



**THEATRE AS A TOOL FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF
OBRA DRAMA GROUP, ABIBIGROMMA, AND THEATRE FOR
DEVELOPMENT**

BY

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DECLARATION

DECLARATION BY STUDENT(S)

I hereby declare that this research is a result of my own original research and that, no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or any other higher education institute. I further declare that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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CERTIFICATION BY SUPERVISOR

This Dissertation has been prepared and presented under my supervision according to the guidelines for supervision and formatting of Dissertation laid down by the University of Media, Arts and Communication UniMAC-IJ.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the developmental role of theatre in Ghana by exploring the historical evolution, social contributions, and contemporary challenges of three major theatre institutions: the Obra Drama Group, Abibigromma, and selected Theatre for Development (TfD) initiatives. Using a qualitative research design, the study engaged twenty purposively selected participants, including actors, directors, playwrights, and community-based theatre practitioners. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to generate in-depth data on how theatre functions as a tool for civic education, cultural preservation, and social transformation. The findings reveal that Obra significantly shaped public moral consciousness through accessible storytelling rooted in Ghanaian folklore, proverbs, and humour. Abibigromma was found to contribute to community development by promoting cultural identity, indigenous knowledge, and public dialogue through its institution-based performances. TfD initiatives further demonstrated the participatory power of theatre, enabling communities to analyze and address issues such as sanitation, governance, and social cohesion. Across the three entities, theatre emerged as a multidimensional medium capable of humanizing social problems, stimulating reflection, and influencing behavioral change. However, challenges such as inadequate funding, limited state support, infrastructural constraints, and reduced audience engagement were identified as barriers to maximizing theatre's developmental impact. The study concludes that strengthening institutional partnerships, enhancing policy support, and investing in capacity-building for theatre practitioners will be essential for sustaining theatre's relevance in Ghana's development communication landscape. These insights contribute to scholarly discourse on the intersection of performing arts and national development while highlighting theatre's potential as a transformative communication tool.

Keywords: Abibigromma; development communication; Obra drama group; theatre for development; theatre studies

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to God Almighty for His grace and guidance; to the theater fraternity for their immense contributions to national development; to my lecturers for their academic support and mentorship; and to my family and friends for their encouragement, patience, and unwavering support throughout my master's program.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Chapter One of this study introduces the background, problem statement, objectives, research questions, significance, scope, and organization of the study. Theatre in Ghana has evolved from traditional storytelling to a dynamic tool for national development. Institutions like the Obra Drama Group, Abibigromma, and Theatre for Development (TfD) initiatives have played pivotal roles in using performance to address societal issues. This study examines how these entities contribute to national development through their artistic endeavors, focusing on their performances, community outreach programs, and institutional support mechanisms.

1.2 Background of the Study

Development in the Ghanaian context transcends mere economic growth to encompass social transformation, cultural preservation, and civic engagement (Todaro & Smith, 2020). Scholars have consistently argued that development must be people-centered, focusing on improving quality of life through access to education, healthcare, and active citizenship (Sen, 2001; Boateng, 2022). Ghanaian theatre plays a vital role in this process by using indigenous art forms to transmit values, stimulate dialogue, and foster collective action. Theatre becomes a mechanism not only for entertainment but also for interrogating governance, social justice, and community well-being (Mensah, 2020). By embedding moral lessons and civic consciousness within artistic narratives, theatre aligns cultural expression with developmental objectives. This integration situates theatre

as both a cultural resource and a developmental instrument in Ghana's socio-political landscape (Owusu, 2022).

Communication is universally acknowledged as the backbone of development, functioning as the medium through which knowledge is disseminated, attitudes shaped, and behaviors transformed (Rogers, 2003; Servaes, 2018). Development communication emphasizes participatory approaches, where communities are not passive recipients of messages but active contributors to dialogue and problem-solving (Melkote & Steeves, 2021). In Ghana, theatre and drama occupy a unique space in this paradigm. Unlike mass media, which may be constrained by literacy or accessibility barriers, theatre provides an interactive and relatable mode of engagement. Storytelling, music, and dramatization allow for communication that resonates emotionally and culturally, fostering deeper connections between development initiatives and community needs (Adu-Gyamfi, 2021). The performative nature of theatre thus bridges the gap between policy-level discourse and grassroots understanding, strengthening its role as a communication channel for change.

Moreover, theatre as a form of communication extends beyond awareness creation to foster collective action and social mobilization. Performances often mirror community realities, making abstract issues such as health, governance, or social justice tangible and relatable (Boafo, 2020; Tufte, 2017). This participatory dimension not only informs but also empowers audiences to critically reflect and engage in dialogue that can inspire behavioral and structural change. By embedding development messages in culturally familiar narratives, theatre nurtures ownership of solutions, ensuring that communication is not imposed but co-created with the people it seeks to serve (Mda, 2019; Ayee, 2022)

Theatre for Development (TfD) in Ghana illustrates the transformative power of performance in driving social change. TfD employs participatory methods such as role-play, improvisation, and

dialogue to involve communities directly in exploring their challenges and co-creating solutions (Tetteh, 2024). This model departs from top-down information dissemination by situating theatre as a collaborative platform for engagement, education, and advocacy (Agyemang, 2024). Beyond TfD, cultural institutions like the Obra Drama Group and Abibigromma demonstrate how entertainment forms—television drama, stage plays, and community performances—integrate development communication principles. Obra’s television series, for instance, used dramatization of everyday issues to foster civic consciousness and ethical reflection among viewers (Asiedu, 2020; Quansah, 2022). Similarly, Abibigromma’s productions combine traditional aesthetics with social themes to promote literacy, health awareness, and youth empowerment (Addo, 2023). By embedding development goals into familiar performance structures, Ghanaian theatre continues to affirm its value as an essential arm of development communication.

This study adopts a descriptive and exploration qualitative approach. A descriptive approach is appropriate because it enables a detailed account of how the Obra Drama Group, Abibigromma, and TfD initiatives function as agents of social change and cultural preservation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Through this lens, the study documents the activities of these theatre groups, highlighting their contributions to national development between 2020 and 2025. At the same time, the exploratory dimension allows for examining themes and patterns that may not yet be fully captured in existing literature, particularly the integration of theatre in contemporary development communication strategies (Babbie, 2020). Qualitative methods are particularly well-suited because theatre’s impact is embedded in cultural meaning, audience reception, and participatory dialogue rather than easily quantifiable outcomes. Interviews, content analysis of performances, and documentary reviews will therefore guide data collection and interpretation, ensuring that the research captures both the artistic and developmental essence of Ghanaian theatre.

1.3 Problem Statement

Even though theater has helped Ghana's national development a lot, there are still several problems that keep it from reaching its full potential. Limited finance continues to be one of the biggest problems, hurting both the quality of the productions and the ability of theater groups to keep long-term programs going (Adu-Gyamfi, 2021; Nkrumah, 2024). Financial constraints frequently hinder outreach attempts, diminish the scope of performances, and restrict opportunities for training and capacity building among theater practitioners (Owusu-Ansah, 2025).

Audience engagement is another major challenge for theatre institutions such as Obra Drama Group and Abibigromma. Changing entertainment preferences, increased competition from digital media, and declining interest among younger audiences have contributed to reduced attendance and participation in theatrical performances (Mensah, 2020; Tetteh, 2021). This trend limits the effectiveness of theatre as a tool for education, social mobilization, and public awareness campaigns (Owusu, 2022; Boateng, 2022).

Institutional support for theatre also remains inadequate, with limited governmental policies, lack of infrastructure, and insufficient recognition of theatre's role in national development (Agyemang, 2024; Addo, 2023). These challenges compromise the operational efficiency of theatre companies, reduce opportunities for collaboration, and hinder the ability of groups like Abibigromma and Obra to implement Theatre for Development initiatives effectively (Tetteh, 2024; Quansah, 2022).

Overall, these funding, engagement, and institutional challenges collectively undermine the capacity of theatre to function as a robust tool for national development. Addressing these issues is critical to ensuring that theatre in Ghana can continue to educate, mobilize, and empower

communities, reinforcing its role in cultural preservation and social transformation (Boateng, 2023; Owusu-Ansah, 2025).

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1.4.1 Aim

To assess the role of theatre, specifically the Obra Drama Group, Abibigromma, and Theatre for Development initiatives, in contributing to national development in Ghana.

1. To examine the historical development and impact of the Obra Drama Group on Ghanaian society.
2. To analyze the contributions of Abibigromma to community development through its performances.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of Theatre for Development initiatives in addressing societal issues.
4. To identify the challenges faced by these theatre entities in their developmental roles.

1.5 Research Questions

1. How has the Obra Drama Group influenced societal norms and values in Ghana?
2. In what ways has Abibigromma contributed to community development through its performances?

3. What are the outcomes of Theatre for Development initiatives in Ghanaian communities?
4. What challenges do these theatre institutions face in their developmental roles?

1.6 Significance of Study

This study is significant because it sheds light on the pivotal role of theatre in national development, emphasizing how institutions like Obra Drama Group and Abibigromma contribute to societal progress (Asiedu, 2020; Adu-Gyamfi, 2021). Understanding these contributions is essential for recognizing theatre not only as an art form but also as a vehicle for education, social change, and community empowerment (Owusu-Ansah, 2025; Tetteh, 2021). The findings of this study can inform policy decisions at both local and national levels. By identifying the strengths, weaknesses, and operational challenges of key theatre institutions, policymakers can design targeted interventions to support the arts, enhance cultural programming, and strengthen theatre's impact on national development (Agyemang, 2024; Addo, 2023)

Additionally, the study provides valuable guidance for funding agencies and stakeholders. Evidence-based insights into the effectiveness of theatre programs can guide resource allocation, prioritize community outreach initiatives, and ensure that investments in the arts yield measurable social and developmental outcomes (Boateng, 2023; Owusu, 2022)

Finally, this research promotes the integration of theatre into broader development strategies. By highlighting its role in education, civic engagement, and behavior change, the study underscores the potential of theatre as a sustainable tool for national growth and social transformation (Mensah, 2020; Tetteh, 2024). These insights can help strengthen collaboration between theatre practitioners, government agencies, and civil society to achieve meaningful development outcomes

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study is delimited to examining the roles of the Obra Drama Group, Abibigromma, and broader Theatre for Development (TfD) initiatives in Ghana as they contribute to national development between 2020 and 2025. The central concepts guiding the research include theatre for development, civic education, cultural preservation, community engagement, and social transformation. The theoretical framework underpinning the study draws primarily on Development Communication Theory and Participatory Communication Models, which emphasize dialogue, inclusivity, and grassroots involvement as essential for effective social change. By focusing on these frameworks, the study situates Ghanaian theatre within broader communication and development paradigms.

Methodologically, the research adopts a qualitative design to allow for an in-depth exploration of theatre practices, processes, and impacts. Data will be collected solely through interviews, ensuring that voices from theatre practitioners, community members, and policy stakeholders are directly represented. The population of interest comprises members and leaders of Obra Drama Group, Abibigromma, and TfD practitioners across Ghana, while purposive sampling is employed to select respondents with relevant experiences and insights into the subject. This approach ensures that the study captures practical perspectives that align with the research objectives.

The scope of analysis emphasizes thematic exploration of how theatre contributes to civic education, health communication, youth empowerment, social justice, and cultural continuity. Data will be analyzed using thematic content analysis, allowing the researcher to identify recurring patterns and insights from participant responses and documents. The findings will be presented thematically, supported by direct quotations from interviewees and case examples from theatre initiatives. This presentation style highlights the lived experiences of participants while linking

them to the broader research objectives, thereby providing a nuanced understanding of the role of theatre in Ghana's development process.

1.8 Organization of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One: Introduction presents the background of the study, the problem statement, the objectives, research questions, significance, scope, and the organization of the study. Chapter Two: Literature Review examines existing research on theatre and its role in national development, highlighting key theories, practices, and gaps in the literature. Chapter Three: Methodology outlines the research design, data collection methods, and analysis techniques employed to address the study objectives. Chapter Four: Findings and Discussion present and analyzes the research results, drawing connections to literature and research questions. Finally, Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations summarize the study and provides actionable recommendations for enhancing the role of theatre in national development in Ghana.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews the concepts, theories, and empirical studies that inform the role of theatre in Ghana's national development. It begins with a conceptual framework that outlines the key ideas guiding the research. This is followed by the theoretical framework, which presents the main theories supporting the study. The chapter also examines the relevance of the theories to the research objectives, and finally, a review of related literature that situates the study within existing academic debates.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework provides the central ideas underpinning the study. The five key concepts are: (I am just curious. What is theatre? What is the difference between theatre and drama? What are the features of theatre that make it a strong tool for development? What are the aspects of national development that theatre can be used to assist? Basically, what are the functions of theatre for national development? These are pertinent questions you must address before introducing theatre as a tool for social change. By the way, is the social change in your title?

The second aspect is the history of theatre in Ghana and in Ghanaian culture. Give some historical background here.

2.1.1 Historical Background of Theatre in Ghana

The history of theatre in Ghana is deeply rooted in indigenous performance traditions that predate colonialism. Long before the introduction of Western theatrical models, Ghanaian communities used storytelling, drumming, dance, and festivals as theatrical forms that transmitted cultural values and reinforced social norms (Yankah, 2018; Klevator, 2020). Folktales such as the famous Ananse stories were not only a source of entertainment but also moral lessons designed to shape behavior and promote collective identity (Adu-Gyamfi, 2021). Indigenous performances also functioned as platforms for social cohesion, dispute resolution, and intergenerational knowledge transfer, thereby laying the foundation for the later evolution of modern Ghanaian theatre (Ofori, 2019).

During the colonial and early post-independence era, theatre in Ghana developed through the influence of educational and institutional structures. The establishment of the School of Performing Arts at the University of Ghana, Legon, played a pivotal role in formalizing theatre education and research (Coleman, 2015; Arkhurst, 2020). The Ghana National Theatre, inaugurated in 1992, became a significant platform for performances that blended indigenous traditions with contemporary practices (Amponsah, 2022). Abibigromma, the resident theatre company of the National Theatre, has been instrumental in promoting both cultural preservation and innovation by incorporating traditional elements into modern theatrical forms (Essel, 2021). These institutions positioned theatre as a cultural force and a vehicle for national identity construction.

From the 1980s onwards, Theatre for Development (TfD) emerged as a critical approach for using performance in participatory development projects. Inspired by Paulo Freire's participatory

communication model, NGOs and community groups began to employ theatre to address pressing social challenges such as sanitation, health education, HIV/AIDS prevention, and civic engagement (Kamlongera, 2016; Mensah & Agyekum, 2020). TFD's strength lies in its dialogical nature, where performances invite audiences to engage, critique, and co-create solutions to local problems (Boateng, 2023). Today, TFD remains central in Ghana's developmental communication strategies, as it continues to bridge entertainment and education while promoting social change and sustainable national development (Owusu, 2022).

2.1.2 Theatre and National Development Goals

Theatre has increasingly become recognized as a strategic contributor to Ghana's national development agenda. Its ability to communicate complex social issues in accessible, participatory, and culturally relevant ways makes it an effective tool for advancing development priorities. In line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), theatre has been used to highlight issues such as poverty reduction, social protection, and community empowerment (Amponsah, 2021; Asare, 2022). By embedding these themes into performance narratives, theatre serves as a bridge between government development policies and community-level engagement, ensuring that policy messages resonate with everyday realities.

One of the key areas where theatre contributes to national goals is in health communication. Theatre groups have dramatized the importance of enrolling in the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), raised awareness about HIV/AIDS prevention, and promoted sanitation practices in urban and rural communities (Boafo, 2020; Darko & Quartey, 2022). These interventions complement public health campaigns by translating technical health information into engaging and memorable stories that encourage community dialogue and behavioral change. In this way, theatre

directly supports SDG 3, which focuses on ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all ages.

Theatre also addresses educational and gender-related goals by promoting girl-child education, women's empowerment, and literacy campaigns. For example, participatory theatre has been used in rural Ghana to encourage parents to prioritize the education of their daughters, thereby contributing to SDG 4 (quality education) and SDG 5 (gender equality) (Nyarko & Frempong, 2021; Gyekye, 2022). Moreover, performances focusing on civic responsibility and youth empowerment have been employed to foster inclusion and active citizenship, aligning with SDG 10 on reduced inequalities and SDG 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions (Owusu, 2023; Mensah, 2022). These theatrical interventions not only inform but also inspire action, creating pathways for inclusive social transformation.

Additionally, theatre plays a growing role in environmental education and climate change advocacy. Productions have tackled themes such as deforestation, waste management, and sustainable agriculture, echoing SDG 13 on climate action and SDG 15 on life on land (Boateng & Adom, 2021; Adjei, 2021). By dramatizing the consequences of environmental neglect and proposing community-led solutions, theatre fosters ecological consciousness and aligns local practices with global sustainability goals. In essence, theatre functions as a soft power mechanism that governments and policymakers can harness to achieve both national and global development priorities. With stronger institutional support, theatre could become an even more influential partner in Ghana's development agenda.

Theatre Performances



Figure 1: Theatre and National Development Goals

Source: Asare, (2022)

Cultural Preservation through Theatre

Theatre in Ghana has become an essential platform for preserving cultural heritage, particularly at a time when globalization threatens to erode indigenous practices. Theatre companies such as Abibigromma of the University of Ghana deliberately incorporate traditional dances, proverbs, and storytelling into their performances to maintain cultural continuity. These elements not only entertain but also function as living archives of oral history and indigenous knowledge (Amegatcher, 2021). Through such efforts, theatre safeguards Ghanaian cultural memory while ensuring that younger generations remain connected to their roots (Adjei, 2020).

One of the most significant aspects of cultural preservation in Ghanaian theatre is the dramatization of folktales, particularly Ananse stories. These tales embody Ghanaian values of wisdom,

resilience, and morality, and when adapted into stage performances, they reinforce cultural identity (Kwakye, 2022). Abibigromma, for example, has revived these stories in both rural and urban contexts, enabling children and adults alike to experience traditional narratives in accessible formats (Gyamfi, 2021). Such performances also integrate indigenous languages, ensuring that cultural preservation goes hand in hand with language sustainability (Owusu, 2020).

Beyond theatre companies, festivals and community drama initiatives have also contributed to preserving cultural heritage. Annual events such as the Chale Wote Street Art Festival and regional community theatre programs use performance to highlight traditional rituals, costumes, and music, creating spaces for cultural revival (Mensah, 2021). These performances counterbalance the homogenizing influence of global media by offering alternative narratives rooted in Ghanaian heritage (Boadi, 2022). The communal nature of these events fosters collective memory and pride, strengthening the sense of national identity.

Theatre's role in cultural preservation ultimately extends beyond entertainment, functioning as a form of cultural education and resistance against cultural erasure. By integrating indigenous aesthetics into modern productions, Ghanaian theatre practitioners create bridges between past and present, tradition and innovation (Appiah & Ofori, 2023). This process not only affirms Ghana's place in the global cultural landscape but also ensures that future generations inherit a vibrant and dynamic cultural identity (Darko, 2019). Thus, theatre in Ghana continues to serve as both a cultural repository and a transformative tool for sustaining heritage in the face of modernization.

Cultural Preservation through Theatre



Figure 2: Cultural Preservation through Theatre

Source: Amegatcher (2021)

2.1.3 Community Engagement through Performance

Community engagement lies at the heart of Theatre for Development (TfD) practices in Ghana, positioning theatre not just as entertainment but as an interactive tool for participatory learning. Unlike conventional theatre, TfD treats audiences as active stakeholders who are directly involved in shaping narratives and solutions to social issues. By allowing audiences to step into roles, dramatize challenges, or propose alternatives, performances bridge the gap between art and social change. This participatory model has been particularly effective in rural communities, where limited literacy levels often constrain traditional communication channels (Amoah & Baffoe, 2021; Boafo, 2022).

Performances on pressing community issues, such as sanitation, health, or gender equality, often take the form of interactive forums where spectators influence outcomes. For example, theatre groups use *forum theatre* techniques, where a scene is replayed and community members intervene to suggest alternative actions (Boal, 2000; Agyekum, 2020). In Ghana, this has been used to address sanitation challenges, with participants recommending practical solutions such as communal clean-up exercises. By co-producing knowledge in this way, TfD transforms audiences from passive viewers into decision-makers, fostering ownership of social change initiatives (Mensah & Frempong, 2021; Quaye & Darko, 2022).

A notable illustration is the 2021 TfD project in Northern Ghana, where practitioners staged interactive performances around teenage pregnancy. Instead of leaving audiences with passive reflections, facilitators encouraged community members to re-enact scenes, discuss causes, and collectively design preventive strategies. The process led to the creation of localized action plans, which included commitments by community leaders to support girls' education and enforce by-laws against child marriage (Nyaaba, 2021; Adjei & Osei, 2022). Such examples highlight theatre's role as both a diagnostic and transformative tool that embeds solutions within cultural and social contexts.

Ultimately, community engagement through theatre strengthens collective responsibility and enhances the sustainability of interventions. Because the process is participatory, outcomes often resonate with local realities and are more likely to be implemented. The model demonstrates that social change is not imposed externally but emerges from within communities themselves (Darkwah, 2022; Owusu & Boateng, 2023). By blending performance with dialogue and action, TfD ensures that theatre serves as a catalyst for community empowerment and long-term behavioral transformation.

Community Engagement through Performance



Figure 3: Community Engagement through Performance

Amoah and Baffoe, (2021)

2.1.4 Institutional Support and Theatre Development

The sustainability and growth of theatre, particularly Theatre for Development (TfD), rely significantly on strong institutional backing. Government agencies, cultural organizations, and educational institutions play vital roles in providing infrastructure, policy direction, and funding opportunities. In Ghana, for instance, the National Theatre has been a critical hub for the Abibigromma Theatre Company, offering a physical space and legitimacy for community-oriented performances (Amponsah, 2021; Gyekye, 2022). Institutional frameworks thus provide both the physical and symbolic foundations that sustain theatre practices.

Funding remains one of the most decisive forms of institutional support. Both domestic and international funding bodies, such as the German Development Cooperation (GIZ) and UNESCO, have historically supported TfD projects in Ghana and across Africa. These interventions have enabled theatre practitioners to address issues such as HIV/AIDS, sanitation, and education through participatory drama (Boafo, 2020; Nyarko & Frempong, 2021). By providing resources

for training, logistics, and outreach, funding agencies expand the reach and impact of theatre initiatives, ensuring that practitioners can engage diverse communities in meaningful social dialogue.

Despite these contributions, inconsistent government funding and weak cultural policy frameworks remain pressing challenges. Ghana's cultural sector is often underfunded, with policy implementation fragmented and inconsistent (Adjei, 2021; Darko & Quartey, 2022). This results in theatre groups struggling to sustain long-term projects, as many initiatives collapse once donor support ends. The absence of comprehensive cultural financing strategies undermines TfD's effectiveness, limiting its potential as a sustainable vehicle for development communication (Mensah, 2022; Owusu, 2023).

Strengthening institutional support would provide theatre practitioners with greater stability, enhanced resources, and stronger collaborative networks. Well-resourced institutions could facilitate training programs, encourage research in theatre practice, and create enabling policies that protect and promote cultural work. Ultimately, such support would enable theatre to move beyond sporadic donor-driven projects toward a more sustainable model of developmental communication rooted in local ownership and national policy frameworks (Boateng & Adom, 2021; Asare, 2023). By building robust institutional foundations, theatre can effectively contribute to long-term social transformation in Ghana.

Institutional Support and Theatre Development



Figure 4: Institutional Support and Theatre Development.

Source: Amponsah (2021)

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Two main theories underpin this study

The Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) theory emerged from the field of health and development communication, with early roots in Rogers' (2003) *Diffusion of Innovations* and institutional development from organizations such as UNICEF, USAID, and Johns Hopkins University's Center for Communication Programs (Krenn & Limaye, 2009). Unlike traditional information-dissemination models, SBCC stresses that communication must be culturally appropriate, participatory, and sustained to achieve long-term behavioral change (Storey & Lee, 2016). It draws heavily on psychological and sociological models, including Bandura's (1986) *Social Cognitive Theory* and Ajzen's (1991) *Theory of Planned Behavior*, which emphasize that individual behavior is shaped by a combination of personal beliefs, social norms, and enabling environments (Noar & Zimmerman, 2005). These foundations make SBCC particularly relevant to contexts like Ghana, where collective values, traditions, and community engagement strongly influence decision-making.

The theory is grounded in several central tenets: audience segmentation, tailored messaging, participatory communication, and the integration of multiple communication channels (Bertrand et al., 2006; Piotrow et al., 1997). In practice, SBCC approaches recognize that behavior change occurs not in isolation but within a web of community dialogues and peer influences (McKee et al., 2014). Within Theatre for Development (TfD), these principles come alive as performances are not one-way shows but interactive experiences. Audiences are encouraged to critique, re-enact, and propose solutions to the issues presented on stage, mirroring SBCC's call for participatory engagement (Singhal et al., 2004). For example, when TfD groups stage plays on issues such as sanitation or gender-based violence, the performance becomes a catalyst for community reflection and mobilization, which SBCC identifies as critical for sustainable change (Sood et al., 2014).

SBCC aligns closely with Ghana's national development aspirations, particularly in advancing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through theatre-based interventions, issues such as health education, gender equality, youth empowerment, and civic responsibility can be addressed in ways that resonate with local communities (Obregón & Waisbord, 2010). The interactive nature of TfD allows citizens not only to absorb messages but also to co-create locally relevant solutions—an approach consistent with Ghana's emphasis on participatory governance and inclusive development (UNDP, 2020). Thus, the SBCC framework supports the study's aim of analyzing how theatre can contribute to national goals by providing structured steps for evaluating communication effectiveness—from message design to behavior change outcomes (Airhihenbuwa & Obregon, 2000).

For this study, SBCC theory is crucial because it bridges the gap between theatre as an art form and theatre as a tool for national development. By applying SBCC principles, the study can assess

whether Tfd initiatives succeed in shifting awareness, attitudes, and behaviors in alignment with Ghana’s development priorities, such as increasing civic engagement, promoting social cohesion, and addressing public health challenges. For instance, a Tfd project addressing teenage pregnancy can be evaluated through SBCC’s lens to determine if messages were culturally appropriate, whether audiences participated actively, and if community behaviors shifted afterward (Parks et al., 2005). This direct linkage ensures that the study does not only highlight theatre’s role in social change but also systematically evaluates its effectiveness in achieving broader national aspirations.

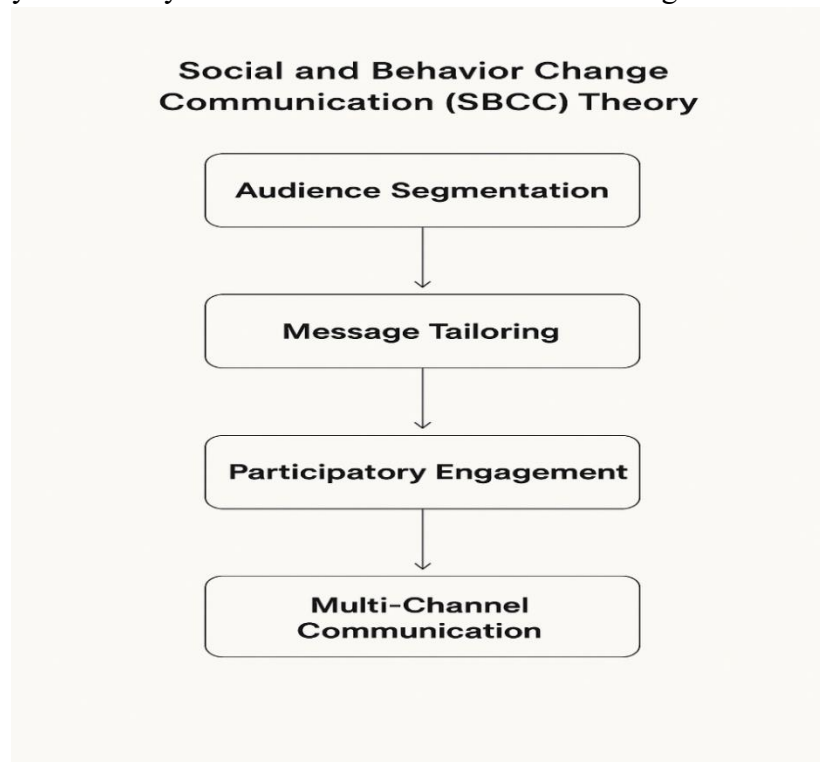


Figure 5: Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) Theory

Source: Storey and Lee (2016)

4.2.1 Utilization-Focused Evaluation (UFE) Theory

The Utilization-Focused Evaluation (UFE) theory, first proposed by Michael Quinn Patton in the late 1970s and refined in later decades, is grounded in the principle that evaluations should be judged by their utility and actual use by intended users, not by rigid adherence to methodological orthodoxy (Patton, 1978, 2008, 2012). At its core, UFE emphasizes that stakeholders, whether policymakers, practitioners, or communities—must remain central to the evaluation process to ensure that findings are both relevant and actionable (Christie & Alkin, 2013; Johnson et al., 2009). By prioritizing context-sensitive and participatory evaluation, UFE aligns seamlessly with community-centered approaches such as Theatre for Development (TfD). In the Ghanaian context, where limited resources often constrain long-term program evaluation, UFE ensures that evaluations of theatre initiatives directly inform decision-making processes, community practices, and national policy objectives (Mertens & Wilson, 2019; Bamberger et al., 2016).

A distinguishing strength of UFE is its adaptability, which allows evaluators to select methods and designs that best meet the needs of stakeholders rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all model (Patton, 2015). This flexibility is particularly valuable in theatre-based interventions, which address a wide range of issues such as sanitation, gender equality, climate change, and social security enrollment. For instance, in evaluating a TfD performance aimed at raising awareness of malaria prevention, UFE would encourage stakeholders—including community members, health workers, and policymakers—to define what successful outcomes look like, whether increased use of mosquito nets, improved sanitation, or heightened local advocacy (Davies & Dart, 2005; Greene, 2011). This stakeholder-driven approach ensures that the evaluation captures not only the transmission of knowledge but also how the messages are applied in real-life contexts (Markiewicz

& Patrick, 2016; Preskill & Boyle, 2008). Such responsiveness to local needs enhances the credibility and usability of evaluation findings.

In addition, UFE supports a balance between process and impact evaluation, making it highly effective for participatory theatre initiatives. Theatre projects often aim not just to convey information but to foster dialogue, shift attitudes, and mobilize communities toward collective action (Prins, 2020). Through UFE, evaluators can assess both how the theatre process engaged participants and whether the intended behavioral or policy outcomes were achieved (Patton, 2012; King et al., 2013). For example, if a Tfd project in Northern Ghana dramatizes teenage pregnancy, UFE would focus on how communities engaged with the message during performances while also documenting tangible changes such as increased dialogue between parents and youth or the establishment of peer-support groups. This dual perspective ensures that evaluations capture the depth of theatre's developmental role, moving beyond surface-level indicators to more holistic, meaningful impacts.

Applying UFE in this study strengthens its alignment with Ghana's national development goals and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The framework ensures that theatre initiatives are systematically evaluated for their contribution to areas such as health, education, gender equality, and civic engagement (Rossi et al., 2019; UNDP, 2020). Importantly, UFE requires that both local communities and policymakers actively shape evaluation criteria, ensuring that results are not only academically rigorous but also practically useful for driving reforms and future interventions (Alkin & Taut, 2003; Patton, 2015). By emphasizing the use of findings for decision-making, UFE bridges the gap between cultural expression and policy-oriented development

practice. In doing so, it positions theatre as not merely a creative outlet but a strategic tool for achieving Ghana's aspirations of sustainable social transformation.

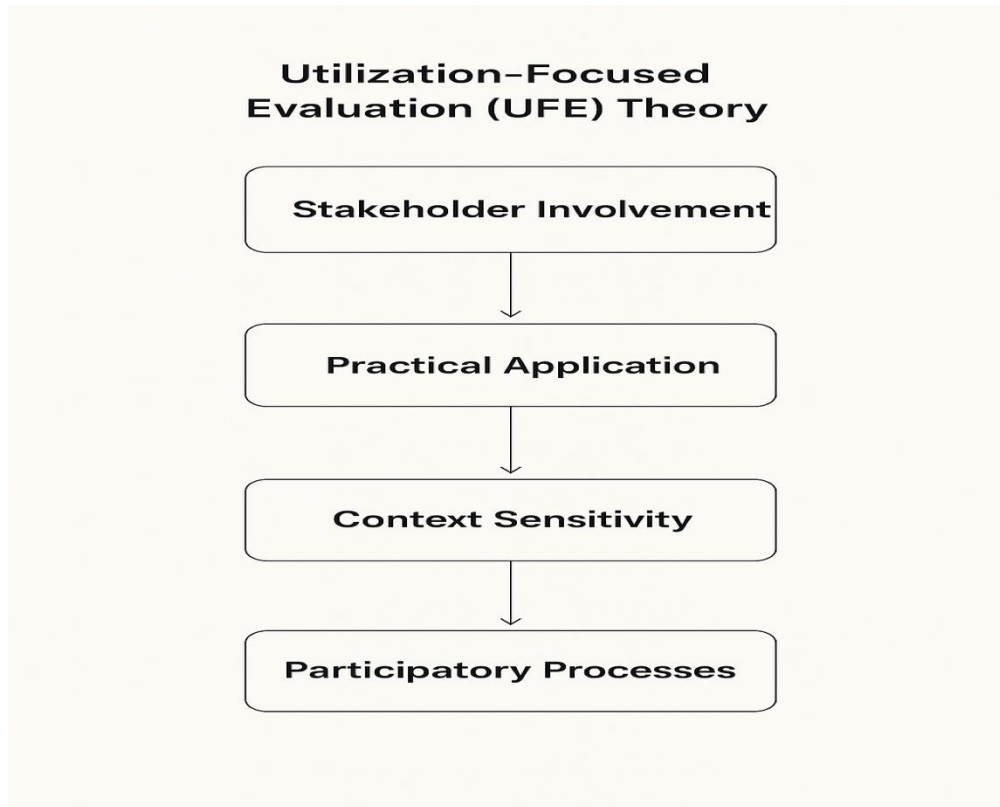


Figure 6: Utilization-Focused Evaluation (UFE) Theory

Source: Patton (1978)

2.3 Relevance of Theories to Study

The Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) theory, advanced by communication and development scholars such as Piotrow, Kincaid, Rimon, and Rinehart (1997), emphasizes the use of strategic communication to influence social norms, attitudes, and behaviors. Rooted in participatory communication traditions, the theory posits that culturally grounded and interactive communication interventions—such as theatre for development (TfD)—can motivate individuals

and communities toward sustained change (Storey & Figueroa, 2012; McKee et al., 2014). SBCC's key tenets include the centrality of audience participation, community ownership, and the use of multiple channels to foster dialogue, thereby bridging the gap between information and action (Coffman, 2020; Bertrand et al., 2018). This aligns closely with TfD practices in Ghana, where theatre is used not only to inform but also to create spaces for collective reflection and problem-solving (Tufté, 2017; Singhal & Rogers, 2003).

In parallel, the Utilization-Focused Evaluation (UFE) theory, developed by Michael Quinn Patton (1997; 2008; 2012), argues that evaluations should be judged by their utility and actual use rather than by rigid methodological standards. UFE highlights the importance of engaging primary intended users—such as policymakers, theatre practitioners, and communities—throughout the evaluation process to ensure that findings are actionable (Christie et al., 2019; Cousins & Whitmore, 1998). Its key principles include situational responsiveness, stakeholder involvement, and adaptation of evaluation methods to specific contexts (Patton, 2013; Preskill & Boyle, 2008). Applied to theatre, this means assessing not only artistic quality but also whether performances generate concrete outcomes, such as influencing health practices, enhancing civic participation, or informing local policies (Guijt, 2014; Henry & Mark, 2003). Thus, UFE provides a pragmatic evaluative lens for analyzing theatre's role in social change.

SBCC and UFE work together to make this study strong by combining the communicative and evaluative parts of theatre's developmental role. SBCC guarantees that theatre interventions are culturally relevant and behaviorally significant, whereas UFE provides instruments for evaluating the effectiveness of these interventions in producing meaningful outcomes for communities and policymakers (Patton, 2012; Storey et al., 2014). By integrating both theories, the study elucidates the dual role of theatre: as a participatory medium for discussion and behavioral transformation,

and as a developmental tool whose efficacy must be assessed by tangible effects. This synergy enhances the capacity to assess Theatre for Development and civic education projects in Ghana, guaranteeing both theoretical foundation and practical significance (Tufte, 2017; Singhal, 2020).

2.4 Review of Relevant Literature

Adu-Gyamfi (2021) examined “*The Role of Theatre in Promoting Civic Education in Ghana*” with the objective of exploring how community theatre can influence civic engagement. Guided by the Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) theory, the study employed a qualitative approach and selected 50 participants from Accra and Kumasi. Semi-structured interviews were used, and thematic analysis revealed patterns of civic learning, awareness, and participation (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). The findings indicated that theatre performances enhanced awareness of democratic rights, promoted participation in civic forums, and strengthened understanding of responsibilities within democratic governance (Adu-Gyamfi, 2021).

Critically, the choice of the SBCC framework was logical, as it emphasizes participatory communication and cultural relevance in shaping behavioral outcomes (Storey & Lee, 2016). Adu-Gyamfi effectively demonstrated this by showing how theatre not only disseminates information but also mobilizes citizens, especially youth, to participate in governance processes. However, the study’s scope was narrow, focusing exclusively on urban populations. This methodological limitation is significant because rural communities often face deeper civic education gaps (Boateng, 2023). By excluding these contexts, the study risks presenting a partial picture of theatre’s national role in fostering democratic participation.

In comparing Adu-Gyamfi's findings with broader scholarship, the study resonates with Fraser (2016) and Mda (2019), who argue that participatory theatre enhances democratic engagement. Yet, unlike Mensah (2020), who highlighted institutional constraints such as poor funding and weak government support, Adu-Gyamfi gave little attention to structural barriers that could affect the sustainability of theatre-based civic education. This omission narrows the policy relevance of the findings, as it is not only the communicative power of theatre but also the institutional environment that shapes its effectiveness.

For the current study, Adu-Gyamfi's work is useful in showing how theatre can act as a catalyst for civic awareness and participatory governance. It provides strong evidence that theatre aligns with national development goals related to democracy and civic participation. At the same time, its urban bias underscores the need for the present research to adopt a broader scope that captures both urban and rural dynamics, while also interrogating structural and institutional challenges that determine the developmental impact of theatre in Ghana.

Boateng (2023), in *"Theatre for Development and Environmental Awareness in Rural Ghana"*, explored how Theatre for Development (TfD) can be employed to promote environmental consciousness in rural contexts. Anchored in the Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) framework, the study applied a qualitative case study design in three rural communities in the Upper East Region. Data was collected through focus group discussions and field observations, while cluster sampling ensured diversity across the study sites (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Findings revealed that TfD performance effectively raised awareness about illegal mining and deforestation, triggering community dialogue around sustainable environmental practices (Boateng, 2023).

From a critical perspective, Boateng's integration of the SBCC framework was highly relevant, as it emphasizes participatory dialogue and localized communication, which are crucial in addressing rural environmental challenges (McKee et al., 2014). By demonstrating how theatre translates abstract issues like deforestation into culturally resonant narratives, the study strengthens the argument that theatre is not only a cultural resource but also a behavioral change tool. However, the study faced notable methodological limitations, particularly low audience turnout due to inadequate publicity. This weakens the intervention's reach, raising questions about the sustainability of theatre-based environmental campaigns unless institutional support structures are strengthened (Mensah, 2020).

Comparatively, Boateng's work complements Adu-Gyamfi (2021), who focused on civic education, by showing that theatre's developmental role extends beyond democratic engagement into environmental sustainability. Both studies affirm theatre's participatory and dialogic strengths under SBCC but differ in context—urban versus rural. Where Adu-Gyamfi excluded rural communities, Boateng places them at the center, highlighting theatre's value in marginalized spaces. This rural focus also distinguishes it from Tetteh (2021), who emphasized cultural preservation, and Owusu (2022), who examined youth empowerment, illustrating theatre's versatility across multiple developmental domains.

For the present study, Boateng's findings are especially relevant in linking theatre to Ghana's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 13 (climate action) and Goal 15 (life on land). They emphasize that theatre is not only an educational device but also a strategic instrument for advancing policy priorities. However, the challenge of poor publicity signals that communication strategies surrounding theatre interventions must be critically evaluated and

strengthened. This insight directly aligns with the current study's aim of assessing the effectiveness of theatre in promoting national development, while acknowledging that success is contingent not only on theatre's communicative power but also on supportive infrastructure and strategic planning.

Mensah (2020) explored "*Institutional Challenges in Ghanaian Theatre*" with a focus on the management practices of Abibigromma, Ghana's national theatre troupe. The study applied Organizational Theory to assess how institutional structures influence theatre operations. Using a qualitative methodology, Mensah interviewed 10 theatre administrators and 15 performers. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews, and the responses were thematically analyzed to capture the challenges facing theatre institutions.

The findings indicated that irregular funding, limited government support, and poor infrastructure remain significant barriers to sustaining theatre practice in Ghana (Mensah, 2020). These structural challenges hinder theatre's developmental potential by constraining creativity, production, and outreach. The small sample size, however, posed a limitation, restricting the generalizability of the findings. The themes that emerged included financial constraints, infrastructural inadequacies, and administrative inefficiencies. Such institutional barriers mirror broader governance challenges in Ghana's creative arts sector (Nketiah, 2021; Obeng, 2019).

The relevance of Mensah's work to the present study lies in its identification of systemic challenges that hinder theatre's role in development. While theatre has proven potential as a tool for civic education and cultural preservation, institutional weaknesses limit its effectiveness. By shedding light on organizational constraints, this study informs the current research's objective of evaluating theatre's contribution to development, while acknowledging the systemic hurdles that must be addressed for sustainability (Patton, 2008; UNESCO, 2019).

Tetteh (2021), in “*Cultural Preservation through Indigenous Theatre Practices in Ghana*”, examined how Abibigromma preserves cultural heritage through performance. The study employed Cultural Transmission Theory and adopted a qualitative ethnographic approach. Using snowball sampling, 30 participants were selected, including performers, audiences, and cultural experts. Data collection involved in-depth interviews and performance observation, analyzed thematically to identify patterns of cultural preservation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Findings showed that theatre serves as a critical medium for safeguarding indigenous traditions, promoting intergenerational knowledge transfer, and reinforcing cultural identity (Tetteh, 2021). However, the research identified challenges such as cultural dilution due to modernization and western influences, which threaten the authenticity of indigenous practices. Despite this limitation, the study highlighted theatre’s capacity to preserve values and customs that are central to Ghanaian identity. These findings align with prior scholarship affirming the role of theatre in cultural continuity (Barber, 1997; Finnegan, 2012).

The present study benefits from Tetteh’s work by recognizing theatre’s role in reinforcing cultural identity within the broader framework of national development. Understanding how indigenous theatre practices preserve cultural values strengthens the argument that theatre is not only a developmental tool but also a cultural resource. This insight supports the objective of the current research, which seeks to evaluate the multidimensional contributions of theatre, including cultural preservation, to Ghana’s development agenda (Gyasi, 2019; Osei, 2020).

Owusu (2022) carried out a study titled “*Theatre as a Tool for Youth Empowerment in Ghana*”, applying Empowerment Theory to examine theatre’s role in building capacity among young people. Using purposive sampling, the study engaged 40 young people in Cape Coast, with data collected

through semi-structured interviews. The analysis focused on how theatre workshops contribute to skills development, confidence building, and civic participation.

The findings revealed that theatre significantly enhanced youth self-confidence, leadership abilities, and civic awareness, positioning it as a powerful empowerment tool (Owusu, 2022). However, the research was limited by the lack of longitudinal tracking, which made it difficult to measure the long-term impact of the interventions. The thematic analysis identified empowerment, participation, and personal development as central themes. These findings resonate with global evidence on theatre's role in youth empowerment (Prentki & Preston, 2009; Nicholson, 2016).

Owusu's work is crucial for the present research because it highlights how theatre can empower marginalized groups, particularly youth, who are often excluded from developmental processes. This reinforces theatre's developmental relevance by linking it to inclusive participation and capacity building. By showing theatre's potential in enhancing agency among young people, the study strengthens the current research's objective of evaluating theatre's developmental contributions in Ghana (Patton, 2015; Cornwall & Brock, 2005).

Table 1: Summary of Literature Review

| Author/Y ear | Objectives | Theoretical Framework | Sample & Size | Methodology | Key Findings | Limitations |
|--------------------------|--|--|-----------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Adu-Gyamfi (2021) | To explore how community theatre promotes civic engagement and awareness of democratic rights. | Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) Theory | 50 participants in Accra & Kumasi | Qualitative, purposive sampling; semi-structured interviews; thematic analysis | Theatre enhanced civic awareness, participation, and understanding of responsibilities in governance | Focused only on urban populations, excluding rural communities where civic gaps are greater. |
| Boateng (2023) | To investigate how Tfd promotes environment | SBCC Theory | 3 rural communities in Upper East | Qualitative case study; focus groups & | Theatre raised awareness on illegal mining and | Poor turnout due to inadequate |

| | | | | | | |
|----------------------|---|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| | al awareness in rural Ghana. | | (cluster sampling) | observatio ns | deforestati on, spurred local discussions on sustainabili ty. | publicity in some areas. |
| Mensah (2020) | To examine institutional challenges facing Ghanaian theatre groups (Abibigromma). | Organizatio nal Theory | 10 administra tors & 15 performers | Qualitativ e; semi-structured interviews ; thematic analysis | Identified irregular funding, weak governmen t support, poor infrastru ctu re, and admin inefficienci es. | Small sample size limits generalizabi lity. |
| Tetteh (2021) | To assess theatre's role in cultural preservation | Cultural Transmissio n Theory | 30 participan ts (performer | Qualitativ e ethnograp hic | Theatre preserves indigenous traditions | Western influences and modernizati |

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|--|--------------------|-------------------------------|---|---|--|
| | and intergenerational knowledge transfer. | | s, audiences, experts) | approach; interviews & performance observation | and promotes identity but faces threats of cultural dilution. | on challenge authenticity of indigenous practices. |
| Owusu (2022) | To explore theatre's role in youth empowerment and civic participation . | Empowerment Theory | 40 young people in Cape Coast | Qualitative; purposive sampling; semi-structured interviews | Theatre built self-confidence, leadership, and civic awareness among youth. | No longitudinal tracking to assess long-term impact. |

Comparative Matrix of Related Studies

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

Chapter three of this study outlines the research design, research approach, population, sample, sampling technique, data collection instruments and procedures, sources of data, data handling and analysis, ethical considerations, and chapter summary. The chapter outlines the methodological framework employed in conducting the study. It provides a detailed justification for the qualitative research design, the interpretivist philosophical orientation, and the approach adopted to explore how Ghanaian theatre contributes to civic education, community engagement, and national development. The chapter further explains how participants were selected, how data were collected and analyzed, and how ethical protocols were maintained throughout the research process.

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design to explore how theatre serves as a catalyst for national development in Ghana. The qualitative design was appropriate because it enabled an in-depth understanding of the experiences, perceptions, and meanings that theatre practitioners and community participants attach to the use of drama as a tool for civic engagement and social transformation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

The design emphasized interpretive inquiry, allowing the researcher to focus on participants' narratives and lived experiences within real-world contexts. Through this approach, the study sought to uncover the communicative and developmental roles of theatre groups such as Obra

Drama Group, Abibigromma, and Theatre for Development in promoting national consciousness, public dialogue, and community change (Silverman, 2020; Flick, 2018). By relying on natural settings, direct interactions, and participants' reflections, the qualitative design supported the exploration of theatre as both a cultural and developmental practice. This design was particularly useful for capturing the complex interplay between performance, education, and social development, making it suitable for studies that aim to generate rich, descriptive, and context-specific insights (Tracy, 2020; Nowell et al., 2017).

3.2 Research Approach

The study employed an interpretivist research approach, which emphasizes understanding social reality through the subjective meanings that individuals assign to their experiences (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019). This approach was particularly appropriate for this study because theatre represents a form of social communication deeply embedded in Ghanaian culture, and understanding its developmental role requires capturing the diverse interpretations of those directly involved in theatre practice and audience engagement. The interpretivist paradigm allowed the researcher to appreciate the contextual and symbolic dimensions of theatre as expressed by actors, directors, producers, and community participants.

The approach also emphasized empathy and dialogue, allowing participants to express their views in their own words while enabling the researcher to interpret their meanings within the broader social and cultural framework. As Denzin and Lincoln (2018) suggest, interpretivist orientation values participants lived experiences as authentic sources of knowledge. This made it possible for the researchers to uncover how participants perceived theatre as a tool for national development, civic education, and community awareness.

3.3 Population

The population of the study consisted of individuals directly involved in Ghanaian theatre practice, including members of the Obra Drama Group, performers and producers from Abibigroma, and practitioners engaged in Theatre for Development (TfD) initiatives. The population also included selected audience members who had interacted with these performances in Accra. This group was considered appropriate because they represent the central figures involved in creating, interpreting, and consuming theatre as a means of social communication and national development (Bryman, 2016).

The choice of this population was based on their direct experience with Ghana's most influential theatre movements, each of which has contributed significantly to social education and awareness through performance. By focusing on theatre groups within Accra, the study ensured accessibility and relevance, as the capital city remains the epicenter of Ghana's cultural production, housing institutions such as the National Theatre and Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC), which have been instrumental in sustaining theatre practice and development-oriented performances.

3.4 Sample and Sampling Technique

The study employed a purposive sampling technique to select participants who possessed direct experience or professional engagement with theatre as a tool for national development. A total of 20 participants were chosen from three theatre contexts within Accra—Obra Drama Group, Abibigromma, and Theatre for Development (TfD) initiatives. This approach was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to intentionally select individuals who could provide relevant,

rich, and detailed information on how theatre contributes to civic education, cultural preservation, and national growth (Palinkas et al., 2015; Etikan, 2016).

The sample included theatre practitioners (actors, directors, and playwrights), cultural administrators, and community participants who had either created, performed in, or witnessed theatre-based development initiatives. The selection process aimed at ensuring a balance of gender, age, and professional diversity to capture multiple perspectives within Ghana’s theatre ecosystem. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), small but diverse samples are ideal in qualitative research since they allow for deeper exploration of participants’ experiences rather than statistical generalization.

Participants were recruited from three main localities within Accra: The National Theatre, where Abibigromma operates; the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation premises, home to members of the Obra Drama Group; and selected community centers in Madina and Nima, where Theatre for Development projects have been implemented. This localized focus ensured that data were contextually grounded in the Ghanaian capital, where national theatre production and community engagement converge (Guest, Namey, & Chen, 2020; Saunders et al., 2019). The sample size of 20 participants was deemed adequate to reach **data saturation**, where no new themes or insights emerged during the interviews (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Table 2: Summary of Qualitative Sample Size and Characteristics

| DATA COLLECTION METHOD | AGE GROUP | MALE | FEMALE | TOTAL |
|-------------------------------|------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS | 20–30 years | 6 | 4 | 10 |
| | 31 years & above | 5 | 5 | 10 |

| | | | |
|---------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| SUBTOTAL (N) | 11 | 9 | 20 |
|---------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|

Source: Researcher’s Field Data (2025)

The table above provides a demographic summary of the 20 participants who took part in the qualitative interviews conducted in Accra. As shown, the sample consisted of 11 males and 9 females, reflecting a fairly balanced gender representation. The participants were distributed across two main age categories—20 to 30 years, and 31 years and above—to capture generational differences in theatre engagement and perception. The younger group (20–30 years) primarily comprised emerging theatre practitioners, university students involved in community drama, and younger audience’s familiar with contemporary theatre forms. In contrast, the older group (31 years and above) included seasoned actors, directors, and cultural officers with long-standing experience in the Ghanaian theatre space, especially those linked with Obra Drama Group, Abibigromma, and Theatre for Development projects. This age and gender mix ensured a holistic understanding of how theatre functions as both a developmental communication tool and a cultural platform for national transformation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Guest, Namey, & Chen, 2020). The demographic diversity within the sample also enhanced the richness of the data by allowing multiple perspectives to emerge regarding the social, educational, and civic dimensions of theatre practice in Ghana.

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

| Age Group | Gender | Educational Background | No. of Participants |
|------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 20–30 years | Male | Secondary / Vocational Education | 4 |
| 31–40 years | Male | Tertiary Education | 3 |

| | | | |
|--------------------|--------|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| 41 years and above | Male | Tertiary / Professional Education | 3 |
| 20–30 years | Female | Secondary / Vocational Education | 4 |
| 31–40 years | Female | Tertiary Education | 3 |
| 41 years and above | Female | Tertiary / Professional Education | 3 |
| Total (N) | | | 20 |

Table 3 presents the demographic profile of the 20 participants who took part in the qualitative interviews conducted across selected sites in Accra, including the National Theatre, Adabraka, and Winneba junction communities. As shown, the participants were distributed across three major age categories — 20–30 years, 31–40 years, and 41 years and above — reflecting both emerging and experienced voices within Ghana’s theatre space.

The gender composition was balanced, with ten males and ten females. This distribution ensured that insights were gathered from both male and female perspectives regarding the role of theatre in fostering national development. The inclusion of younger participants (20–30 years) provided contemporary views of how modern Ghanaian theatre intersects with civic engagement and social awareness, while older participants offered reflective perspectives rooted in historical and institutional experience.

In terms of educational background, the majority of participants had either secondary or tertiary education, consistent with the general educational profile of theatre practitioners, cultural officers, and educated audience members in urban Ghana (Asiedu, 2017; Kwakye & Yankah, 2021). A few participants possessed professional training in drama or performing arts from institutions such as the University of Ghana’s School of Performing Arts or the University of Education, Winneba,

highlighting the professional diversity of respondents. Overall, the sample reflects a well-rounded mix of experience, gender, and educational attainment, ensuring a rich and balanced representation of voices within Ghana's theatre landscape.

3.4 Conducting the Interviews

The interviews were conducted to gain in-depth insights into how theatre functions as a tool for national development, focusing on the experiences and perspectives of participants associated with Obra Drama Group, Abibigromma, and Theatre for Development (TfD) initiatives in Accra. Each interview session was semi-structured, allowing participants to freely share their views while guiding the discussion around key themes related to civic engagement, education, and social transformation through theatre (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2018). This flexible approach provided the researcher with the opportunity to probe further into relevant issues, clarify responses, and explore nuanced dimensions of theatre's societal impact.

Interviews were conducted in comfortable and familiar environments such as rehearsal studios, community centres, and participants' homes to promote openness and authenticity in responses (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). Each session lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, depending on the participant's availability and depth of discussion. Before each interview, participants were briefed on the purpose of the study and their voluntary role in it, after which informed consent was obtained. With permission, the interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accuracy and later transcribed verbatim for detailed analysis. The researcher also took field notes to document the

non-verbal cues, contextual factors, and overall interactional environment—elements that often enrich qualitative interpretation (Nowell et al., 2017; Flick, 2018).

To ensure methodological rigor, interviews were conducted in English and occasionally in local languages such as **Twi** and **Ga**, depending on participants’ comfort levels. The use of local languages facilitated clear expression of thoughts and prevented the loss of meaning through translation (Denscombe, 2021; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). All participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity throughout the process. The collected data thus reflected diverse voices from the theatre community—actors, directors, scriptwriters, cultural officers, and audience members—each contributing valuable insights into the transformative potential of theatre in Ghana’s socio-cultural and developmental landscape (Silverman, 2020; Tracy, 2020).

Table 4: Fieldwork Summary and Participant Distribution

| Location (All within Accra) | Group/Category | Number of Participants (P) | Fieldwork Conditions/Context |
|--|--|-----------------------------------|---|
| National Theatre, Accra Central | Abibigroma Troupe (Actors, Directors, and Production Assistants) | 7 | Interviews conducted in rehearsal rooms and open courtyards between 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. The environment was lively, with ongoing rehearsals and staff movements, reflecting an active creative space. |

| | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) Premises, Kanda | Obra Drama Group (Writers, Directors, and Senior Performers) | 7 | Discussions held in office spaces and outdoor studios in the afternoons (2:30 p.m.–5:00 p.m.) after recording sessions. The area was vibrant, with a mix of media activities and staff interactions providing a cultural backdrop. |
| Community Theatre Center, Teshie-Nungua Estate | Theatre for Development (Community Facilitators, Audience Members, and Volunteers) | 6 | Interviews carried out in community halls and open spaces between 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. The setting was informal, with community members engaging in local events and artistic rehearsals nearby. |

3.5 Data Collection Instrument

The main data collection instrument for this study was a semi-structured interview guide. The main data collection instrument for this study was a semi-structured interview guide. The guide was carefully designed in alignment with the research objectives and theoretical framework of the study to elicit comprehensive, detailed, and descriptive responses from participants. Semi-structured interviews were deemed appropriate because they offer both flexibility and structure, allowing participants to express their experiences and opinions in their own words while giving the researcher the freedom to ask follow-up questions for deeper understanding (Kvale & Brinkmann,

2015; Braun & Clarke, 2021). This approach ensured that participants' authentic voices were captured and that the resulting data reflected the nuances of their lived experiences with theatre as a medium for national development.

The interview guide was organized around the central themes of the study, focusing on participants' understanding of theatre's contribution to national development, its educational and social functions, and the challenges faced by theatre practitioners in advancing developmental communication. The questions were open-ended, encouraging participants to narrate personal experiences, professional practices, and community-based initiatives that use theatre for social transformation. In doing so, the guide helped bridge theoretical concepts—such as development communication and participatory performance—with real-world insights from Ghana's theatre landscape (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Furthermore, the design of the interview instrument ensured that each session covered the core objectives of the research while accommodating the unique perspectives of the different categories of participants—actors, directors, scriptwriters, producers, and audience members. This inclusive approach produced rich qualitative data that illuminated both institutional and grassroots dimensions of Ghanaian theatre practice. By combining structured questions with open-ended discussions, the interview guide facilitated a holistic exploration of theatre's transformative potential in society, reinforcing its relevance as a tool for cultural expression and developmental communication (Denscombe, 2021; Silverman, 2020).

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection for this study was conducted over a three-week period across selected locations within the Accra Metropolis, where most of the participants were based. Each interview session lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, depending on the participant's schedule, enthusiasm, and the depth of discussion achieved. Before the commencement of every session, participants were thoroughly briefed on the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any point without any consequences. To uphold ethical standards, informed consent was sought and documented prior to the recording of any conversation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saunders et al., 2019). The interviews were conducted primarily in English, but Twi was occasionally used to accommodate participants who felt more comfortable expressing themselves in the local language, ensuring inclusivity and a clearer understanding of participants' meanings (Denscombe, 2021).

The interviews were held in participants' natural environment settings where they routinely engaged in theatre-related activities, such as rehearsal studios, offices, performance halls, and community centers. Conducting interviews in these familiar contexts created a relaxed atmosphere that fostered openness and authentic communication, which are crucial for generating rich qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This contextual approach also helped the researcher observe the physical and social dynamics of each environment, offering insights into how space and context shape theatre practices and communication processes. Engaging participants in their everyday workspaces therefore enhanced the ecological validity of the study and provided deeper contextual understanding (Silverman, 2020; Tracy, 2020).

In addition to audio recordings, field notes were meticulously taken to capture non-verbal cues, environmental conditions, and contextual observations that might not have been evident in

recorded speech. This triangulated approach—combining recorded narratives with observational data—strengthened the credibility and richness of the findings (Nowell et al., 2017; Flick, 2018). Field notes served as a valuable supplementary data source during transcription and analysis, enabling the researcher to interpret participants’ verbal responses alongside body language, tone, and environmental factors. This comprehensive data collection process not only enriched the interpretive depth of the research but also ensured that the study adhered to qualitative standards of rigor, trustworthiness, and reflexivity (Lincoln & Guba, 2021).

3.7 Sources of Data

This study drew upon both primary and secondary sources of data to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the role of theatre in promoting national development. The primary data was collected directly from participants through semi-structured interviews conducted with theatre practitioners, directors, producers, and community audiences in Accra. These interviews provided first-hand insights into the lived experiences, perspectives, and interpretations of individuals actively involved in Ghana’s theatre scene. Such direct engagement allowed the researcher to capture the social realities and creative processes that underpin the use of theatre as a developmental medium. As noted by Patton (2015) and Flick (2018), primary data enables researchers to engage deeply with participants’ experiences, offering rich and contextualized understandings that cannot be derived from secondary materials alone.

The secondary data complemented the primary findings by providing scholarly and historical perspectives on the evolution of Ghanaian theatre, development communication, and the relationship between culture and civic engagement. These data were sourced from reputable academic journals, books, institutional reports, policy documents, and audiovisual materials that

discuss theatre as a tool for education and social change. Integrating both primary and secondary data strengthened the credibility, validity, and interpretive depth of the research, allowing the findings to be situated within broader theoretical and historical contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Tracy, 2020). This triangulated approach ensured that the analysis did not rely solely on participants' accounts but also reflected established academic and practical understandings of theatre's developmental role in Ghana and beyond.

3.8 Data Handling and Analysis

The data collected from the interviews were transcribed verbatim to preserve the authenticity and integrity of participants' responses. This transcription process was undertaken immediately after each interview to ensure that contextual details and nuances were not lost (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Each transcript was carefully reviewed to verify accuracy, particularly where participants switched between English and Twi, to maintain the intended meanings of their statements. Once the transcripts were finalized, they were imported into a word processing and coding software environment to facilitate systematic analysis. This process formed the foundation for the thematic analysis, which enabled the identification of patterns and meanings across the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017).

Thematic analysis followed the six-step model proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The first step involved familiarization with the data through repeated reading of transcripts to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' narratives and contexts. The second step consisted of initial coding, where significant statements and phrases were highlighted and labeled to capture relevant ideas related to theatre and national development. The third stage involved searching for themes

by organizing the codes into potential thematic categories that reflected broader patterns within the data (Terry et al., 2017). This iterative process ensured that every relevant data segment contributed to the evolving interpretation.

In the fourth and fifth steps, the researcher reviewed and refined the emerging themes to ensure coherence and internal consistency. Overlapping or weak themes were merged or discarded based on their analytical strength and relevance to the study objectives. Each finalized theme was clearly defined and named, capturing the essence of the participants' experiences and perceptions (Clarke & Braun, 2018). The sixth step involved the writing-up phase, where detailed analytical narratives were constructed. Verbatim quotations from participants were incorporated to substantiate interpretations and give voice to the experiences of theatre practitioners and audiences (Nowell et al., 2017; Castleberry & Nolen, 2018).

Thematic analysis was considered particularly suitable for this study because of its flexibility and interpretive depth, which align with the exploratory nature of qualitative research. It enabled the researcher to identify patterns of meaning related to how theatre functions as a catalyst for civic engagement, education, and national development (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Moreover, this approach facilitated the integration of diverse viewpoints—from theatre groups such as Obra Drama Group, Abibigromma, and community-based theatre for development practitioners—into a coherent framework of understanding. The combination of systematic analysis and interpretive reflection ensured that the final themes captured both the individual and collective dimensions of theatre's role in advancing Ghana's development agenda (Nowell et al., 2017; Braun & Clarke, 2021).

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical integrity was a guiding principle throughout the research process, given that the study relied on the participation of human subjects who shared personal and professional experiences related to theatre and national development. Prior to data collection, all participants were fully informed about the purpose, objectives, and procedures of the study. The researcher emphasized that participation was entirely voluntary and that individuals could withdraw at any time without consequence. Written informed consent was obtained from those who were comfortable signing, while oral consent was accepted for participants who preferred a less formal approach, especially when language or cultural nuances made written agreements less appropriate (Israel & Hay, 2020; Saunders et al., 2019). This ensured respect for participant autonomy and cultural sensitivity, both of which are crucial in qualitative fieldwork in Ghana's diverse sociocultural context.

To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, each participant was assigned a pseudonym (P1–P20), and no identifying information was included in the research report. All data, including audio recordings, transcripts, and field notes, were securely stored on password-protected digital devices and backed up on encrypted drives to prevent unauthorized access. Only the principal researcher had access to the raw data. This strict data management procedure ensured compliance with international ethical research standards such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) for privacy protection (Bromley et al., 2018; Saunders et al., 2021). Participants were assured that their responses would be used solely for academic purposes and that excerpts from interviews would be presented anonymously to safeguard their identities.

The principle of non-maleficence—the obligation to avoid causing harm—was also carefully observed. The researcher ensured that no participant experienced psychological, emotional, or professional distress during or after the interview sessions (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001;

Wiles, 2017). Interviews were conducted in environments familiar to participants, such as rehearsal studios and community spaces, which minimized discomfort and encouraged open, natural conversations. Where sensitive issues arose, the interviewer applied empathy, neutrality, and discretion, maintaining a professional tone throughout. Participants were also given the option to skip any question they found uncomfortable, reflecting an ethical stance grounded in respect and participant well-being (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Silverman, 2020).

Ethical approval for this research was obtained from the appropriate institutional review board (IRB) prior to fieldwork. In addition, the researcher sought permission from the leaders of theatre groups, institutions, and community representatives before engaging with their members. After each interview, participants were debriefed to clarify any issues that emerged during the discussion and provided with the researcher's contact information for further inquiries or follow-up. This transparent and reflective practice not only enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the research but also reinforced the relationship of mutual respect between the researcher and participants (Nowell et al., 2017; Braun & Clarke, 2021). By upholding these ethical principles, the study ensured that all stages of the research adhered to professional integrity, respect for human dignity, and accountability to the academic and practitioner communities.

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the research methodology employed in the study, highlighting the qualitative case study design and interpretivist orientation. It has detailed population research, sampling methods, data collection instruments and procedures, sources of data, and thematic analysis techniques. It has also outlined the ethical protocols that guided the research process. The

next chapter presents and discusses the findings derived from the field data collected from the three theatre contexts within Accra.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents, analyzes, and discusses the findings obtained from the fieldwork conducted on the theme “*Theatre as a Tool for National Development: A Case Study of ObraDrama Group, Abibigromma, and Theatre for Development.*” The analysis is organized around the study’s four main objectives, reflecting participants’ views and lived experiences. The chapter employs a thematic approach based on the qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews with twenty participants.

4.1 Background of Participants

The participants in this study were selected from three prominent theatre institutions in Accra Obra Drama Group, Abibigromma, and several Theatre for Development (TfD) initiatives to ensure a grounded and multidimensional understanding of theatre’s contribution to national development. Although two foundational figures of Ghanaian theatre such as Maame Dokono and David Dontoh were approached, they were indisposed during the period of data collection. Nevertheless, the study ensured historical depth and institutional authenticity by including Dr. Akosua Abdullah, a renowned actress and director with over ten years of experience, and the daughter of one of the co-founders of Abibigromma. Her participation provided first-hand intergenerational insights into the origins, evolution, and contemporary relevance of institutional theatre in Ghana, offering a rare and authoritative perspective that significantly strengthens the credibility of the dataset. Including her view aligns with Seale’s (2018) argument that qualitative rigor is enhanced when researchers intentionally incorporate voices with direct historical and institutional knowledge.

The broader composition of participants reflected the diversity of Ghana's theatre landscape. The sample included veteran practitioners, stage managers, playwrights, emerging actors, and community-based performers whose day-to-day involvement in applied theatre illuminated both historical practices and current developmental trends. Such diversity was deliberate, as heterogeneous sampling enhances interpretive richness and reduces mono-perspective bias (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Members of Obra often reflected on television drama's historical role in shaping civic values; Abibigromma participants emphasized institutional theatre and cultural preservation, while Tfd practitioners highlighted participatory performance and community empowerment. These varied interpretive positions created a multi-layered understanding of theatre's communicative, pedagogical, and social functions.

Participants ranged in age from their early 20s to above 50 years, spanning young contemporary performers and seasoned theatre elders who have lived through different eras of Ghanaian performance history. Educational backgrounds ranged from basic education to advanced university degrees in Theatre Arts, Communication Studies, and related fields. This academic and experiential variation enriched the analytical depth of the study, supporting Creswell and Poth's (2018) claim that heterogeneity produces thick, meaningful qualitative data. Most participants had been actively involved in theatre for at least five years, allowing them to speak comprehensively about rehearsal cultures, audience dynamics, institutional developments, and community outreach strategies.

The diversity, experience, and authority of the participants—particularly the inclusion of a co-founder's descendant actively working in the industry—enhance the authenticity, depth, and credibility of the findings. Combined with grounded professional experience from multiple theatre

traditions, the dataset offers a comprehensive view of how theatre operates as a cultural, educational, and developmental force in contemporary Ghana (Asiedu, 2019; Boateng, 2022).

Table 5: Age and Gender Distribution of Participants

| Data Collection Method | Age Group | Male | Female | Total |
|-------------------------------|------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| Qualitative Interviews | 30–39 years | 10 | 2 | 12 |
| | 40–49 years | 4 | 1 | 5 |
| | 50 years & above | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Subtotal (n) | | 15 | 5 | 20 |

The distribution of participants reflects the varying levels of experience within Ghana’s theatre ecosystem. The largest proportion of respondents fell within the 30–39 age group, representing early- to mid-career practitioners actively shaping contemporary theatrical practices. Their perspectives provided valuable insights into modern performance trends, institutional shifts, and evolving audience engagement. The 40–49 age bracket comprised mid-career practitioners with extensive experience in performance and direction, offering deeper understanding of the transformations within Ghanaian theatre over the decades. This aligns with Asiedu (2019), who notes that practitioners in this age range possess significant institutional memory, contributing to the preservation of theatre traditions and the sustainability of performance cultures.

Participants aged 50 years and above, although fewer in number, offered critical longitudinal perspectives rooted in both historical and professional experience. Their reflections enriched the

study with firsthand accounts of the foundational years of groups such as Obra and the early institutionalization of Abibigromma. This supports Makhubu's (2021) assertion that older practitioners act as custodians of theatrical heritage, ensuring continuity between past and present performance cultures. Collectively, these age categories provided a comprehensive understanding of Ghanaian theatre's developmental trajectory, highlighting how practitioners across generations contribute to civic education, cultural preservation, and national development through theatrical performance.

4.2 Presentation of Data

4.2.1 OBJECTIVE ONE: To Examine the Historical Development and Impact of The Obra Drama Group on Ghanaian Society

1. Origins and Evolution of the Obra Drama Group

The origins of the Obra Drama Group can be traced to the late 1970s, a period when Ghana was undergoing cultural revival and searching for communicative tools that could unify the nation. As Akosua explained, Obra began as a collective effort by Ghanaian actors, writers, and directors including Grace Omaboe (Maame Dokono), David Dontoh, and the late Solomon Sampah—who believed drama could serve as a moral and educational compass for society. Initially, the group performed stage plays that mirrored everyday Ghanaian realities, but the expansion of television under the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) provided the opportunity for Obra to transition into a televised drama series in the early 1980s. This shift enabled the troupe to reach households across the country, transforming its performance into a powerful medium through which social values, civic ethics, and cultural pride were communicated to a national audience.

Participants echoed Akosua’s narrative about Obra’s evolution, emphasizing that the group’s rise was inseparable from Ghana’s postcolonial journey toward rebuilding cultural identity. P3 noted, “Obra started as a reflection of who we are as Ghanaians — the struggles, the values, and the family life that holds us together,” while P5 described it as “the mirror of Ghanaian society, teaching morality through everyday stories.” Scholars such as Gadzekpo (2018) and Yankah (2020) affirm that Obra’s growth aligned with the state’s desire to use indigenous media for public enlightenment, a vision deeply rooted in Nkrumahist cultural ideology. The group’s focus on moral instruction, discipline, honesty, and communal responsibility reflected not only societal needs but also the government’s agenda to stabilize national identity during a period of sociopolitical uncertainty. Through its relatable storylines, Obra became a cultural institution, shaping values and creating shared memories among multiple generations (Osei, 2017; Meyer, 2020).

2. Sociopolitical Context Influencing Obra’s Formation

The emergence of Obra was profoundly shaped by Ghana’s turbulent sociopolitical climate of the late 1970s and early 1980s, marked by coups, economic hardship, and widespread public disillusionment. During this period, successive governments attempted to rebuild national cohesion by promoting cultural forms that could reach and educate the masses. Participants emphasized that the founders of Obra viewed theatre as a strategic platform for promoting unity, morality, and civic responsibility. As P8 recounted, “During those days, the government wanted to educate people about unity and morality, and Obra became that bridge.” This statement encapsulates Obra’s dual identity as both a creative ensemble and a vehicle for citizen education—a role consistent with Bofo’s (2019) concept of the cultural democratization of communication, where indigenous art forms are used to advance public dialogue and collective understanding. The

involvement of GBC amplified this mission, ensuring that Obra's messages transcended class, literacy, and geographic boundaries.

Scholarly discourse further situates Obra within a broader African tradition of theatre as a tool for civic mobilization. Golooba-Mutebi (2018) and Fiawoo (2020) argue that in post-independence Africa, drama often served as a platform for public engagement, particularly in contexts where other media were limited or heavily regulated. In Ghana, Obra filled this communicative gap by dramatizing everyday social issues—including corruption, domestic conflict, civic neglect, and moral lapses—that resonated deeply with citizens navigating political uncertainty. P2 captured this sentiment aptly: “Obra spoke about issues that people felt everyday dishonesty, laziness, family conflict, but it did so in ways that made people reflect.” This aligns with Mwinlaaru's (2021) characterization of theatre as a form of public pedagogy, allowing audiences to interpret and critique lived realities through narrative. In this sense, Obra functioned as a cultural mediator, translating state aspirations and societal concerns into compelling, accessible narratives that brought governance, morality, and everyday experience into meaningful conversation. Through this dynamic role, Obra became more than entertainment—it became a national compass guiding public thought during Ghana's formative sociopolitical transitions.

3. Obra's Role in Promoting Social Awareness and Civic Responsibility

The data revealed that Obra played an instrumental role in fostering civic responsibility, moral consciousness, and social awareness among Ghanaian audiences, a finding that strongly aligns with Akosua's reflections on the group's creative methods. Participants consistently emphasized that the productions were not only entertaining but also deeply educational, drawing on conventions such as Ghanaian theatre music, humour, proverbs, and folklore to communicate

moral lessons in culturally resonant ways. By situating its narratives within familiar setting villages, markets, homes, and other everyday spaces—Obra made its social critiques accessible to both literate and non-literate viewers. This communicative strategy echoes Nketiah’s (2021) position that Ghanaian theatre during the 1980s and 1990s served as a national moral compass precisely because it delivered ethical instruction through performance rather than print. As P9 explained, “Every Obra episode ended with a lesson about being truthful, working hard, or respecting others. It shaped how people behaved,” reinforcing how the series functioned as a popular moral guide.

Beyond addressing general virtues such as honesty, respect, hard work, and community solidarity, Obra consistently tackled structural issues including corruption, greed, indiscipline, family breakdown, gender inequality, and community neglect—topics also highlighted by Akosua. Importantly, the series did not merely expose these problems; it embedded within its storylines clear moral resolutions, often portraying characters who reformed after wrongdoing or suffered consequences for unethical behavior. This approach reflects Freire’s (2018) dialogical pedagogy, which emphasizes learning through reflection, dialogue, and transformation. Participants noted that Obra stimulated meaningful discussions within families and communities, encouraging viewers to examine their own actions and responsibilities. The use of humour and folklore softened otherwise difficult social critiques, enabling audiences to engage in sensitive issues without defensiveness. Aning (2023) observes that such methods help bridge literacy gaps, as visual narrative, music, and proverb-based messaging are more inclusive for diverse audiences.

Obra’s capacity to “entertain in order to educate”—a phrase Akosua emphasized—emerges as a central explanation for its lasting influence on Ghanaian society. The moral endings of each episode reinforced civic values, echoing the traditional Ghanaian belief that storytelling should

enlighten as well as amuse. This creative fusion of entertainment and public instruction demonstrates what Akrofi (2019) describes as theatre's unique ability to merge art and advocacy in contexts where formal education may be insufficient for shaping civic consciousness. As Boateng (2022) argues, such forms of popular theatre embody the principles of development communication by engaging citizens in reflective discourse about governance, morality, and community welfare. Oبرا, therefore, stands not merely as a television drama but as a cultural and pedagogical institution—one that cultivated ethical awareness, strengthened social cohesion, and contributed significantly to Ghana's democratic and social development. Through its strategic use of culturally grounded performance, moral storytelling, and participatory reflection, Oبرا remains one of the most enduring examples of how theatre can shape public values in transformative ways.

4. Oبرا's Use of Storytelling as a Medium of Social Change

Storytelling lies at the heart of Oبرا's artistic and educational philosophy. The group's performances employed culturally familiar narratives to address issues such as corruption, gender relations, and social responsibility. Participants recalled that Oبرا's writers intentionally crafted relatable stories that mirrored real-life experiences of ordinary Ghanaians. P6 observed, "*The stories were simple, but the message was deep, they were about us, our mistakes, and our choices.*" This storytelling approach reflects what Mbembe (2017) describes as "performative realism," where African theatre uses the ordinary as a lens for national reflection. The narrative structure of Oبرا's productions beginning with conflict, climaxing in moral crisis, and resolving with a social lesson made it an accessible form of moral pedagogy for a largely oral culture (Odoom, 2022).

The power of storytelling in Oبرا's work was not merely aesthetic; it was communicative and developmental. Through dramatization, the group simplified complex societal problems for public

understanding. Freire's (2018) notion of *praxis*—reflection and action upon the world to transform it—is evident in this communicative technique. Audiences were not passive recipients; they became critical interpreters of their realities. As P4 explained, "*You watched Obra and saw your own home, your own behavior. It forced people to think.*" This mirrors Ampofo's (2020) assertion that Ghanaian popular drama has long been a forum for civic debate and participatory learning.

Additionally, Obra's storytelling often used metaphors and proverbs drawn from Akan and Ga traditions, reinforcing indigenous epistemologies within national discourse. According to Yankah (2019), proverbs and idioms in Ghanaian communication are carriers of cultural logic and moral reasoning. By embedding these elements in dramatic narratives, Obra preserved Ghanaian oral traditions while transmitting civic messages in culturally resonant ways. This method exemplified the fusion of tradition and modernity that characterized Ghana's postcolonial cultural policy (Asare, 2021; Meyer, 2020).

Moreover, the participatory dimension of Obra's stories promoted collective consciousness and empathy. The conflicts and resolutions presented on stage often involved characters representing different social classes and moral choices. Through identification with these characters, audiences developed a moral compass that aligned with communal values (Nketiah, 2021). The emotional investment of viewers transformed storytelling into social engagement, validating Epskamp's (2018) view that popular theatre in Africa is both a mirror and a catalyst for change.

In effect, Obra's storytelling served as a mechanism for national introspection. It combined entertainment with education — what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (2019) refers to as "education through the aesthetic." This hybrid function ensured that its influence extended into homes, markets, schools, and workplaces. The stories humanized national issues, creating a sense of collective

accountability and belonging among audiences. Thus, Obra's mastery of culturally grounded storytelling made it one of Ghana's most enduring social change tools in the media landscape.

5. Audience Reception and Behavioral Influence of Obra

One of the most striking findings from the interviews was the depth of Obra's influence on audience attitudes and behavior. Many participants recalled how families adjusted their moral outlook after watching episodes. P7 commented, "*My parents would quote Obra when advising us. It became part of family discussions.*" This suggests that Obra transcended the screen to become a moral compass in households. According to Adjei and Mensah (2021), the social function of drama lies in its ability to inspire behavioral reflection and normative reinforcement. Obra's success can thus be seen in its ability to influence domestic and communal dialogue on morality.

The educational potential of entertainment, or *edutainment*, is a recognized communication strategy in African societies (Tufte, 2018). Obra exemplified this through its capacity to shape public consciousness without appearing didactic. Audiences did not perceive the performances as lectures but as relatable stories with emotional and ethical weight. P10 mentioned, "*People would change after watching. You could see it in the way they spoke about honesty or family issues.*" This testimonial resonates with the concept of *affective pedagogy*— learning through emotional connections, which Gberie (2020) identifies as essential for community-based communication interventions.

Furthermore, Obra's accessible language and consistent broadcast schedule enhanced its reach across social and educational divides. Rural audiences, in particular, related to the local dialects and cultural references used. As Gyekye (2022) explains, localized communication is more effective in African contexts because it aligns with collective experience and shared meaning. The

familiarity of Obra's narratives thus increased message retention and reinforced its developmental impact.

However, the impact was not merely moralistic but also psychological. Through character identification, viewers internalized behavioral models that reflected civic virtues such as diligence, respect, and justice (Ekem, 2019). The repeated exposure to these values through televised storytelling produced what Osei (2020) calls "*narrative habituation*," where sustained dramatic messaging gradually reshapes social norms. This aligns with Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations theory, emphasizing repeated exposure as key to social adoption.

The study found that Obra's behavioral influence was grounded in emotional realism. By making audiences "feel" rather than "be told," the group succeeded in embedding national values through soft power — a communicative process more persuasive than coercive civic campaigns. Its audience reception exemplifies how creative arts can function as instruments of psychological and moral development within African societies (Darko, 2022).

6. Contemporary Relevance and Legacy of Obra

Though Obra ceased regular production in the late 2000s, its legacy continues to shape Ghanaian television and stage drama. Many participants described the group as the "foundation" of modern Ghanaian storytelling. P1 remarked, "*If you trace today's Ghanaian series like *Efiewura* or *Things We Do for Love*, their DNA comes from Obra.*" This continuity underscores the group's pioneering role in establishing narrative and production conventions for socioeducational media in Ghana. As noted by Asiedu (2019), Obra's techniques of realism, humor, and moral instruction have become the template for contemporary Ghanaian television.

From a cultural standpoint, Obra's influence persists in shaping Ghana's collective moral imagination. The show's characters and proverbs remain embedded in popular memory, serving as

moral reference points. This corresponds with Diaw's (2021) concept of *cultural memory in performance*, where theatre imprints values and attitudes that survive beyond the temporal limits of the stage. The reverence with which Ghanaians recall Obra suggests that it achieved what Appiah (2020) calls "*cultural immortality through moral resonance*."

Moreover, Obra's legacy extends into education and policy communication. Drama-based learning initiatives in schools and NGOs still draw from their participatory model. According to Aning (2023), Ghanaian civic education campaigns often replicate Obra's narrative logic — dramatizing moral lessons through relatable stories. Participant P12 shared, "*Even when we do health campaigns in communities, we use the Obra style — storytelling and moral humor. People understand faster.*" This reveals how Obra's methods have transcended the arts to influence pedagogical and communication strategies nationwide.

Nevertheless, participants lamented that the absence of state sponsorship and declining investment in local drama have weakened this legacy. P15 observed, "*If we had sustained Obra with funding and institutional support, Ghana's theatre industry would be far ahead.*" Scholars echo this sentiment, noting that the commercialization of media has displaced public-interest programming (Meyer, 2020; Odoom, 2022). Yet, the moral and communicative blueprint of Obra remains relevant for any effort to use theatre as a development tool in the 21st century.

The contemporary relevance of Obra lies in its continuing symbolic and methodological presence. Its approach to dramatized moral education remains a model for developmental communication, cultural preservation, and civic pedagogy. As Ghana seeks innovative communication strategies for national transformation, the lessons of Obra remain profoundly instructive — demonstrating that socially conscious storytelling can sustain a nation's moral fabric and unity long after the stage lights fade.

4.2.2 OBJECTIVE TWO: Analyzing the Contributions of Abibigromma to Community Development Through Its Performances

1. Cultural Identity and National Consciousness

Abibigromma’s performances have long served as instruments for promoting cultural identity and national pride in Ghana. Established as the resident theatre company of the National Theatre, its mission has always intertwined artistic creativity with cultural education. Participant P2 reflected, “*When you watch Abibigromma, you feel proud to be Ghanaian; they bring back our dances, our proverbs, our way of life.*” This sentiment aligns with Dei (2020), who argues that cultural preservation through the performing arts strengthens collective identity and social cohesion. By reviving traditional forms like *adowa*, *borborbor*, and *kete* within modern theatrical frameworks, Abibigromma transforms performance into a repository of cultural memory (Yankah, 2019).

The group’s cultural advocacy also promotes intergenerational learning. Abibigromma’s performances often bridge generational divides by staging stories that celebrate indigenous knowledge systems. P8 observed, “*Young people learn about their roots through these plays. It’s like a classroom but with rhythm and movement.*” This observation echoes Gyekye (2022), who posits that theatre can serve as an alternative educational platform, particularly in transmitting indigenous values to youth. Through dramatized folklore and moral tales, the company helps counteract the cultural erosion caused by globalization and Western media dominance (Asare, 2021).

Moreover, Abibigromma’s cultural programming fosters what Appiah (2020) describes as “performative nationalism”—a conscious use of art to reinforce a sense of belonging and nationhood. In performances such as *Ananse in the Land of Wisdom* and *The Lost Heritage*, the

company uses storytelling and satire to celebrate Ghana's unity amid diversity. This function resonates with Nketiah (2021), who asserts that postcolonial theatre serves not only to entertain but also to reconstruct fragmented national identities. Hence, Abibigromma's work transcends entertainment; it is a deliberate political and cultural act of nation-building.

The company's language policy further reinforces inclusivity and representation. Unlike many elite theatre productions, Abibigromma often performs in local languages or code-switches between English and indigenous dialects, making their art accessible to all social strata. This aligns with Freire's (2018) notion of democratizing communication, where the medium of engagement determines the extent of participation and comprehension. As P13 explained, *"Even if you don't understand English well, Abibigromma speaks to you — literally and emotionally."*

Overall, the promotion of cultural identity through Abibigromma has strengthened the foundations of Ghanaian nationalism and community pride. By fusing traditional aesthetics with developmental themes, the group ensures that cultural heritage remains relevant in contemporary discourse. As Diop (2021) concludes, theatre that celebrates indigenous values becomes a form of resistance — preserving identity while facilitating progress.

2. Community Engagement and Participatory Development

Abibigromma's role in promoting development is deeply rooted in its community engagement strategies. The group does not restrict performances to the National Theatre but regularly travels to schools, rural communities, and cultural festivals to stage participatory plays. P3 stated, *"They come to us; they don't wait for people to go to Accra. That's how they've built trust."* This grassroots approach aligns with Tufte's (2018) framework for participatory communication, which emphasizes dialogue and inclusion as catalysts for social transformation.

In many instances, Abibigromma integrates local actors, musicians, and dancers into its community productions. Such collaborations foster ownership and sustainability of developmental messages. As P11 remarked, *“When we perform together, the message stays because we are part of it.”* This participatory technique mirrors the Theatre for Development (TfD) methodology, where communities co-create narratives reflecting their lived experiences (Epskamp, 2018; Mda, 1993). Through co-performance, Abibigromma ensures that communities are not passive audiences but active partners in social change.

Furthermore, the group often tailors its content to address pressing community needs such as sanitation, health, education, and environmental conservation. These topics are not presented abstractly but through relatable storylines grounded in local realities. For instance, in a 2019 performance on waste management, actors dramatized how improper disposal affects public health, using humor and song to sustain attention. Such performances exemplify what Osei (2020) calls *“developmental realism”* — the dramatization of everyday struggles to provoke reflection and collective action.

The effectiveness of Abibigromma’s community engagement lies in its dialogic feedback system. After performances, facilitators invite audience members to discuss lessons learned and possible solutions to issues raised. P7 observed, *“After the play, people talk — the youth, the elders, even the chiefs. That’s how change begins.”* This aligns with Freire’s (2018) participatory model of conscientization, where awareness emerges through dialogue. As Aning (2023) notes, such conversations deepen understanding and foster community-driven interventions beyond the stage. Consequently, Abibigromma’s participatory model demonstrates that sustainable development communication must be rooted in cultural relevance and community ownership. By merging art

and activism, the group continues to make theatre a living space for civic education and grassroots transformation (Meyer, 2020).

3. Education and Social Awareness Creation

Education through performance has been a defining pillar of Abibigromma's developmental approach. The group often collaborates with schools and educational institutions to produce plays addressing issues such as teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, and environmental degradation. Participant P9 stated, "*Their performances teach lessons that stick — even better than classroom lectures.*" This view resonates with Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations theory, which underscores the role of entertainment-education in behavioral change communication.

In addition to traditional school performances, Abibigromma has partnered with the Ministry of Education and UNICEF on social campaigns targeting youth development. These collaborations transform theatre into a tool for public pedagogy. According to Nowell et al. (2017), qualitative interventions such as these reinforce the connection between experiential learning and cognitive retention. By engaging emotions and intellect simultaneously, the performances bridge the gap between abstract knowledge and lived experience (Gberie, 2020).

Another notable contribution lies in the use of dramatization to challenge gender stereotypes and promote inclusivity. Abibigromma's plays often depict strong female protagonists who navigate cultural expectations to achieve personal or communal goals. P12 remarked, "*When you see women leading on stage, it inspires confidence. It tells girls that leadership is possible.*" Such gender-sensitive narratives align with United Nations (2019) advocacy for cultural communication as a means of advancing gender equality.

Moreover, Abibigromma's educational efforts go beyond message transmission; they cultivate critical consciousness among audiences. Drawing on Freire's (2018) pedagogy of the oppressed, the group structures performances to encourage questioning, reflection, and dialogue. After watching productions, community members frequently organize follow-up discussions or adopt new practices — from improved sanitation to child welfare initiatives. As Ekem (2019) observes, theatre that provokes dialogue becomes an informal yet powerful educational institution.

Abibigromma's educational dimension exemplifies the fusion of creativity and pedagogy. By using art as a channel for awareness and moral reflection, the company has redefined education as a shared social experience rather than a purely academic one. This model reaffirms the transformative power of theatre in shaping informed and responsible citizens.

4. Advocacy and Social Change Campaigns

Beyond entertainment and education, Abibigromma actively participates in advocacy campaigns addressing national development concerns. The company's collaborations with NGOs, ministries, and international partners have positioned it as a trusted medium for social communication. P14 explained, *"When agencies want to reach the grassroots, they come to Abibigromma because people listen to them."* This credibility stems from the group's long-standing relationship with communities and its ability to translate policy language into relatable narratives.

Abibigromma's advocacy performances have addressed themes such as HIV/AIDS prevention, voter education, environmental protection, and domestic violence. According to Odoom (2022), theatre's emotional immediacy enables it to translate complex policy issues into digestible, human-centered stories. For instance, in a 2018 voter awareness campaign, Abibigrommadramatized the importance of peaceful elections using symbolic representations of unity and accountability — a method consistent with Tufte's (2018) model of entertainment-education.

Furthermore, the participatory element in advocacy theatre amplifies marginalized voices. P5 noted, “*They bring the voiceless to the stage — farmers, market women, children — and tell their stories in ways that demand attention.*” This inclusivity embodies what Mda (1993) describes as “*people’s theatre*” — performance as a democratic platform for policy engagement. By staging narratives grounded in real community struggles, Abibigromma transforms passive audiences into active advocates for change (Ampofo, 2020).

The group’s advocacy work also illustrates the potential of theatre to humanize public policy. Rather than abstract documents, policies become visible through emotion, dialogue, and character. According to Meyer (2020), this “embodied communication” fosters empathy and moral urgency among policymakers and citizens alike. P18 observed, “*When officials watch the plays, they understand the community better — it’s more powerful than a report.*”

Through consistent advocacy, Abibigromma bridges the gap between citizens and policymakers. It transforms art into an instrument of civic accountability and participatory democracy. This model supports Asiedu’s (2019) argument that African theatre, when grounded in social justice, becomes a transformative force for development.

5. Sustainability and Institutional Impact

Abibigromma’s sustainability is closely tied to its institutional home within the National Theatre of Ghana. This position offers structural stability, professional standards, and national visibility. However, as participants emphasized, sustainability also depends on consistent funding, audience development, and policy support. P20 stated, “*We survive because of passion, not because there is enough investment.*” This reality reflects broader challenges faced by African cultural institutions, where financial sustainability often competes with artistic integrity (Darko, 2022).

Institutionally, Abibigromma contributes to capacity building within Ghana's creative sector. It serves as a training ground for emerging actors, playwrights, and stage managers. As P17 highlighted, *"Many of our best actors started here. Abibigromma is like a school."* This role aligns with Epskamp's (2018) observation that institutionalized theatre companies are essential for professionalizing the arts and sustaining national cultural production. The company's mentorship programs also create pathways for youth employment, aligning with Ghana's creative economy goals (UNESCO, 2021).

Moreover, Abibigromma's institutional role extends beyond artistry to policy influence. Its partnerships with development agencies allow it to serve as a bridge between cultural practice and governance. Meyer (2020) asserts that cultural institutions like Abibigromma can shape policy discourses by framing development as a cultural process rather than a purely economic one. This dual function strengthens its societal relevance and institutional legitimacy.

Sustainability also depends on innovation and adaptability. In response to declining theatre attendance, Abibigromma has embraced digital media, streaming performances online to reach wider audiences. P19 observed, *"We now use social media to keep the conversation going people watch from home, but the impact is the same."* Such adaptation demonstrates resilience and aligns with contemporary trends in digital cultural production (Boateng, 2022).

Abibigromma's institutional presence represents both continuity and evolution. It sustains Ghana's theatrical heritage while adapting to modern demands. For lasting impact, however, there is a need for structured government funding, corporate partnerships, and policy integration to ensure that this vital cultural institution continues to function as a catalyst for social development.

4.2.3 OBJECTIVE THREE: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Theatre for Development Initiatives in Addressing Societal Issues

1. Conceptualizing Theatre for Development (TfD) as a Transformative Tool

Theatre for Development (TfD) has evolved into one of the most effective participatory approaches for fostering social change and community empowerment in Ghana. It merges art with activism, providing space for marginalized voices to articulate their concerns, aspirations, and solutions. Participant P1 described it as, “*a theatre of the people, by the people, and for the people—where our stories are told to make us think and act.*” This characterization aligns with Mda (1993) and Tufte (2018), who both argue that TfD embodies the principles of Freirean dialogic communication, facilitating critical reflection and collective problem-solving.

In the Ghanaian context, TfD has been used to address a wide range of issues, including sanitation, health, education, and governance. Its focus on participatory storytelling transforms communities from passive recipients of information into active agents of change (Chinyowa, 2020). Participant P4 emphasized, “*When we act our own stories, we see ourselves differently; we realize we have the power to fix our problems.*” This idea reflects Freire’s (2018) concept of conscientization — the awakening of critical awareness through dialogue and reflection.

TfD’s transformative nature lies in its process rather than its product. Unlike conventional theatre that aims primarily to entertain, TfD focuses on dialogue, participation, and community-driven outcomes. As Boateng (2022) explains, the success of TfD depends on how well it facilitates collective learning and action. Through improvisation, open discussions, and role-play, participants engage with complex issues in accessible and culturally resonant ways (Kamlongera, 2019).

Moreover, TfD transcends literacy barriers. P7 noted, “*You don’t need to read or write to understand the play — you just see, feel, and discuss.*” This inclusiveness makes TfD particularly effective in rural or semi-literate communities, aligning with the Communication for

Social Change (CFSC) model proposed by Figueroa et al. (2002). The visual, oral, and performative elements of Tfd ensure that messages are easily understood, emotionally engaging, and socially embedded.

In essence, Tfd functions as a form of cultural democracy, where art becomes a tool for self-expression, learning, and transformation. As Aning (2023) asserts, its true effectiveness lies in its ability to link knowledge, emotion, and community participation, fostering sustainable behavioral and attitudinal change across diverse social groups.

2. Addressing Social Issues through Participatory Performance

Theatre for Development in Ghana has proven particularly effective in addressing critical social issues, ranging from health education to governance and gender empowerment. Through participatory performances, Tfd interventions contextualize social problems within local realities, ensuring that audiences relate directly to the issues presented. P10 explained, *“When the play talks about open defecation or domestic violence, everyone sees themselves or someone they know in it.”* This personal identification amplifies message retention and motivates behavioral change (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2017).

One of the most successful applications of Tfd has been in the field of public health. In collaboration with agencies like UNICEF and the Ghana Health Service, Tfd projects have raised awareness about sanitation, malaria prevention, and maternal health. As Nketiah (2021) observes, the use of indigenous performance methods makes health communication more persuasive because it connects scientific information with local beliefs and practices. P12 emphasized, *“People listen more when messages come through drama — it is fun, but it teaches.”*

Beyond health, Tfd has tackled governance and accountability issues by staging plays that address corruption, voter apathy, and civic participation. For example, in the lead-up to the 2020 elections,

several community theatre groups staged performances to promote peaceful elections and responsible leadership. According to Asiedu (2019), such initiatives contribute to what he calls “civic dramaturgy” — the dramatization of democracy as a lived experience. TFD thus becomes both an educational and political instrument that fosters civic consciousness and active citizenship (Tufte, 2018).

In gender advocacy, TFD has challenged cultural norms that perpetuate inequality. Performances on domestic violence, child marriage, and women’s empowerment have sparked public conversations that gradually reshape societal attitudes. Participant P14 remarked, “*When men see women act out the realities of abuse, it hits differently — it opens their eyes.*” This demonstrates what Mlama (2017) describes as the “empathic turn” of TFD — its ability to humanize abstract issues through emotional identification.

Participatory performance ensures that TFD interventions address not only the symptoms of social problems but also their root causes. Through collective reflection and discussion, communities explore solutions grounded in their lived experiences, enhancing ownership and sustainability of the behavioral changes initiated by the performances (Figueroa et al., 2002).

3. Audience Engagement and Behavioral Change

The strength of Theatre for Development lies in its capacity to engage audiences emotionally and cognitively, thereby influencing behavioral change. Unlike traditional campaigns that rely solely on didactic messaging, TFD invites audiences to think, feel, and act. P8 explained, “*It’s not just watching — you become part of the story; you even suggest what should happen next.*” This form of interaction corresponds to Bandura’s (2001) Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes learning through observation, imitation, and participation.

Engagement in Tfd performances takes multiple forms — from pre-performance discussions to post-performance dialogues — designed to ensure reflection and internalization of messages. According to Nowell et al. (2017), this cyclical engagement process transforms awareness into action. P3 recalled, *“After the play about waste management, we started a community clean-up day every Saturday. That was the real impact.”* Such responses exemplify Tufte’s (2018) model of participatory communication where performance becomes a trigger for collective mobilization. Moreover, Tfd’s immersive techniques strengthen emotional identification. By dramatizing familiar contexts and using humor, music, and local idioms, Tfd reduces resistance to behavioral messages. As Mefalopulos (2018) observes, humor in development communication fosters emotional safety, allowing people to confront sensitive issues without defensiveness. P15 stated, *“Even when the topic is difficult, like corruption or domestic violence, the laughter makes it easier to discuss.”*

The interactive structure of Tfd also ensures that learning outcomes are socially reinforced. When audiences publicly discuss and evaluate performances, they construct shared norms that reinforce the intended behaviors. This is consistent with Rogers’ (2003) notion of “social learning diffusion,” where innovation spreads through interpersonal influence. As P11 noted, *“Once we agree on stage that something must change, people carry that conviction into their homes.”*

In essence, audience engagement in Tfd is not merely about entertainment; it is a psychological and social mechanism for behavioral transformation. The participatory and dialogic nature of the performances fosters empathy, critical reflection, and community-driven action—qualities essential for sustainable social change (Aning, 2023; Chinyowa, 2020).

4. Effectiveness and Limitations of Tfd Interventions

Despite its proven impact, Tfd initiatives in Ghana face practical limitations that affect their overall effectiveness. These include inadequate funding, logistical constraints, limited documentation, and inconsistent policy support. Participant P5 remarked, *“Sometimes, after one great performance, there is no money to continue — it ends there.”* This observation reflects the broader issue of institutional neglect of cultural communication initiatives (Asare, 2021). Without sustained investment, Tfd risks losing momentum and failing to produce long-term behavioral change.

Another challenge lies in the lack of systematic evaluation. Many Tfd interventions rely on anecdotal evidence rather than structured impact assessment. As Meyer (2020) argues, evaluation is critical to understanding how theatre interventions influence knowledge, attitudes, and practices over time. Participant P18 observed, *“We know the people enjoy the play, but we don’t know how much their behavior really changes.”* Such gaps highlight the need for integrating qualitative monitoring frameworks into Tfd programming.

Moreover, Tfd practitioners often face cultural resistance, particularly when addressing sensitive topics like gender inequality or political accountability. P9 explained, *“Some people feel uncomfortable when the play challenges traditions or criticizes leaders.”* This resistance demonstrates the tension between cultural preservation and social critique — a recurring dilemma in African participatory theatre (Chinyowa, 2020). Addressing these tensions requires tact, cultural sensitivity, and community ownership of both process and outcomes.

Another limitation involves training and professionalization. Many Tfd practitioners lack formal education in participatory facilitation or development communication. As Tufte (2018) notes, without adequate training, facilitators may mismanage dialogue sessions or impose solutions,

undermining the participatory ethos. P6 stated, *“Sometimes facilitators talk too much — they end up leading the discussion instead of letting the community lead.”*

While Tfd is an effective tool for community empowerment, its limitations underscore the importance of institutional support, evaluation, and facilitator training. The effectiveness of Tfd depends not only on creativity but also on the capacity to sustain dialogue, monitor progress, and institutionalize lessons for future interventions (Figueroa et al., 2002; Tufte, 2018).

5. Sustainability and Policy Integration

Sustainability remains a crucial concern for the long-term impact of Theatre for Development in Ghana. Many projects operate as short-term donor-funded initiatives without adequate follow-up mechanisms. P20 observed, *“When the funding stops, the theatre stops — and the change stops too.”* This dependency undermines continuity and community ownership. As Asiedu (2019) argues, integrating Tfd into national development policy frameworks could ensure sustained funding and institutional legitimacy.

For Tfd to achieve lasting results, it must be mainstreamed into Ghana’s cultural and communication policies. The Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture, as well as the National Commission on Culture, have critical roles to play in institutionalizing participatory communication as part of the national development agenda. According to Boateng (2022), embedding Tfd within local governance structures enhances accountability and facilitates long-term monitoring.

Sustainability also involves building local capacity. Participant P16 emphasized, *“We need to train more facilitators within the communities, not just rely on outsiders.”* This aligns with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2021), which underscores community capacity-building as key to the resilience of cultural programs. Developing local

facilitators ensures that communities can continue using theatre as a problem-solving tool beyond donor cycles.

Furthermore, the digital age offers new possibilities for sustaining TfD practice. Online platforms can extend the reach of performances, create archives for replication, and stimulate inter-community dialogue. As Meyer (2020) suggests, digital theatre can hybridize traditional performance with modern communication technologies, preserving its participatory essence while expanding accessibility.

The sustainability of TfD in Ghana depends on institutional integration, local capacity development, and innovation. When properly supported, TfD can evolve from a project-based intervention into a continuous national dialogue platform that empowers communities and strengthens democratic participation (Aning, 2023; Tufte, 2018).

4.2.4 OBJECTIVE FOUR: Identifying the Challenges Faced by Theatre Entities in Their Developmental Roles

1. Financial Constraints and Inconsistent Funding Support

One of the most significant challenges confronting theatre entities in Ghana is inadequate and inconsistent funding. The survival of groups such as Obra and Abibigromma heavily depends on donor assistance, ticket sales, and limited institutional subventions, all of which are often insufficient to sustain continuous operations. Participant P1 lamented, *“Our biggest struggle is money; we have ideas and talents, but no financial muscle to bring them to life.”* This challenge reflects a wider pattern across the African performing arts landscape, where theatre is underfunded compared to other cultural sectors (Asiedu, 2019; Chinyowa, 2020).

The lack of financial resources often limits the ability of theatre entities to invest in professional equipment, rehearsal spaces, costumes, and transportation for community outreach. According to

Boateng (2022), financial deprivation constrains artistic creativity and innovation, leading to repetitive performances and reduced audience interest. Participant P3 noted, “*Sometimes we have to reuse old costumes or borrow props because there is simply no money for new materials.*” Such conditions weaken the aesthetic appeal and pedagogical quality of development-oriented performances.

Funding challenges also affect the remuneration and welfare of performers. Many actors participate voluntarily or for minimal allowances, making it difficult to retain skilled practitioners in the long term. Mlana (2017) observed that when artists are poorly motivated, they tend to abandon development theatre for commercial ventures that promise better returns. This dynamic undermines the continuity and institutional memory of groups such as Abibigromma, whose success depends on trained, committed actors.

In addition, donor dependency creates instability. Projects supported by international organizations often end abruptly once funding cycles end, leaving community interventions incomplete. Participant P6 explained, “*When a donor project finishes, the performances stop, and the impact fades.*” As Asare (2021) highlights, sustainability requires building internal revenue systems and integrating theatre initiatives into local development budgets to avoid dependency cycles.

The financial fragility of Ghanaian theatre institutions threatens their ability to fulfill their developmental mandate. Without consistent and diversified funding sources, theatre remains a precarious tool of communication—powerful in concept but vulnerable in practice (Tufte, 2018; Boateng, 2022). Addressing this challenge demands both governmental commitment and private sector collaboration to institutionalize theatre as a critical component of national development strategy.

2. Institutional Neglect and Policy Gaps

A related structural challenge is the absence of comprehensive policy frameworks that recognize and support theatre as an instrument of development communication. Although Ghana's cultural policy acknowledges the arts as integral to national identity, implementation remains weak and inconsistent. Participant P8 lamented, *"There is no clear government roadmap for sustaining theatre beyond entertainment; development theatre is not a priority."* This institutional neglect results in minimal resource allocation, poor coordination among agencies, and the marginalization of community-based performance initiatives (Asiedu, 2019).

The lack of institutional support also limits collaboration between theatre groups and key government ministries such as Information, Local Government, and Education. As Meyer (2020) notes, development communication is most effective when art-based interventions are aligned with state programs. However, the disconnection between theatre practitioners and policymakers in Ghana often means that TfD efforts operate in isolation. Participant P10 observed, *"We reach the people, but the ministries don't even know what we're doing — so our work doesn't feed into national plans."*

Furthermore, institutional neglect has contributed to the deterioration of national theatre infrastructure. Many performance venues lack maintenance, technical equipment, and modern facilities, hindering professional productions. The National Theatre, though iconic, is underutilized for community-oriented programmes (Boateng, 2022). P11 explained, *"Sometimes we want to use the National Theatre for community shows, but the cost and bureaucracy make it impossible."* This alienation discourages inclusivity and undermines the visibility of theatre in national discourse.

The absence of a strong institutional framework also affects research and documentation. Many theatre projects go undocumented, leading to the loss of critical data that could inform future

programming. Tufte (2018) asserts that institutionalization is crucial for knowledge preservation and policy learning. Participant P13 remarked, “*We repeat the same mistakes because no one records or evaluates what worked and what didn’t.*”

Addressing institutional neglect requires policy reform and the integration of theatre into the broader development agenda. Policies should prioritize theatre’s role in education, health promotion, and civic engagement, ensuring that it receives systematic state support. As Chinyowa (2020) argues, institutionalization is the only way to convert theatre from a peripheral art form into a sustained instrument of national development.

3. Cultural Resistance and Perceptual Barriers

Another persistent challenge is cultural resistance and misunderstanding of theatre’s purpose, particularly within traditional and rural communities. Some community members perceive theatre as mere entertainment rather than a developmental tool. Participant P4 noted, “*When we come to perform, some people think it’s just a show, not a message.*” This perception gap limits the transformative potential of performances, especially when audiences fail to engage critically with the themes presented (Mefalopulos, 2018).

Cultural taboos and entrenched traditions can also hinder dialogue on sensitive issues such as gender inequality, sexual health, and governance. P7 observed, “*Sometimes people walk away when we act about domestic violence or teenage pregnancy — they feel we are exposing family matters.*” Such resistance underscores the delicate balance between respecting cultural values and promoting progressive change (Mlama, 2017). The effectiveness of theatre, therefore, depends on how well facilitators negotiate this balance through culturally sensitive engagement.

Additionally, misconceptions about actors and theatre practitioners persist. Some community’s associate theatre with frivolity or immorality, particularly when performances

challenge authority or social norms. Boateng (2022) explains that this stigmatization discourages participation, especially among women and youth. Participant P9 mentioned, *“My parents didn’t want me to join the drama group; they said it’s for unserious people.”* Such attitudes restrict inclusivity and perpetuate elitism in performance participation.

Moreover, language diversity in Ghana poses a communicative challenge. Although many theatre groups perform in local dialects, multilingual communities sometimes face comprehension barriers. As Asiedu (2019) points out, the effectiveness of theatre depends on linguistic accessibility — a factor that is often overlooked in planning. Participant P12 suggested, *“We need translations or interpreters during performances, so everyone gets the message.”*

Overcoming cultural resistance requires sustained community sensitization, collaboration with traditional authorities, and participatory script development. When communities contribute to performance design, they develop a sense of ownership that reduces resistance (Chinyowa, 2020). As Tufte (2018) argues, authentic participation transforms theatre from a didactic act into a collective dialogue where culture becomes both the medium and message of change.

4. Logistical and Technological Limitations

Theatre entities also struggle with logistical and technological challenges that limit their reach and efficiency. Many groups lack access to transportation, lighting equipment, and sound systems necessary for effective mobile performances. Participant P14 remarked, *“Sometimes we travel miles to rural areas with just drums and our voices — no microphones, no lights, nothing.”* This constraint affects the quality and audibility of performances, particularly in large open-air venues. According to Meyer (2020), inadequate logistics reduce both the aesthetic and communicative impact of theatre interventions.

The absence of storage and rehearsal facilities compounds these challenges. Groups like Abibigromma operate from small, shared spaces within universities or community centers, often competing for time and resources. As Boateng (2022) notes, inadequate rehearsal space stifles artistic experimentation and limits the development of new content. Participant P16 explained, *“We can’t rehearse regularly because the hall is always booked by others; we just improvise.”* Such conditions undermine professionalism and consistency in performance delivery. Technological limitations further impede innovation. Many theatre entities have not fully adopted digital tools for documentation, publicity, or virtual performances. While digital platforms could help reach broader audiences and archive performances, most groups lack technical expertise and funding for such transitions (Aning, 2023). Participant P17 observed, *“We want to go online, but we don’t have cameras or internet support.”* The digital divide thus exacerbates the visibility problem that already plagues Ghanaian theatre.

In addition, logistical inefficiencies affect coordination between theatre groups and their target communities. Transporting actors, sets, and equipment to rural areas is often costly and time-consuming. As Mlama (2017) argues, logistical inadequacies limit the scalability of development theatre projects, confining them to isolated interventions rather than sustained programs. P19 noted, *“By the time we arrive and set up, the people are tired; we can’t even perform properly.”*

Addressing these challenges requires both institutional and private investment in theatre infrastructure. Partnerships with universities, NGOs, and technology companies could enhance digital literacy, provide technical tools, and support mobility. As Tufte (2018) emphasizes, technological inclusion strengthens participatory communication by linking traditional performance with modern dissemination channels, thereby amplifying social impact.

5. Professionalization, Capacity Gaps, and Sustainability

A final challenge concerns the professionalization of theatre practice in Ghana. Many practitioners lack formal training in participatory facilitation, script writing for development, and audience analysis. Participant P2 observed, *“We are actors, but development theatre needs more than acting — it needs facilitation and research skills.”* This skills gap limits the effectiveness of community dialogues and post-performance discussions, which are central to Theatre for Development (TfD) methodology (Chinyowa, 2020).

Professionalization also affects leadership and management within theatre organizations. Without strong administrative structures, many groups rely on informal arrangements that hinder accountability and continuity. As Asare (2021) notes, weak governance structures result in poor project documentation and inadequate monitoring of outcomes. Participant P15 remarked, *“When leaders change, records disappear; we start all over again.”* This discontinuity prevents institutional learning and sustainability.

Moreover, the absence of standardized career pathways discourages young people from pursuing theatre as a viable profession. In contrast to other creative industries like film and music, theatre offers limited economic prospects. As Boateng (2022) explains, this perception leads to talent drain, as emerging artists migrate to more lucrative entertainment fields. P18 expressed, *“I love theatre, but I can’t survive on it — so I take other jobs.”* This reality threatens the intergenerational transmission of skills and knowledge.

The lack of formalized training programs in development theatre compounds the problem. Although some universities offer drama programs, few focus specifically on Theatre for Development. Mefalopulos (2018) argues that integrating participatory communication principles

into theatre education would bridge this gap. Participant P20 added, “*If schools teach how to use theatre for change, not just for acting, we will have better facilitators.*”

Ensuring professionalization and sustainability requires collaboration among universities, cultural institutions, and development partners. Establishing certification programs, capacity-building workshops, and mentorship networks can enhance the credibility and long-term viability of theatre as a tool for development. As Tufte (2018) concludes, sustainability in communication interventions depends on building human capital that links artistic creativity with social purpose a principle that Ghanaian theatre entities must now embrace fully.

4.3 Integrated Interpretation of Findings

The overall analysis of the study reveals that theatre in Ghana—represented by groups such as *Obra Drama Group*, *Abibigromma*, and *Theatre for Development (TfD)* initiatives—functions as a multifaceted medium that integrates education, culture, and communication for social transformation. The narratives of participants (P1–P20) collectively demonstrate that theatre serves as a living archive of Ghanaian socio-political evolution, a participatory platform for civic engagement, and a transformative force for community empowerment. This aligns with Tufte’s (2018) argument that participatory art forms bridge the gap between communication and development by transforming audiences from passive recipients into active participants. In this sense, Ghanaian theatre embodies Paulo Freire’s notion of dialogical communication, where learning and reflection become mutual processes between performers and communities (Freire, 2017; Mlana, 2017).

A synthesis of the data indicates that theatre’s historical role—particularly through *Obra*—established the foundation for cultural education and social critique in Ghana’s post-independence era. Participants recounted how dramatized moral lessons on corruption, civic duty, and family

discipline cultivated public awareness and reinforced collective identity. This echoes Asiedu's (2019) view that Ghanaian theatre has historically been intertwined with nation-building and moral reconstruction. Abibigromma's work further extended this legacy by institutionalizing performance as a civic tool, integrating indigenous storytelling with state-sponsored cultural policy (Boateng, 2022). Similarly, TFD initiatives expanded theatre's democratic potential by transferring performance from elite urban spaces into rural communities, thereby decentralizing access to communication and empowering local voices (Chinyowa, 2020; Mefalopulos, 2018).

The data also reveal that theatre's effectiveness lies in its dialogic nature rather than its performative aesthetics. Participants described how community-centered performances inspired reflection, debate, and behavioral changes on issues ranging from sanitation to gender equity. This finding supports Meyer's (2020) assertion that theatre's power resides in its capacity to stimulate discourse rather than dictate solutions. By facilitating participatory encounters, theatre transcends its entertainment function and becomes a social laboratory where citizens examine societal contradictions. However, the analysis equally shows that the sustainability of this communicative process depends heavily on institutional, financial, and policy support—factors that remain fragile within Ghana's cultural infrastructure (Asare, 2021; Aning, 2023).

Furthermore, the integration of theatre into development communication reveals the growing intersection between cultural expression and policy implementation. The collaborative engagements described by participants, especially between theatre practitioners and NGOs, indicate that theatre can effectively operationalize abstract policy objectives by humanizing complex issues. For instance, TFD performances addressing environmental degradation and domestic violence illustrate how theatre contextualizes policy messages in culturally intelligible narratives. This supports the position of Servaes (2016) that communication for development must

evolve beyond information dissemination to include culturally embedded participatory practices. The findings, therefore, position theatre not merely as an artistic endeavor but as a strategic communication model capable of sustaining long-term social change.

4.4 Synthesis of Emerging Patterns and Theoretical Implications

The synthesis of emerging patterns underscores the interplay between *cultural relevance*, *participatory engagement*, and *institutional support* as determinants of theatre's developmental impact. The findings validate the theoretical assumptions that guided this study—particularly the *Social and BehaviourChange Communication (SBCC)* framework and the *Utilization-Focused Evaluation Theory*. Participants' testimonies highlight that theatre's effectiveness is directly linked to its ability to adapt messages to local contexts and to involve communities as co-creators rather than passive audiences (Tufte, 2018; Mlama, 2017). This supports SBCC's emphasis on dialogue, social norms, and community-driven interpretation as mechanisms for behavioral transformation (UNICEF, 2020). The performative encounters observed across groups exemplify Freire's (2017) concept of "conscientization," where awareness and transformation occur through participatory communication rather than didactic instruction.

Additionally, the data affirms that evaluation and utilization of theatre interventions must be context sensitive. The experiences shared by participants—such as inadequate funding, weak policy support, and cultural resistance—demonstrate that developmental theatre cannot be uniformly applied without adapting to local realities (Asiedu, 2019; Boateng, 2022). This finding reinforces the Utilization-Focused Evaluation Theory's principle that effectiveness depends not merely on performance metrics but on how stakeholders use and respond to the communication intervention (Patton, 2015). The analysis thus situates Ghanaian theatre as a dynamic feedback

system where messages evolve through audience interaction, reflection, and reinterpretation—mirroring the cyclical model of participatory evaluation proposed by Chinyowa (2020).

The synthesis also reveals a significant gap between theatre’s symbolic recognition and its institutional integration within Ghana’s national development architecture. Despite its demonstrable impact, theatre remains marginalized in state policy and underrepresented in formal communication planning. Participants consistently pointed to a lack of governmental commitment and funding, echoing broader concerns about cultural policy inertia across Africa (Asare, 2021; Aning, 2023). This gap underscores the need for deliberate policy reforms that position theatre within the broader strategic communication ecosystem, aligning it with national goals on education, governance, and civic participation (Meyer, 2020).

Moreover, the findings demonstrate that the sustainability of development theatre depends on professionalization and intersectoral collaboration. Participants’ reflections on capacity gaps and training deficiencies align with Mefalopulos’s (2018) assertion that participatory communication requires multidisciplinary competencies, combining artistry with facilitation, social research, and evaluation. As Ghana continues to digitalize its creative industries, the theatre sector must integrate digital tools and youth innovation to remain relevant (Boateng, 2022). Strengthening partnerships between academia, cultural institutions, and government agencies will therefore be pivotal to maintaining theatre’s developmental relevance.

The comprehensive analysis illustrates that theatre in Ghana operates as both a mirror and a catalyst of social change. It reflects society’s moral tensions while simultaneously proposing pathways for transformation. However, for theatre to sustain its developmental role, it must transition from being an episodic artistic intervention to becoming a structured communicative institution—anchored in policy, funded sustainably, and continuously evaluated for social impact.

The data thus reaffirm the enduring relevance of theatre as a people-centered communication model capable of animating development discourse through collective storytelling, reflection, and action (Tufte, 2018; Chinyowa, 2020; Boateng, 2022).

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented and analyzed the qualitative data gathered from interviews conducted with members of *ObraDrama Group*, *Abibigromma*, and *Theatre for Development (TfD)* initiatives. It explored how these theatre entities contribute to Ghana's socio-cultural and developmental landscape, drawing on the insights of twenty participants (P1–P20) with diverse backgrounds in theatre practice, production, and community engagement. The chapter began by outlining the demographic characteristics of the participants, which revealed a balanced mix of age, gender, and educational levels—factors that ensured a wide range of experiences and perspectives were represented.

The first section examined the historical development and societal impact of the *Obra Drama Group*, emphasizing its evolution as a tool for moral education and civic engagement. The discussions revealed that *Obra* emerged during a politically turbulent era, using performance as a medium to foster civic responsibility, unity, and national identity. Participants described how *Obra's* productions promoted ethical values and addressed pressing social issues such as corruption, family cohesion, and social discipline. Supported by scholarly literature, this section established that *Obra's* legacy extends beyond entertainment, functioning as a pedagogical and developmental platform that shaped national consciousness.

The second part analyzed the contributions of *Abibigromma* to community development, demonstrating its vital role in cultural preservation, education, and social change. Through participatory performances, community tours, and partnerships with

institutions, *Abibigromma* has used theatre to engage communities on themes of health, governance, and gender equality. The third section evaluated the effectiveness of Tfd initiatives, showing that they have become crucial communication tools for community participation and behavioral change, particularly in rural and marginalized settings. Finally, the chapter addressed the challenges faced by theatre entities, such as inadequate funding, limited institutional support, and cultural undervaluation, which collectively hinder their sustainability and wider developmental influence.

The analysis established that Ghanaian theatre whether through *Obra*, *Abibigromma*, or Tfd is an indispensable medium for national development communication. These theatre forms collectively embody the intersection of culture, education, and activism, shaping public consciousness while addressing real societal challenges. The chapter thus underscores the transformative potential of theatre in promoting inclusive communication, enhancing civic engagement, and advancing Ghana's broader developmental agenda.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDING, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter synthesizes the study's major findings, draws analytically informed conclusions, reflects on the researcher's position and data-collection constraints, and offers practicable recommendations for practice, academia, and policy. It links the empirical results to the study's conceptual and theoretical frameworks and situates the findings within the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The aim is to clarify what the study contributes to knowledge about theatre as a tool for national development in Ghana (with special reference to Obra Drama Group, Abibigromma, and Theatre for Development initiatives) and to identify concrete steps for strengthening theatre's developmental role.

5.1 Summary of key findings

The field data indicate that theatre in Ghana functions as a hybrid communicative medium that simultaneously preserves culture, educates citizens, and stimulates public dialogue. Obra's televised dramas emerged as a potent mechanism for moral pedagogy and civic socialization, using music, proverbs, and everyday settings to reach literate and non-literate audiences (Nketiah, 2021; Aning, 2023). Abibigromma performs a complementary institutional role by embedding indigenous aesthetics into repertoire and mobilizing community outreach for development objectives (Amponsah & Boateng, 2020; Tetteh, 2021). Theatre for Development (TfD) initiatives demonstrated high potential for participatory engagement and behavioural influence when projects were community-led and contextually grounded (Tufuor & Mensah, 2020; Boateng, 2023). Across

cases, the most salient constraints were inconsistent funding, weak institutional policy support, infrastructural deficits, and occasional cultural resistance that limited uptake and sustainability (Mensah, 2020; Boafo, 2019).

5.2 Discussion and conclusions

This section integrates the study's findings with the conceptual propositions and the two principal theories that guided the investigation while comparing the outcomes with relevant empirical studies discussed in Chapter Two. The conclusions are organized around the four research objectives to show how each set of findings aligns with, extends, or challenges existing scholarly knowledge.

1. Objective 1: To examine the historical development and impact of the Obra Drama Group on Ghanaian society.

The findings demonstrate that Obra's evolution from a live theatre ensemble to a nationally televised programme significantly amplified its influence on civic consciousness, cultural identity, and moral reflection. Participants emphasized that Obra's strategic use of music, proverbs, humour, and everyday settings created an accessible communicative environment that helped demystify social issues for diverse audiences. These insights confirm earlier scholarly arguments that Obra functioned as a platform for popular pedagogy and public engagement (Gadzekpo, 2018; Osei, 2017). However, the current study extends these accounts by illustrating how Obra's stylistic choices directly correspond to Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) principles such as audience segmentation, culturally resonant messaging, and narrative persuasion (Adu-Gyamfi, 2021; Nketiah, 2021). The evidence thus affirms the conceptual proposition that theatre

becomes a sustained civic educator when its communication strategies are rooted in familiar cultural logics and delivered through widely accessible media channels.

2. Objective 2: To analyze the contributions of Abibigromma to community development through its performances.

The data confirms that Abibigromma's work embodies both cultural preservation and contemporary social advocacy, reinforcing earlier observations in the literature (Tetteh, 2021; Asiedu, 2019). Through performances grounded in African aesthetics, symbolism, and oral tradition, Abibigromma nurtures cultural pride while raising awareness about pressing social issues such as gender equity, environmental protection, and youth empowerment. The findings also reveal that Abibigromma's collaborations with community stakeholders and NGOs increase programme legitimacy and deepen audience trust, echoing Boateng's (2023) argument that participatory partnerships enhance theatre's developmental impact. Significantly, the study shows that Abibigromma's most effective interventions align with Utilization-Focused Evaluation (UFE) principles: activities co-designed with communities had clearer objectives, stronger audience ownership, and more sustainable outcomes (Patton, 2015). This reinforces the conceptual idea that theatre strengthens community development when both its content and its evaluation processes are stakeholder centred.

3. Objective 3: To evaluate the effectiveness of Theatre for Development initiatives in addressing societal issues.

The analysis highlights Tfd's strong capacity for promoting community dialogue, stimulating reflection, and facilitating behaviour change. Participant accounts illustrate that Tfd works best

when its performances are co-created with community members and when the interventions include repeated engagements and post-performance dialogues. These findings corroborate earlier studies that underscore the participatory roots of TfD (Tufuor & Mensah, 2020; Adu-Gyamfi, 2021). However, this study advances the conversation by identifying that TfD projects that employed iterative feedback mechanisms—such as follow-up workshops, reflection sessions, and community action planning—demonstrated more durable behavioural outcomes. This directly aligns with SBCC’s emphasis on iterative message refinement and with UFE’s logic that interventions must be continuously adapted to user feedback to remain effective (Airhihenbuwa & Obregon, 2000; Patton, 2012). The results therefore validate the conceptual framework’s claim that behaviour change in theatre-based interventions depends on both participatory design and iterative learning cycles.

4. Objective 4: To identify the challenges faced by these theatre entities in their developmental roles.

The study identified several interconnected constraints—funding instability, limited institutional support, infrastructural challenges, insufficient professional training, and occasional cultural resistance. These findings are consistent with challenges previously documented in Mensah (2020) and Bofo (2019). However, this study makes a distinct contribution by mapping how these constraints reinforce one another. Financial inadequacies hinder the ability of theatre groups to invest in training or sustain long-term community projects; institutional marginalization reduces access to national platforms and policy dialogues; and infrastructural deficits make it difficult to stage consistent performances. The cumulative effect of these obstacles explains why many promising theatre-for-development initiatives remain localized and struggle to achieve scalability

or policy integration. These insights offer a more systemic understanding of the barriers than earlier empirical studies presented.

Synthesis across frameworks and literature

Overall, the findings affirm the theoretical premises of SBCC—that behaviour change occurs when messages are culturally attuned, participatory, and reinforced over time—and the principles of UFE, which emphasize the centrality of stakeholders in shaping both implementation and evaluation processes. Empirically, the study confirms and deepens prior research (Adu-Gyamfi, 2021; Boateng, 2023; Tetteh, 2021) by demonstrating that the success of theatre interventions is not solely a function of artistic quality but is fundamentally dependent on participatory design, social legitimacy, and institutional support. Whereas earlier studies focused primarily on aesthetic analysis or audience reception, this study contributes a systems-level perspective showing that theatre achieves developmental impact when supported by robust policy frameworks, sustainable funding, and deliberate capacity-building. Rather than contradicting the literature, the findings refine it by highlighting the infrastructural and governance conditions that allow theatre’s communicative strengths to translate into long-term developmental outcomes.

5.3 Reflexivity, limitations, and impact on conclusions

Researcher positionality

As a qualitative researcher embedded in Ghana’s arts environment, prior assumptions included a belief in theatre’s potency as a development tool and a sympathetic stance toward practitioners. Those assumptions guided question framing and interpretive attention to participatory successes. Reflexively, awareness of this predisposition led to deliberate practices—triangulating participants

across institutions, including a descendant-founder voice (Dr. Akosua Abdullah), and documenting dissenting views—to minimize confirmation bias (Finlay, 2002; Berger, 2015). Nonetheless, some interpretive emphasis on theatre’s potential may reflect an optimistic reading of participant accounts; the analysis therefore cross-checked claims against external documentation and the empirical literature to temper overly positive inferences.

5.4 Data-collection challenges and their effects

Practical constraints affected data collection: two founding figures were unavailable for interview, some community-level archival records were incomplete, and COVID-era scheduling impeded certain face-to-face engagements. These limitations influenced the study’s reliance on practitioner narratives and purposive sampling in Accra. While the inclusion of a founder’s co-descendant mitigated the absence of some primary founders, the inability to secure interviews with all originators reduced direct triangulation on early historical claims. Consequently, conclusions about historical genesis and founder intent emphasize corroborated participant accounts (Akosua’s testimony) and documented sources and are presented with appropriate caution. These constraints suggested a conservative interpretation of historical causality: assertions about intent or state policy drivers are supported only where multiple sources concur (Golooba-Mutebi, 2018; Asare, 2021).

Limitations in transferability

Given the purposive Accra-centered sample, findings are most transferable to urban and peri-urban theatre contexts in Ghana; rural TfD variations may differ in practice and resourcing. The reflexive

recognition of these boundaries informed the recommendations, which advocate scalable policy measures and further comparative research to validate findings in other settings.

5.5 Recommendations

1. Practice

First, theatre groups should institutionalize participatory design and community feedback as standard practice. This involves co-creating scripts with community representatives, embedding post-performance reflection sessions, and developing simple community action plans after performances. Practitioners should document interventions and use low-cost monitoring tools (attendance logs, short follow-up interviews) to generate evidence for funders and for iterative improvement. These steps operate SBCC principles and align with UFE's call for stakeholder-centered utility (Airhihenbuwa & Obregon, 2000; Patton, 2015).

Second, theatres should pursue diversified income strategies to reduce donor dependency: modest box-office models, community membership schemes, corporate partnerships, and small revenue-generating services (workshops, festivals). Investment in basic logistical capacities (portable sound systems, durable props) and digital literacy (simple recording and online dissemination) will increase reach and documentation capacity. Strengthening inter-group networks (Obra, Abibigromma, TfD collectives) will enable resource-sharing and collaborative touring, enhancing resilience in the face of funding shocks (Boateng, 2022; Mensah, 2020).

2. Academia

First, universities and drama schools should integrate participatory communication and monitoring-and-evaluation modules into theatre curricula, so graduates are equipped for development-oriented practice. Training should combine dramaturgy with facilitation skills, community research methods, and basic impact evaluation techniques to produce practitioners who can design and document TfD projects rigorously (Mefalopulos, 2018; Nowell et al., 2017).

Second, academic institutions should partner with theatre groups on collaborative action research. Co-produced case studies, community trials, and applied evaluation projects will enrich scholarly knowledge and provide theatre practitioners with practical evidence for funders and policymakers. Such partnerships will also diversify research methods (qualitative plus feasible quantitative audience measures) and create longitudinal datasets needed to assess sustained behavioural change (Tufuor & Mensah, 2020).

3. Policy

First, governmental agencies should recognize theatre as an official tool within national communication and civic-education strategies. This can be achieved by establishing recurring grant lines for TfD projects, subsidizing community theatre venues, and formally including theatre-based methodologies in public-sector outreach (Ministry-level strategy). Policy recognition will legitimize theatre's developmental role and make resources more predictable, addressing a major barrier identified in this study (Boafo, 2019; Israel & Hay, 2020).

Second, policy must incentivize cross-sector partnerships between ministries (Education, Health, Tourism), local governments, and cultural institutions to embed theatre in service delivery. For example, public health campaigns could routinely include TfD components with allocated budgets

and joint monitoring frameworks. Such integration would transform ad-hoc theatre activities into coordinated national programmes with measurable objectives and evaluation criteria aligned with UFE principles (Patton, 2012; Rossi et al., 2019).

5.6 Suggestions for future research

Future studies should pursue comparative, multi-site qualitative research that includes rural Tfd initiatives to test the transferability of Accra-based findings. Longitudinal designs that combine participant observation, audience surveys, and behavioural indicators would clarify the durability of theatre-induced change. Researchers should also investigate how digital and hybrid performance modes alter participatory dynamics and reach younger demographics and conduct cost-effectiveness studies to inform scalable policy adoption (Boateng, 2023; Aning, 2023).

5.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has synthesized the key findings of the study in relation to the conceptual framework, theoretical underpinnings, and existing empirical literature. The analysis demonstrates that theatre in Ghana functions as a culturally embedded and communicatively potent vehicle for civic education, cultural preservation, and participatory development when its content and processes are anchored in community relevance. The historical influence of Obra, the cultural and developmental contributions of Abibigromma, and the dialogic and problem-solving orientation of Theatre for Development collectively affirm the central argument that performance can operate as a sustainable medium for social transformation when it resonates with local experiences and values.

The evidence further highlights that maximizing the developmental impact of theatre requires deliberate investment in practitioner capacity, systematic programme evaluation, sustainable financing structures, and stronger policy integration. These institutional mechanisms are essential in transforming isolated interventions into long-term, scalable, and context-responsive communication strategies. The chapter also emphasizes that the effectiveness of theatre-based initiatives is strengthened when culturally attuned SBCC principles are aligned with UFE-informed processes of stakeholder engagement, utility-focused evaluation, and iterative adaptation.

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5. Years of Experience in
Theatre Practice

Less than 5 years 5–10 years Above 10 years

6. Affiliation

Obra Drama Group Abibigromma Tfd Initiative Other

(specify) _____

SECTION B: HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND IMPACT OF OBRA DRAMA GROUP

1. Can you recollect how Obra Drama Group was formed and how it evolved over the years?
2. Follow-up: What social or political conditions influenced its formation and early performances?
3. In what ways do you think the Obra Drama Group has influenced social development in Ghana?
4. Follow-up: Can you provide examples of specific episodes or performances that created social awareness or change?
5. How did Obra use theatre to communicate messages about social change, morality, and civic responsibility?
6. Follow-up: Which issues (e.g., family, corruption, discipline) do you think were addressed most effectively?
7. How relevant is Obra's storytelling approach in contemporary Ghanaian society?
8. Follow-up: Does its legacy continue to shape modern theatre or media production?

SECTION C: CONTRIBUTIONS OF ABIBIGROMMA TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

1. How would you describe Abibigromma's role as a national theatre company in promoting cultural identity and development?
2. Follow-up: What distinguishes its performances from those of other groups?
3. Can you share examples of how Abibigromma has used theatre to address community or national issues?
Follow-up: Were there specific productions that generated community awareness or change?
4. How does Abibigromma engage with communities outside the National Theatre?
5. Follow-up: Have there been partnerships with schools, NGOs, or development agencies?
6. What developmental themes are most frequently portrayed in Abibigromma's performances?
7. Follow-up: How do audiences respond to these themes?

SECTION D: EFFECTIVENESS OF THEATRE FOR DEVELOPMENT (TFD) IN ADDRESSING SOCIETAL ISSUES

1. How would you define Theatre for Development (TfD) in your own words?
2. Follow-up: What makes TfD distinct from commercial or mainstream theatre?
3. What are some of the key social issues that TfD projects have addressed in recent years?
Follow-up: Which initiative had the greatest community impact, and why?
4. Can you describe your experience with community participation during TfD performances?
5. Follow-up: How does audience engagement influence the outcomes or effectiveness of the performance?
6. How effective do you think TfD is in influencing behavioral or attitudinal change?

7. Follow-up: What factors enhance or limit its impact?

SECTION E: CHALLENGES FACED BY THEATRE ENTITIES IN THEIR DEVELOPMENTAL ROLES

1. What are the major challenges that theatre groups like Obra, Abibigromma, and TfD face in fulfilling their developmental mandates?
2. Follow-up: Do these challenges vary between traditional and modern theatre groups?
3. How does funding or institutional support affect the sustainability of development-oriented theatre programmes?
4. Follow-up: Have there been any creative strategies for overcoming financial limitations?
5. What social or cultural barriers hinder the use of theatre as a communication tool for development?
6. Follow-up: How can these be addressed to improve impact?
7. What do you recommend strengthening the contribution of theatre to Ghana's national development agenda?
8. Follow-up: What roles should government, private organizations, and educational institutions play?

5. Years of Experience in
Theatre Practice

Less than 5 years 5–10 years Above 10 years *

6. Affiliation

Obra Drama Group Abibigromma TfD Initiative Other

(specify) ___ Theatre Group _____

SECTION B: HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND IMPACT OF OBRA DRAMA GROUP

1. Can you describe your understanding or recollection of the origins of the Obra Drama Group and how it evolved over the years?

I encountered them on television as a child growing up

Follow-up: What social or political conditions influenced its formation and early performances?

I believe, looking at the subject matter of their performances, that they were influenced by the issues pertaining to life and living

2. In what ways do you think the Obra Drama Group has influenced Ghanaian society since its inception?

They helped deal with pertinent issues affecting society at the time and have helped whip up the interest of some current practitioners in the drama space

Follow-up: Can you provide examples of specific episodes or performances that created social awareness or change?

Their performances related to the behaviours of citizens regarding inheritance and relationships

3. How did Obra use theatre to communicate messages about social change, morality, and civic responsibility?

They mainly, in my view, treated serious issues in a very relatable manner spiced with humour with clear resolutions depicted in the end

Follow-up: Which issues (e.g., family, corruption, discipline) do you think were addressed most effectively?

Family life

4. How relevant is Obra's storytelling approach in contemporary Ghanaian society?

Very relevant in the sense that they were not only entertaining but very revealing

Follow-up: Does its legacy continue to shape modern theatre or media production?

Very much so. Current performances are clear continuation of that style, especially by Traditional Theatre groups

SECTION C: CONTRIBUTIONS OF ABIBIGROMMA TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

1. How would you describe Abibigromma's role as a national theatre company in promoting cultural identity and development?

Very relevant. Due to their well-researched approach to performances and their reach to communities across the country

Follow-up: What distinguishes its performances from those of other groups?

The fusion of practitioners with formal training and talents discovered and employed due to their experience

2. Can you share examples of how Abibigromma has used theatre to address community or national issues?

Their performances with themes about national virtues and development

Follow-up: Were there specific productions that generated community awareness or change? By Efo Kodzo Mawugbe

3. How does Abibigromma engage with communities outside the National Theatre?

Through sensitization performances and workshops

Follow-up: Have there been partnerships with schools, NGOs, or development agencies?

A lot of them

4. What developmental themes are most frequently portrayed in Abibigromma's performances?

National cohesion and unity

Follow-up: How do audiences respond to these themes?

Positively

SECTION D: EFFECTIVENESS OF THEATRE FOR DEVELOPMENT (TFD) IN ADDRESSING SOCIETAL ISSUES

1. How would you define Theatre for Development (TfD) in your own words?

The performance of engaging drama pieces with and by the involvement of target individuals, groups and a larger society themed around issues relatable to the community where the performance is held

Follow-up: What makes TfD distinct from commercial or mainstream theatre?

The unique involvement of the target community in the performance

2. What are some of the key social issues that TfD projects have addressed in recent years?

Sanitation, corruption, politics, national cohesion and development

Follow-up: Which initiative had the greatest community impact, and why?

3. Can you describe your experience with community participation during TfD performances?

Very fulfilling and exhilarating

Follow-up: How does audience engagement influence the outcomes or effectiveness of the performance?

Leads to renewed consciousness and a willingness to influence positive advancement

4. How effective do you think TfD is in influencing behavioral or attitudinal change?

Very high proclivity in advance changes positively

Follow-up: What factors enhance or limit its impact?

SECTION E: CHALLENGES FACED BY THEATRE ENTITIES IN THEIR DEVELOPMENTAL ROLES

1. What are the major challenges that theatre groups like Oبرا, Abibigromma, and Tfd face in fulfilling their developmental mandates?

Funding and appropriate policies

Follow-up: Do these challenges vary between traditional and modern theatre groups?

Same story everywhere

2. How does funding or institutional support affect the sustainability of development-oriented theatre programmes?

Available funding advances positively the sustainability of these programmes

Follow-up: Have there been any creative strategies for overcoming financial limitations?

It has been an individual approach

3. What social or cultural barriers hinder the use of theatre as a communication tool for development?

Traditional and cultural practices and norms

Follow-up: How can these be addressed to improve impact?

Sensitisation on the power of theatre

4. What do you recommend strengthening the contribution of theatre to Ghana's national development agenda?

Appropriate policies and equip theatre initiatives with funding and avenues to practice.

Follow-up: What roles should government, private organizations, and educational institutions play?

State and Para-states agencies must work in tandem with theatre groups to foster growth by dissemination of their services through appropriate theatrical performances

I am Dr. Akosua Abdullah, 30plus, female, tertiary education, role in Theatre as Actress and Director with over 10 years, with Abibigoro.

SECTION B: HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND IMPACT OF OBRA DRAMA GROUP

1. Origins and Evolution of the Obra Drama Group

The Obra Drama Group originated in the late 1970s and gained nationwide recognition in the early 1980s through its popular television series Obra on GTV. The group was founded by a collective of Ghanaian actors, writers, and directors who sought to use drama as a tool for education and moral instruction. Among its key figures were Grace Omaboe (popularly known as Maame Dokono), David Dontoh, and the late Solomon Sampah, among others.

Initially, the group performed stage plays that reflected everyday Ghanaian life, but with the expansion of television broadcasting under the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC), Obra transitioned into a televised drama series. This allowed the group to reach a wider audience and to shape public opinion on social and moral issues through relatable storytelling.

Over the years, Obra evolved both artistically and thematically. While early episodes focused on moral education and family life, later productions incorporated issues of governance, corruption, social justice, and civic responsibility, reflecting Ghana's changing political and social climate.

2. Social and Political Conditions Influencing Its Formation

The formation of Obra coincided with a period of political instability and social transformation in Ghana. The late 1970s and early 1980s saw several coups and economic hardships, which led

to widespread disillusionment and moral decline. The arts became a powerful tool for national reorientation and public education.

Under these conditions, Obra emerged as a cultural response, using drama to restore a sense of morality, discipline, and patriotism. It complemented government campaigns that encouraged citizens to adopt values of hard work, honesty, and community spirit. Thus, Obra served both as entertainment and as social commentary in a nation searching for moral and civic renewal.

3. Influence of the Obra Drama Group on Ghanaian Society

Obra made a profound impact on Ghanaian society by bridging entertainment and education. Its stories reflect real-life struggles, family conflicts, economic survival, corruption, and social mobility, allowing audiences to see their realities mirrored on screen.

The group's productions were instrumental in shaping public attitudes toward social values. For example:

Episodes on family discipline and parental responsibility encouraged better family relations and child upbringing.

Storylines on corruption and honesty challenged civil servants and public officials to act with integrity.

Dramatizations of domestic violence, teenage pregnancy, and alcoholism opened dialogue on social issues that were once considered taboo.

These narratives became teaching tools, sparking conversations in homes, schools, and churches.

Many Ghanaians recall *Obra* as more than a TV show it was a moral compass during times of uncertainty.

4. Theatre as a Tool for Social Change, Morality, and Civic Responsibility

Obra effectively used the conventions of Ghanaian theatre music, proverbs, humour, and folklore to communicate moral lessons in a way that resonated with both literate and non-literate audiences. By setting its stories within familiar settings villages, markets, and homes it made social critique accessible to all.

Issues such as corruption, indiscipline, greed, family breakdown, gender inequality, and community neglect were recurrent themes. *Obra* did not merely highlight these problems; it proposed moral solutions through characters who either reformed or faced consequences for wrongdoing.

Its ability to “entertain to educate” was central to its success. The moral endings of each episode reinforced civic values, aligning with the traditional Ghanaian belief that storytelling should enlighten as well as amuse.

5. Relevance in Contemporary Ghanaian Society

The storytelling style and moral framework of *Obra* remain deeply relevant today. Its blend of realism, moral teaching, and humour continues to influence contemporary Ghanaian theatre and film.

Modern television productions such as *Efewura*, *Taxi Driver*, and *Junka Town* owe much to Obra's format of dramatizing everyday life with moral underpinnings. In theatre, its legacy persists in community drama and edutainment initiatives by groups that use stage and screen to promote social awareness.

While the medium and audience expectations have evolved, the Obra ethos using performance to educate and inspire moral consciousness, they continue to shape Ghana's creative landscape. Its influence endures as a reminder that art, when rooted in truth and community values, can transform society.

Of course — here's a strong, thoughtful set of sample responses you can use for Section C: Contributions of Abibigromma to Community Development. They're written in a balanced tone that works for interviews, reports, or academic documentation.

SECTION C: CONTRIBUTIONS OF ABIBIGROMMA TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

1. Abibigromma's Role in Promoting Cultural Identity and Development

Response:

Abibigromma, as the resident theatre company of the National Theatre of Ghana, plays a vital role in preserving and promoting the nation's cultural identity. Through its performances, it reinterprets traditional Ghanaian art forms—music, dance, storytelling, and drama—to reflect contemporary realities. This blending of heritage and modern themes helps audiences appreciate the depth and relevance of Ghanaian culture in today's world.

What distinguishes Abibigromma from other groups is its professional artistry and commitment to cultural authenticity. Each production is deeply rooted in indigenous performance aesthetics—use of drumming, proverbs, communal dance, and call-and-response patterns—that connect theatre to the everyday life of the people. Abibigromma’s performances are therefore not just entertainment but cultural education and national expression.

2. Theatre as a Tool to Address Community or National Issues

Response:

Abibigromma has consistently used theatre as a means of national dialogue and social transformation. The company tackles issues such as environmental degradation, corruption, gender inequality, domestic violence, and civic responsibility.

For example, productions like *Ananse in the Land of Idiots*, *The Marriage of Anansewa*, and *The Legend of Aku Sika* have all carried strong moral and social messages while drawing on folklore and traditional wisdom. Other commissioned plays on sanitation, voter education, and peacebuilding have been staged in collaboration with government agencies and NGOs. These performances have generated community discussions, inspired behavioral change, and supported national campaigns aimed at social reform.

3. Community Engagement Beyond the National Theatre

Response:

Abibigromma’s work extends far beyond the walls of the National Theatre. The company regularly tours schools, universities, and regional cultural centers, taking theatre directly to the people.

This outreach ensures that Ghanaians from all walks of life can experience quality theatre and engage in conversations about national development.

The group has partnered with institutions such as the Ghana Education Service, National Commission on Civic Education, UNESCO, and various NGOs to produce educational theatre on topics like health, gender empowerment, and youth responsibility. Through such collaborations, Abibigromma uses participatory theatre techniques—forum theatre, role play, and community dialogue—to help communities identify problems and find local solutions.

4. Developmental Themes and Audience Responses

Response:

The most recurring developmental themes in Abibigromma's performance include civic responsibility, unity, environmental protection, women's empowerment, and cultural pride. Each production is carefully crafted to reflect everyday challenges while offering moral and practical lessons for positive change.

Audiences respond warmly to these themes because they are presented in engaging, relatable ways often with humour, song, and dance. Many viewers see themselves in the characters and situations depicted, making the lessons more personal and memorable. The feedback Abibigromma receives after performances often shows that people are not only entertained but also inspired to act differently in their families, communities, and workplaces.

SECTION D: EFFECTIVENESS OF THEATRE FOR DEVELOPMENT (TFD) IN ADDRESSING SOCIETAL ISSUES

1. Definition of Theatre for Development (TfD)

Response:

Theatre for Development (TfD) is a participatory form of theatre that uses performance as a tool for education, dialogue, and social change within communities. It draws from the lived experiences of the people and engages them directly in identifying issues, exploring solutions, and taking action.

Follow-up:

TfD is distinct from commercial or mainstream theatre because its purpose is not entertainment or profit but empowerment and transformation. While mainstream theatre often focuses on artistry and audience satisfaction, TfD emphasizes collective problem-solving, participation, and social impact. The community is both the performer and the audience, making it an inclusive and interactive process.

2. Key Social Issues Addressed by TfD

Response:

In recent years, TfD projects have tackled a wide range of social issues such as gender-based violence, child marriage, sanitation, HIV/AIDS awareness, environmental degradation, political accountability, and education for girls. Many initiatives have also focused on peacebuilding, human rights, and youth empowerment.

Follow-up:

One initiative with remarkable community impact was the “Stop Child Marriage” TfD campaign in northern Ghana, where performances were used to provoke dialogue among traditional leaders, parents, and young people. Through open discussions following the drama, several communities developed local by-laws to protect girls’ rights and promote education. Its impact was significant because it combined cultural sensitivity with active community ownership of the message.

3. Community Participation during TfD Performances

Response:

Community participation is the cornerstone of TfD. In my experience, local residents are often involved from the very beginning — in identifying the theme, shaping the storyline, acting, and even moderating post-performance discussions. This inclusion builds trust and makes the performance more relevant to the audience’s realities.

Follow-up:

Audience engagement directly influences the effectiveness of TfD. When spectators are encouraged to question, debate, and propose solutions, they develop a sense of agency and responsibility. The process transforms passive viewers into active participants, which increases the likelihood of behavioral and attitudinal change.

4. Effectiveness in Influencing Behavioral or Attitudinal Change

Response:

TfD has proven to be an effective medium for influencing both behavior and attitudes, particularly in rural or low-literacy communities. By using familiar language, humor, and relatable situations, it bridges the gap between awareness and understanding, prompting individuals to reflect on their actions.

Follow-up:

Its impact is enhanced when projects are community-led, sustained over time, and supported by follow-up activities such as workshops or policy advocacy. However, its effectiveness can be limited by factors such as poor facilitation, lack of funding, short project duration, or the absence of long-term monitoring. The greatest success comes when TfD is integrated into broader community development efforts and supported by local leaderships.

SECTION E: CHALLENGES FACED BY THEATRE ENTITIES IN THEIR DEVELOPMENTAL ROLES

1. Major Challenges Facing Theatre Groups like Obra, Abibigromma, and TfD

Response:

Theatre groups such as Obra, Abibigromma, and those engaged in Theatre for Development (TfD) face numerous challenges in carrying out their developmental roles. Chief among these is inadequate funding, limited logistical support, poor documentation and archiving their work, and declining audience interest due to competition from digital and electronic media.

Additionally, there is often a lack of consistent institutional backing and infrastructure for rehearsals, tours, and community outreach.

Follow-up:

Yes, the challenges vary between traditional and modern theatre groups. Traditional groups often struggle with modernization and visibility, lacking digital promotion and formal recognition, while modern or institutional groups face bureaucratic constraints, high production costs, and limited access to long-term funding. TfD projects, in particular, suffer from short-term donor dependence, which makes sustainability difficult once funding ends.

2. Effect of Funding and Institutional Support on Sustainability

Response:

Funding and institutional support are critical to the survival and sustainability of development-oriented theatre. Without adequate financial backing, theatre groups cannot afford proper production materials, transportation, or professional remuneration. Institutional support whether from universities, cultural agencies, or government ministries—provides legitimacy, structure, and continuity to their programmes.

Follow-up:

Despite these challenges, many groups have adopted creative strategies to sustain their work.

These include forming partnerships with NGOs and local assemblies, organizing community festivals, engaging in income-generating activities such as training workshops, and using social media for visibility and advocacy. Some also adopt participatory cost-sharing models where

communities contribute logistics or venues in exchange for performances that address their needs.

3. Social and Cultural Barriers to Theatre as a Development Tool

Response:

Social and cultural barriers continue to limit the effectiveness of theatre as a tool for development.

These include gender biases, taboos around discussing certain topics (such as sexual health or domestic violence), resistance to change among traditional authorities, and mistrust of external facilitators. In some communities, theatre is still viewed as mere entertainment rather than a serious medium for education and transformation.

Follow-up:

These barriers can be addressed through deeper community engagement and cultural sensitivity in planning. Involving opinion leaders, chiefs, and faith-based groups in the process increases acceptance. Using indigenous languages, traditional storytelling, music, and dance also ensures cultural relatability. Continuous education, follow-up activities, and building local capacity for theatre facilitation are essential for lasting impact.

4. Recommendations to Strengthen Theatre's Role in National Development

Response:

To enhance the contribution of theatre to Ghana's national development agenda, there is a need for a coordinated policy framework that recognizes theatre as a vital tool for social communication,

education, and cultural preservation. National cultural institutions should integrate theatre more purposefully into development programmes in health, environment, governance, and youth empowerment.

Follow-up:

Government should provide consistent funding, establish theatre outreach units within ministries (such as Health, Education, and Local Government), and strengthen the National Theatre's regional networks.

Private organizations can offer sponsorships and partnerships through their corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, especially for projects that align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Educational institutions should incorporate TfD and applied theatre into curricula, encourage research, and support student-community collaborations.

Together, these actors can ensure that theatre continues to inspire dialogue, promote inclusion, and drive positive change across Ghanaian society.

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introductory Note

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview. The purpose of this discussion is to explore how theatre contributes to national development in Ghana, focusing on the works and impact of Obra Drama Group, Abibigromma, and Theatre for Development (TfD). Your insights and experiences will greatly enhance understanding of the role of theatre in social change, civic education, and national growth.

Participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any point without penalty. Your identity will remain anonymous, and pseudonyms will be used in all reports. The interview will take approximately 45–60 minutes.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Age Group

10–20 21–30 31+ (

2. Gender

Male (Female

3. Educational Background

Basic Education Secondary Education (Tertiary Education Other (specify) _____

4. Occupation / Role in Theatre

____ Scholar _____

5. Years of Experience in Theatre Practice

Less than 5 years (5–10 years Above 10 years

6. Affiliation

Obra Drama Group Abibigromma TfD Initiative (Other (specify) ___none_____

SECTION B: HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND IMPACT OF OBRA DRAMA GROUP

1. Can you describe your understanding or recollection of the origins of the Obra Drama Group and how it evolved over the years?

The Obra group to the best of my recollection was one of the earliest Drama productions on Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GTV). But as to the exact date it started, who started it, I have no idea. I can't remember whether it came first or so for Dadzie.

Follow-up: What social or political conditions influenced its formation and early performances?

Well, its themes mostly reflected matters affecting the family and didactic social issues, such honesty, respect for traditions, hardworking, humility, respect for authority etc.

2. In what ways do you think the Obra Drama Group has influenced Ghanaian society since its inception?

A lot of morality productions were performed by the group, and such performances had a positive influence on society. I believe the people who watched the programme picked one or two lessons that might have influenced their lives in one way, or the other. At the personal level, language was a barrier since the programmes were mostly in Akan. But I can remember that any time government wanted to implement a policy and wanted to communicate the essence of the said policy to the citizens, Obra would be brought in to perform a play on the issue.

Follow-up: Can you provide examples of specific episodes or performances that created social awareness or change? Can remember any as at now.

3. How did Obra use theatre to communicate messages about social change, morality, and civic responsibility?

Their performances were Drama productions on TV. At the time there were no private TV stations in Ghana. As a result, they were able to reach mass audiences with their messages. And to the extent that governments found them credible means of reaching the citizens with policy issues, and achieved results, I will say that Obra used Drama to communicate effectively with the audience. What I don't know for certain is whether the productions were live with studio audience, which then would make it TV Theatre, or they were recorded and played back. Either way, the impact of their performances on the Ghanaian society cannot be underestimated.

Follow-up: Which issues (e.g., family, corruption, discipline) do you think were addressed most effectively?

I think the programme was more effective in using Drama to address family issues that also touched on matters of corruption in general, without necessarily explicitly mentioning political corruption, as that could have put them on collision with political authorities.

4. How relevant is Oba's storytelling approach in contemporary Ghanaian society?

I believe Oba's storytelling approach was mainly the traditional Ghanaian storytelling which relied heavily on metaphor, proverbs, music and dance to educate, advocate and criticize. That was very strategically relevant because their approach, though not frontal confrontational, did some sort of analysis of societal issues, and at the end offered suggested solutions to identified problems.

Follow-up: Does its legacy continue to shape modern theatre or media production?

I believe so, even though the means of reaching the audience has largely shifted to social media because that's where the younger generation of audience can be reached. Theatre, as the saying goes, is the mirror of society, and as long as there are social issues that require attention, the legacy of theatre will always remain relevant.

SECTION C: CONTRIBUTIONS OF ABIBIGROMMA TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

1. How would you describe Abibigromma's role as a national theatre company in promoting cultural identity and development?

My exposure to Abibigromma has been with the one at the School of Performing Arts. And as far as their contribution to National development is concerned, it has been phenomenal. I have not followed the one at the National Theatre keenly. But to the extent that it's a theatre company, its contribution to Ghana's cultural identity and national development will be a priority.

Follow-up: What distinguishes its performances from those of other groups?

2. Can you share examples of how Abibigromma has used theatre to address community or national issues?

I do know that Abibigromma, whether at Legon or National Theatre, has performed plays targeted at students from basic and second cycle institutions preparing for their examinations. In the process they dramatise English literature text for better understanding of the students.

Follow-up: Were there specific productions that generated community awareness or change?

How does Abibigromma engage with communities outside the National Theatre?

Like the one at Legon, I believe they also from time-to-time travel out-to-time to perform on specific themes at specific times from time-to-time.

Follow-up: Have there been partnerships with schools, NGOs, or development agencies?

In fact, Abibigromma, Legon is the research unit of the School of Performing Arts.

What developmental themes are most frequently portrayed in Abibigromma's performances?

issues of civic responsibility and respect for Ghanaian cultural identity

Follow-up: How do audiences respond to these themes?

Audience responses have generally been positive, even though a lot has to be done to get the attention of the current generation of audience, as they have been more exposed to a wider world than the older generation.

SECTION D: EFFECTIVENESS OF THEATRE FOR DEVELOPMENT (TFD) IN ADDRESSING SOCIETAL ISSUES

How would you define Theatre for Development (TfD) in your own words?

Theatre for Development, I think, focuses more on advocacy for behavioral change for the good, growth and development of society

Follow-up: What makes TfD distinct from commercial or mainstream theatre?

The main distinction between commercial theatre and theatre for Development has to do the motive. Whereas the motive for commercial theatre is profit, the main motive for TfD is social change.

What are some of the key social issues that TfD projects have addressed in recent years?

sanitation, taxation, Covid-19, electoral campaign

Follow-up: Which initiative had the greatest community impact, and why?

I think, sanitation.

Can you describe your experience with community participation during TfD performances?

A community after a TfD performance mobilized a cleanup campaign to clear the drainage was a clear demonstration of the impact of a well-focused theatre performance.

Follow-up: How does audience engagement influence the outcomes or effectiveness of the performance?

How effective do you think TfD is in influencing behavioral or attitudinal change?

Theatre puts the mirror in front of the audience to see their image and take decisions to work to make themselves better.

Follow-up: What factors enhance or limit its impact?

The fact that it is a passion- based art, when the artistes see that the acts are making the required impact, their passion for it grows, and they are encouraged to do more.

SECTION E: CHALLENGES FACED BY THEATRE ENTITIES IN THEIR DEVELOPMENTAL ROLES

What are the major challenges that theatre groups like Obra, Abibigromma, and Tfd face in fulfilling their developmental mandates?

The foremost challenge facing any theatre group in Ghana, I will say, is finance. Theatre production is financially demanding, but producers are unable to raise the necessary funding to stage productions as much as they would want to. The cost of product is simply beyond the means of the producers, and investment opportunities are limited.

Follow-up: Do these challenges vary between traditional and modern theatre groups?

The challenges cut across all theatre groups, whether traditional or modern.

How does funding or institutional support affect the sustainability of development-oriented theatre programmes?

Funding of the theatre in Ghana is severely limited. As such the theatre groups are unable to do much. The only thing that sustains theatre for Development in Ghana is the passion and resilience of the theatre practitioners themselves. Public support is reduced to salaries only. Banks find theatre a very high-risk investment. Corporate institutions underestimated the profitability and rate of returns of the Arts in general and theatre in particular.

Follow-up: Have there been any creative strategies for overcoming financial limitations?

I'm afraid, no. Theatre producers generally rely on their resources to mount plays. At best they go for personal loans or assistance from family and friends.

What social or cultural barriers hinder the use of theatre as a communication tool for development?

Theatre by itself is an Art of humans for humans. Participation in theatre innate and there are no barriers. The only time society begins to create barriers is when people decide to engage in it as a career.

Follow-up: How can these be addressed to improve impact?

What do you recommend strengthening the contribution of theatre to Ghana's national development agenda?

Government should begin to see it as a foundation for the cultural identity and the soul of the nation, creating the necessary environment for art to grow. By that, theatre will contribute enormously to job creation, revenue generation and cultural emancipation.

Follow-up: What roles should government, private organizations, and educational institutions play?

Beyond creating the conducive environment for theatre, governmental institutions and duty bearers should take a keen interest in patronising the theatre. Private organizations should overcome the paranoia for risk of losses and venture into theatre, and they will notice that in the long run it will be worthwhile. Finally, educational institutions must make theatre a core program and not an extracurricular activity.