogue, indigenous Zulu music serves as a powerful expression of the rich cultural tapestry of the Zulu people.

## Author Contributions

I hereby confirm that I am the sole author of this research article.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## Data Availability Statement

Data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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