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## FROM HIGHLIFE KICKS TO AMAPIANO FOOTWORK: TRACING NIGERIAN LEG-WORK DANCE AND ITS ROLE IN YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY.

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### ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on the cultural journey of the leg-work dance in Nigeria from the days of the Highlife kicks to the present Amapiano footwork and the cultural and entrepreneurial significance of the leg-work to youth. A qualitative-exploratory research design was employed in the study and data were gathered using semi structured interviews with dancers, music producers, and young entrepreneurs, other than participant observation and archival data. The findings from the interviews using thematic analysis brought to the fore that the evolution of the dance accompanied the changes in the music of the time and the growing urban culture among the youth, the influences from other parts of the world and the digital platforms that host the dances. The study demonstrates the leg-work dance as a valuable cultural and entrepreneurial tool and the youth as the performers and promoters of the dance from Nigeria. The leg-work and the footwork Amapiano can allow young people to participate in the growing global creative sector and sustainable economic development.

**KEYWORDS:** Digital platforms, Amapiano, cultural sustainability, Youth entrepreneurship, Nigerian leg-work dance.

### INTRODUCTION

The Traditional Nigerian dances are also social records, multi-communicative systems, and means through which Nigerian communities articulate identity, social change and continuity. Urbanisation and the evolution of popular music, especially the popularisation of the highlife of the 1950s, and its offshoots genre, created the aural and social environment whereby

Cooperative dancing, syncopated foot patterns and bodily motions became a feature of night club entertainment, civic social events and urban leisure. Highlife patterning became the structures within which modern indigenous choreographies were created and performed (Nzwi, 1999). Collins (2012) concludes.

The 1970s and 1980s saw the relationship between sound and movement evolve again with the introduction of Afrobeat music. With its politically focused improvisational dance, Afrobeat's polyrhythmic percussion, and horn arrangements, as well as its more socially conscious lyricism, it created new styles and dances. In Lagos and other growing urban centers, youth used dance as entertainment but also as an economically and politically rebellious statement against the state authoritarianism and cultural shifts of the era (Veal, 2000). The dance experimentation of the 1990s and early 2000s, also included the Nigerian Hip Hop explosion, as well as dancing and street competitions, and also neighborhood dance crewing. This also included other Africa's urban dance cultures, with young performers using it as a form of self-expression and social movement (Kringelbach, 2013; Appert, 2016).

Due to Nigeria's structural unemployment and lack of formal job opportunities, many of Nigeria's youth began to use dance to gain recognition, and eventually sewn it into their livelihoods. With the 2010's\*\* completion of digital platforms, the dances Shaku Shaku and Zanku gained national and global recognition. It allowed and encouraged dancers and choreographers the use social media to gain personal branding, and commercialise their dancing skills and collaborations with musicians, and for many a poor but effective means of wealth creation. (Enghauser, 2020; Coleman, 2022).

The cultural and entrepreneurial landscape continued growing with the importation of Amapiano from South Africa post 2019. The genre's signature smooth rhythmic mixes and log-drum bass-lines inspired hybrid leg-work forms that integrated local choreographic vocabularies and the Amapiano sonority. The genre's accelerated inter-regional diffusion created several avenues for the choreography and cultural exchange and collaborations as the economic and expressive possibilities of the dance forms created a greater economic incentive for cross choreography and dance performance (Meintjes, 2017; O'Toole, 2021).

The leg-work dance of Nigeria from the highlife period to the Amapiano phase in the chronology of the dance forms makes much clearer the dynamics that surround the issues of youth entrepreneurship, the sustainability of culture and the shaping of modern identity. This

dance history as well as the artistic performance that shaped the contemporary Nigeria proves that the youth, at all the times, have avenues to channel their creativity, reinforce the dance traditions to contemporary forms, and sustain cultural performance practices to define new economic and cultural dominance.

The studies conducted on leg-work dance styles in Nigeria are few and far between, and deal almost exclusively with the aesthetics of the styles, ignoring the more relevant socioeconomic implications of the styles and the changes in the styles across eras in Nigeria's leg-work dance. More contemporary styles of leg-work such as Shaku Shaku, Zanku and Amapiano-inspired footwork are used by the Nigerian youth and have brought the youth greater visibility; however, there remains an absence of dance scholarship that analyzes the ways in which these dances serve as entry points to many ways of engaging economically and digitally as well as ways to preserve culture. It is the absence of documented history that makes it even more complex to understand leg-work as an iterative practice involving the changing of elements of the style in the context of new and different technology, new music, and the agency to adapt to these changes, or the iterative changes in the style as music and technology evolve. This absence makes it difficult for scholars and policymakers to engage with the practice and indeed the integral role that leg-work dances have in the socioeconomics of youth in Nigeria.

In an attempt to address these socioeconomic implications of Nigeria's leg-work dances, and to fill the socio dance research gap, the study goes through and analyzes each leg-work style, chronologically, and breaks each style down, emphasizing the socio and economic impacts and how these styles encouraged and refined new entrepreneurship avenues and sustained culturally.

## **Literature Review:**

### **Historical evolution of Nigerian leg-work dance from highlife to Amapiano**

Researchers have found that much of today's Nigerian footwork is rooted in the pre-colonial and colonial period for its community movement practices as a form of entertainment, dance, and social interaction. These practices created movement patterns that merged with the new, popular foreign music styles and urban social life (Nzewi, 1999). During the mid twentieth century highlife period, popular coastal city social clubs and bands provided social and spatial conditions to create coordinated social dances with a focus on footwork. Highlife

music with its rhythmical structures, call and response patterns, and musical phrases motivated foot patterns that created a new modern public dance aesthetic (Collins, 2012).

The complex, syncopated footwork that characterizes the genre was enhanced with the popularity of Afrobeat. The genre, political activism, and the performance context of Afrobeat sparked the kinetic movement of urban youth to the music creating a community performance that emphasized stamina, spontaneous movement variation, collective improvisation, and footwork (Veal, 2000). Afrobeat dance practices were not entertainment only; rather, they were used as a form of social commentary and urban identity expression (Umezinwa, 2015).

In the 1990s through the early 2000s, emerging Nigerian hip-hop, street choreography, and dance crews changed the leg-work style of street dance to more athletic, competitive, and individualized forms of expression. Urban neighborhoods became the places of creative apprenticeship where dancers created their own distinct sets of foot patterns, syncopated steps, and battle choreographies that interacted with the beats of local rap and pop music (Okafor 2019). Performers at the time also began to have dance as a visible means of social mobility, having their own paid performances and collaborations with recording artists.

In the 2010s, the increasing availability of mobile internet and social media promoted the rapid spread and alteration of footwork styles. Within digital ecologies, the Shaku Shaku and Zanku dances became viral trends, promoting the rapid advancement of choreographic styles, and increasing the visibility of career paths in dance (Ogunleye 2021). Scholars note that this digital visibility altered the expected pace of a dance style spreading. Individual dance steps that may have previously taken time to travel through neighborhoods were instead able to quickly move through and across national borders, creating cycles of remixes and commodification (Adeoye 2021).

Since 2019, Amapiano has been reshaping soundscapes by adding diverse textures to leg-work practices and has been reproducing new sonic textures in Nigeria. Contemporary Nigerian dancers are drawing from other existing vocabularies in their dances to create subtler, groove-focused leg functions reflective of the genre's slower log drum patterns, bass, and tempos. There has been a fusion of movements termed as a hybrid to reflect the urban Nigerian street culture and the country's South African indigenous rhythms. Recent research notes the assimilation of global musical genres at a local level and the cross-regional circulation of artistic products as a two-way process, where imported musical genres are

adapted to suit local commercial frameworks by dancers, then followed by local musicians (Balogun, 2023, Nyamnjoh 2022).

In all these epochs, a constant factor has been the mutual influence of music with dance: the advancement of music opens avenues to introduce new steps, while new leg-work practices encourage innovation to boost the performance and choreographic structure. This relationship is what contributed to the relegation of social dance to the background, establishing it as a micro industry where dancers profit from performances, digital content, and sponsored social media partnerships (Olanrewaju, 2019). Thus the available literature illustrates the developmental path from social communal dancing of the highlife era to contemporary digitized footwork, emphasizing the related socio-musical facets to account for the changes.

### **Youth Entrepreneurship in the Creative Economy**

The creative economy supports innovation, inclusion, and employment, especially for youth with few formal job opportunities. Global cultural policy literature views creative industries as a means for young people to monetize their creativity and develop skills and enter entrepreneurship (UNESCO, 2013). In Nigeria, mapping studies indicate that the creative sector notably enriches urban economies, especially as young creators dominate the informal micro-entrepreneurial sectors of music, film, dance and fashion (British Council, 2013). These micro-entrepreneurs utilize social networks, multi-dimensional skills, and community-sponsored apprenticeship programs that enable young people to overcome structural barriers and enter the creative workforce.

The proliferation of digital technologies has driven entrepreneurial opportunities for young people within the creative industries. An examination of digital entrepreneurship has shown how online business models eliminate entry barriers, broaden markets, and allow creators to monetise talent through streaming, content production, sponsorships, and audience-driven revenue mechanisms (Soluk, 2021). For performers like dancers, the visibility and career advancement that social media provides allows them to disseminate their choreographies, collaborate in partnerships, and transform their cultural expertise into profitable ventures (Adeoye, 2021). This has placed dance at the forefront of the digitally driven segments of Nigeria's creative economy. This has also stimulated diverse income opportunities for young people through sponsorships for choreography, paid event performances, influencer partnerships, and the monetisation of dance videos.

The literature also highlights the long-standing precarity that comes with the creative professions. Studies documenting the creative professions in Africa point to the ramshackle earnings, little to no social safety nets, the financially inaccessible, and the inconsistent earnings with respect to online platforms (ILO, 2022). The aforementioned conditions motivate the youth to adopt hybrid livelihood strategies that incorporate side informal jobs to the creative professions (Olanrewaju, 2019). The same empirical studies in Nigeria reported the positive influence of creative entrepreneurial activities on youth employability, income diversification, and social mobility especially when the youth were trained in skills and/or digitally literate with access to varying levels of finance (Ejemb, 2023).

In summary, the studies suggest that the creative economy has the potential to be both an opportunity and a constraint to the youth of Nigeria. While the creative economy presents youth with the opportunity to be self employed, it also presents the youth with a need to access integrated systemic support to build resilient livelihoods. This explains the scholarly reasoning that supports the premise that dance-based activities especially the Nigerian leg-work has more to it than cultural expression. They are entrepreneurial activities that are digitally visible, are community centered, and exist in a culturally active milieu.

### **Cultural sustainability in contemporary African performance**

Cultural sustainability is about how cultural practices, hold meaning through time while also contributing to development goals (Throsby, 2010). This term and its implications in policies and scholarly discourse are about the intersections of and debates surrounding the preservation of heritage, the creative economic value, and the social resilience of communities. This positive circular economy of culture has led to the argument that culture must be viewed as both an inherent good and as an economic asset for sustainable development (UNESCO, 2013). This perspective moves the focus from conservation to practice, and how living practices, such as performance, adapt to and survive social, technological, and market changes.

In this case, performance studies and ethnomusicology have the necessary tools to analyze how such practices foster cultural innovation. Performance theory highlights the interplay of event, community, and meaning, and shows how social values are reconfigured and (re)created through performance in a given community, and how social values are reproduced (Schechner, 2013). In the ethnomusicological analysis of African musical arts, performance is framed as a vehicle for the community to sustain collective knowledge. Nzewi shows how

practices that survive are those that are actively re-invented, and how change must be viewed as an inherent part of continuity (Nzewi, 1999; Nzewi, 2006).

Cultural sustainability of contemporary African performance is shaped by specific pressures and opportunities. According to Nyamnjoh (2022), the impact of urbanization and digital media, as well as the flows of music across different regions, lead to rapid updates in styles of music and the creation of broader audiences, allowing for the transnational circulation of performances. This phenomenon, however, also leads to the rapid loss of specific local styles. Meanwhile, scholars discuss the cultural local adaptation and social resilience activities and the cultural sustainability social frameworks that allow the community to incorporate and retain their meaning (Järvelä, 2023). Development and policy literature argues that the potential of cultural heritage and live performance for sustainable development is interdisciplinary in nature: the provision of economic resources and development, enhanced cultural production infrastructure, the protection of the cultural producer and their intellectual property. This includes their diverse forms (Giliberto, 2022; Throsby, 2010).

In the debates concerning the sustainable development of the creative economy, the evident visibility and demand for the market, the structural constraints that impact the long-term viability are also of importance. The uniqueness of informal cultural economic activity in Africa notes that without well-targeted action, cultural achievements may only lead to short-term cashable cultural capital flows, likely informed by cultural economic activities, cash and income flows (ILO, 2022; Olanrewaju, 2019). In the particular case of the performing arts, the absence of recognition and the requisite supportive funding, fairly paid creation platforms, and policies that empower cultural entrepreneurs to convert their creative capital into actionable social and economic value is detrimental to sustaining the cultures of particular choreographic lineages, networks of apprentice performers, and venues for live performances.

The aforementioned literature positions contemporary leg-work and performances within a paradigm where cultural endurance is not self-evident and not simply a case of heritage talk. Anchored in the convergence of creative adaptability, supportive institutions, and fair schemed market circulations, it is the live performance of cultural works that adds value to a community and enhances the intricate interplay of identities, social unity, and self-sufficient, sustainable economic systems (Throsby, 2010; Järvelä, 2023).

### Theoretical Perspective

Cultural sustainability in contemporary African performances is explored through the lens of how cultural practices survive, change, and continue to have relevance through adaptations of social structures. The theory of performance articulates a system of embodied action through which a community mobilizes knowledge, identity, and value resourcing. Performance is not a static entity, but rather a malleable and ever-evolving process, through which the cultural practices of a community remain contemporary and relevant (Schechner, 2013). This correlates to the position that the sustainability of a performance is a result of the ability of the performer to reinterpret the tradition in a contemporary way while retaining the central symbolic framework.

Throsby 2010 points out certain institutional and structural variables which explains why certain cultural practices fail to endure. According to Throsby (2010), cultural products are economically and culturally valuable, and to consider one and ignore the other is to undermine the sustainability of the product. From this angle, the policy environment is of particular importance. It is a framework that understands performance traditions to need not just creative stamina but also other vital resources like active funding, education, training, protection of cultural property, and cultural infrastructures. Such a need is extremely important in preserving the active traditions in the face of globalization and commercialization. Such a perspective assigns policymakers the primary role of determining the circumstances in which living cultural practices thrive and in which they die.

Intangible cultural heritage is a concept framed largely by UNESCO and pertains to heritage-based perspectives which seek to protect living traditions. According to UNESCO (2013), intangible heritage is a community's living heritage and includes expression, performance and social interaction. It is the framework that emphasizes community ownership of heritage. It is also community ownership as the living heritage, or intangible heritage, in the words of UNESCO, is to be passed to other generations and sustain the heritage through practices diverse and adaptive. From this perspective and in African performance today, the emphasis is that sustainability of performance depends on the fact that the community has full control over the cultural practices and has not had that control taken from them by others or has had their cultural practices commercialized.

The influence of colonization on the reproduction of culture, the values ascribed to culture, and the representation of culture are impacts of postcolonial theory. African performance and

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its 'uneven power relations' in the postcolonial world are artefacts of which practices are legitimatized, the extent to which they are diffused, and the prestige they accrue within global marketplace spheres. This theory illustrates the struggle of reclaiming and representing 'indigenous' art and the global capitalist marketplace. The vitality of certain art forms, especially the western classics, accounts for the marginalization of others.

The theory of the creative economy is the most recent of the underlying principles which focuses on the economy as a basis for cultural practice. Giliberto (2022) asserts that cultural practices are sustainable as long as the practitioners of that culture are able to transform their cultural practice into an economically viable enterprise. In the African context, where creative practices are predominantly informal and unregulated, this view suggests that sustainability is strongly associated with the creative practice. It connects the practice of art with the economy to show that cultural sustainability goes beyond the aesthetics and the heritage and includes the labour and the resources.

Social identity theory is notable when discussing achievement and sustainability, especially in cases when achievement is linked to communal cohesion. This theory argues that individuals derive their identity from the groups to which they belong and manifest this identity via communal symbols and rituals (Tajfel, 1981). Achievement is also a symbolic system that strengthens feelings of belonging and inter-generational continuity. In a number of African contexts, achievement is interwoven with ceremonies, celebrations, and communal get-togethers, thereby becoming a fundamental arena where identity and cultural memory are sustained and renewed. This point helps clarify the reasons some cultural practices are preserved and sustained over extended periods, despite the economic and technological pressures.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Given the socio-cultural and entrepreneurial aspects and the phenomenon of Nigerian leg-work dance, the study employs qualitative and exploratory research design. A historical-chronological approach is used to understand the transformation from Highlife kicks to Amapiano footwork. Ethnographic facets of the participation of the youth and the cultural practices are also examined (Creswell, 2014; Flick, 2018).

Primary data will be gathered from Lagos, Port Harcourt, and Abuja through semi-structured interviews with youth entrepreneurs, and professional dancers and music producers. Active

participant observation of the dance practices during the scheduled dance events and workshops will be used to gather contextual data. Archival data, literature, and documentaries, along with music videos about the evolution of dance in Nigeria, will also be utilized as secondary data (Okafor, 2020; Adeyemi, 2019).

Thematic analysis of the data will be performed while integrating the socio-cultural and entrepreneurial mapping of different styles of dance in chronological order. The NVivo application will be used for pattern recognition in coding the data along with the elements of dance, youth participation, and engagement within the sustainable frameworks. The reliability and depth will be maintained through cross-validation with the primary data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Patton, 2015).

### **Chronological Patterns of Leg-Work Styles**

The development of Nigerian leg-work dance styles unfolds chronologically and parallels the trajectory of popular music and neotropical fashions in the context of wider socio-cultural changes. Leg-work dances, from the mid twentieth century into the digital era, have been more than just forms of artistic expression, but rather embodied replies to sound, spatial realities, identity, and economic configurations. With each changing musical genre, incorporated into the dance, were the movements vocabularies continually innovating, adapting, and culturally reinventing (Collins, 2015).

During the 1950s and 1960s, Nigerian urban night life in cities like Lagos and Ibadan was dominated by Highlife music (Collins, 2015). In social clubs and ballrooms, dance in this era was characterized by regimented step patterns and synchronised kicks and leg movements. These movements were musically countered, thus reinforcing the idea of dance as accompaniment, rather than a performance in and of itself. The achievement of the dancer was not in static poses but in seamless movement during abrupt changes, and to the varying speed of the music. This set a foundation for leg movements and other forms popular in dance movement cultures.

Afrobeat and funk styles of music popularized in the 1970s facilitated the expansion of the movement lexicon and the range of the techniques employed in the social dance units of the genre (Olaniyan, 2004). The looser, faster, lower-body, leg movements became even more improvisational and were often paired with choreographed upper-body movements. This specific era in social dance marked the merging of old and contemporary urban direct rhymes

and dance styles which social commentary and or critique. The emphasis on rhythm, repetition, and endurance in the movement also created more colonially and militarily oriented (i.e., blood, bodily sacrifice) and modern competitive and improvisational dance forms created the groundwork communal, participatory and competitive dance forms which intensified in the later decades.

The decade of the late 1980s and 1990s in Nigeria represented and was characterized by major Jùjú, Fuji, and dancehall influenced popular styles of social vernacular dance (Euba, 2000). Also during this period, leg movement styles and forms popularized became more elaborate and intricate in design, performing choreographies of participatory, audience inclusive (i.e. stemming from the performer(s) audience/ spectators) call and response improvisations of often danceable and singable phrases. Galala became a prominent popular movement, Ajegunle Closely associated with Daddy Showkey, Galala was known for its also known for the exaggerated histrionics and expressive of limb movements and swinging and angular posture, stamping, contracted, disturbed lower torso, upper torso and head movements.



### Galala Dance in Nigeria

Source: <https://www.danceus.org/style/galala-dance-in-nigeria/?>

Despite the flamboyant character of its style often marked a popular of of 'ghetto' or rural lowerclass of the urban lower inclusive and mainstream mobility, it was a dance to claim and celebrate the social sea of the street, its cultural of defiant opposition, This was especially seen in the of rival and opposition and in the it and the urban popular and u social, its It popular to claimed and celebrate a groove and its social of the and the lyrics.

Shortly thereafter, Suo, popularized by the Danfo Drivers Mountain Black and Mad Melon, briefly replaced Galala as the most popular street dance in the late 1990s. Suo maintained the original energy of Galala, yet incorporated new, more compact lower-body movements and rhythmic footwork that involved shifting side to side. Rapid rises and declines in popularity demonstrate the fast-paced roda of Nigerian popular dance, where newness and audience participation determine how long a fad lasts. During the same period, also Alanta, popularized by Artquake, drew attention for its theatricality. Characterized by the leg lifts and winch face, a term popularized by the track that describes the pantomime of the facial expressions, Alanta also simulated a drum roll by rhythmically hitting the upper body, and like a pantomime portrayed a humorous interpretation of drumming, therefore enriching the craft of dance visual storytelling in addition to music.

The late 1990s and early 2000s also saw the heavy influence of Francophone African music, especially Congolese Soukous. During this period, popular Makossa in Nigeria was also popularized through Awilo Longomba and Koffi Olomide. Makossa also popularized a new style of dancing characterized by smooth, continuous cycles of lower body movements that were rhythmically driven in a highly boosted manner. Although not originally from Nigeria, this period in dance style shaped hip and lower body coordination more than any other period in contemporary Nigerian dance. This period in dance also illustrates the openness of popular Nigerian culture to other African influences.

Hip-hop, dancehall, and hybrid global sounds quickly took over the landscape during the early 2000s. Styles of dance became faster and more loosely aligned, pulling from both international trends and local traditions (Akinwumi, 2012). One example of the time period is Azonto, which came from Ghanaian popular culture and was propelled even further into the spotlight when Wizkid engaged with the rhythm. Azonto was able to be one of the most widely circulated African dance styles of the time because of its easy, playful leg gestures, mimetic movements, and adaptability. Digital media allowed the dance to be hyper circulated to the point where it was accessible all over the world, highlighting a new phenomenon where African dance styles were able to be circulated to the entire global north.

Also, the period of time had a noteworthy modernization of indigenous dance elements. For example, Etigi became popular with the song Kukere by Iyanya, and became a contemporary leg-work style popular in cross over from the dance's Efik traditions of the Cross River state. The dance simplified and culturally rooted the foot patterning and its rhythmic repetitions to

make cross over appealing to a larger audience. The fusions of styles in these performances verifiably narrowed the gap between unmodernized dance and new entertainment.



Photo from Etighi unity carnival

Source:<https://wetinhappen.com.ng/etighi-unity-carnival-on-the-verge-of-breaking-a-guinness-world-record/>

Nigerian pop music in the early 2010s fully adopted the practice of connecting specific dance movements with songs as a promotional tool. Davido's Skelewu was the first of such songs whose choreography included simple leg movements designed for ease of replication by legions of fans. In addition to sporting events across the world demonstrating the visibility dance can bring to a song, Skelewu's choreography was a dance global phenomenon. In Shoki, which Dre San, Lil' Kesh, and Orezi, claimed even more emphasis was put on democratic and participatory choreography through the use of simple and catchy leg movements that brought in fans of all ages and genders.



DaVido-Skelewu/ Choreography by Mo Diakite

Source: <https://youtu.be/7SCniv85yaI?si=OWUcZyc7pV0xpMjj>

MC Galaxy's Sekem introduced joyous bouncing footwork and cheerful side to side leg kicks which heightened feelings of community togetherness. This was followed by Olamide's Shakiti Bobo which was quickly transformed from what appeared to be freestyle footwork into a fully recognized dance craze at the national level. The craze even extended to social dance in religious settings further demonstrating the extent to which the dance craze was integrated into the popular song in the Nigerian milieu.

The digitalization of popular song dancing and the dominance of Afrobeats from the late 2010's in the popular song milieu was concurrent with the development of Shaku Shaku and Zanku among other dance styles in social media ecosystems (Adeyemi, 2019). In these ecosystems, dance styles could be visualized monetized and streamed in a continuous growing cycle. The recent Amapiano with its Southern African township syncopated leg work and sliding foot patterns further complicated the dance style to be monetized through digital platforms (Nkosi, 2021).



Some Amapiano moves

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ftfW0BJfIDM>

Song and dance for social and ceremonial activities was popular among the Nigerian populace. The song, dance, social activity and even ceremonial activity milieu were seamlessly integrated to become part of the Nigerian cultural identity. The dance integrated to the song was often recognized even at a glance New and old, young and old, danced to the

songs in a social and ceremonial activity. The expectation of unity movement reinforces a pattern of collective identity integration to a singular formation.

### Links Between Dance, Youth Enterprise, and Digital Platforms

In the Nigerian leg-work style has become a youth entrepreneurial activity, aided by the Internet, particularly social media on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube which, intended social media Adeyemi, 2019; Nkosi 2021, performances, or who teach dance routines and construct a social branding empire. Dancers perform and monetize social media, sponsored, and incorporated cultural performances and walks.



Online flyer of Legends Dance Challenge and WIN BIG!

Source: <https://web.facebook.com/CityPortHarcourt/posts/1235019681756457/>

For instance, the Shaku Shaku and Zanku Amapiano footwork were informal street, or club dance style but widely published. This recognition offers young performers paid engagements; partnered sponsored or tutorial dances media content as seen in this link: [https://www.tiktok.com/@roseylucci/video/6844960843914857733?is\\_from\\_webapp=1&sender\\_device=pc](https://www.tiktok.com/@roseylucci/video/6844960843914857733?is_from_webapp=1&sender_device=pc) and opined by Akinwumi (2012). Digital platforms promote and even sponsor distance dance collaborations entrepreneurial (Collins 2015).

The research demonstrates that the convergence of dance and youth culture with digital technology allows the accumulation of economic and social wealth. It allows young people to become self-sufficient and economically support themselves while preserving and adapting both traditional and contemporary dance forms. In addition, the ability to gain online visibility and monetize content enhances the sustainability of leg-work dance as an asset and entrepreneurial tool among the youth of Nigeria.

### **Indicators of Cultural Sustainability**

Several indicators of cultural sustainability are embedded in contemporary performance practices of the Nigerian leg-work dance. First is the consolidation and modification of traditional steps in modern genres. For instance, in the dancing styles of Highlife and modern Amapiano, the kicking steps are executed differently suggesting the cultural knowledge of the steps has changed hands through generations (Olaniyan, 2004, Euba, 2000). Younger dancers are encouraged to blend older styles with contemporary rhythms to retain cultural original and relevance jump modern sociocultural tastes.

Second, cultural sustainability is evident in the community collaboration of the dance practices where informal dance socials and festive workshops are organized to promote multiphases of community-mentored collective dance practices. Such community informal social integration structures enhance the practices of community dance cultural norms and the frameworks for the community structured the knowledge of the dance practices to remain contemporary in the community (Collins, 2015).

Third is the digital archiving and dissemination of dance routines. TikTok and YouTube are examples of modern repository technologies where dance heritage, cultural creativity, and narratives of performance are documented and performed. The potential for financial success in the field of dance career positively encourages the youth positively encourages them to participate to both the folk styles and the modern dance forms as well. In the field of dance monetization of cultural performances as well as the creation of digital content and dance collaborations with brands facilitates not only the preservation of a culture but also the modernization of it in a culturally and creates economically sustainable manner.

## **DISCUSSION**

This particular leg work has developed alongside fluctuating musical styles and sociocultural changes over time within Nigerian leg work dance. Ongoing scholarly work regarding

African performance arts and their adaptability has been corroborated by this study. The movement shift from Highlife to Amapiano foot work correlates to the work of Collins (2015) and Olaniyan (2004) regarding the uniquely adaptive and reflective nature of Nigerian dance. The local contemporary styles of Nigerian urban hip-hop and dancehall corroborates Akinwumi (2012) regarding the thriving nature of urban Nigerian contemporary dance being hybrid.

The connection of dance and youth entrepreneurship supports Adeyemi (2019) and Nkosi (2021), who focus on the innovative income earning opportunities, branding and professional avenues available to young dancers on digital platforms. The findings indicate that social media not only enables the monetization of dance but also supports the formation of interregional networks and collaborations, confirming the role of dance in the social and economic realms of the creative economy.

Cultural sustainability stands with signs like the transfer of knowledge across generations, community involvement, and archival activity aimed at preserving culture and traditions. Such observations corroborate the claims of Euba (2000) and Okafor (2020) on the essence of practice and innovation of several genres of dance on the cultural heritage of a society. The current study contributes to this literature by demonstrating how the dance practice can be monetized without losing its cultural significance, but with encouraging the youth to preserve and adapt different patterns of traditional and contemporary leg-work.

In the final analysis, the unique convergence of the innovation of contemporary music, youth culture entrepreneurial pursuits, and culture sustainability, dance leg-work from Nigeria embodies both the cultural and entrepreneurial potential to preserve a cultural identity and modernize dance in a digitally influenced global society.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Nigerian leg-work dance genre originated from the kicks in Highlife music, but, as this of the footwork has contemporary Amapiano dance trends, and, the genre, and its aspects, as cultures and trends, dance has seen most changes of this in the expressive. Air of the creativity, in socio the traditional movements expression of social identity contemporary style, and in the diverse cultures along with the modern Amapiano footwork, integrated to form movements, dance has served culture. Digital engagements have highlight within the resource leg-work dance, and socio cultural resource to the engagement entrepreneurial

resource and culture the resource of the socio socio cultural and dance leg-work to digital within of the youth.

Most. For youth dance cultures the income of socio dance, the genre music, and the social visual entertainment integrate performances digital to provides social income streams and collaborative entertainment, and social socio expression streams dance performances and visual the streams social income. The educator's findings, the youth social, resources cultural preserve in employed expression along with visual preserve culture builder integrate social socio dance, also culture resource in visual economic engage expression. The socio resource of the culture the visual engage social in the socio resource socio in integrated culture engage socio resource.

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