

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter details the methodology employed in the study. Among the areas discussed under research design are descriptive and diagnostic research approaches, and case study research along with its qualitative dimension as reflected in this study. Data collection methods such as the interview method, focus group discussions, observation methods and content analysis are discussed in detail as to how they were used and the extent of their effectiveness. Finally, the scope and limitations of the study are examined.

According Mindoti (1999) research methodology in ethnomusicology borrows a lot from natural science methodology. However, the natural sciences mainly emphasize the testing and establishing of the laws of the universe using experimental methods that can be repeated several times for empirical verification of the previous results as a way of ensuring objectivity. For ethnomusicology, the essence is in the generation of knowledge based on creativity and the interpretation of behavior in a given context. For example, ethnomusicology researchers do not derive meaning from mere observation of behavior, they go ahead and discuss the context in which the behavior has occurred, that is, the cultural factors influencing the producer in order to make a meaningful interpretation of the behavior under observation. In other words, observation makes meaning only when the factors influencing the producer of the music are considered in order to achieve objective results. Above all, unlike the natural sciences that use objects, figures and chemicals in experimenting on the laws of nature, ethnomusicology, as Mindoti (Ibid) observes, uses human beings as 'specimen' to generate knowledge. This makes the research methodology in ethnomusicology intricate and difficult to achieve the type of objectivity, which the typical scientific methodology aims to achieve.

This study relied on two complementary sources of data: primary and secondary. In order to situate the study theoretically and generate the conceptual framework with which to work on the primary sources, secondary data was consulted and analyzed to provide the initial data for the study. Secondary evidence included written sources like books, journal articles, daily newspapers, government reports, articles, seminar papers, MA and PhD theses etc. These were accessed from libraries at Kenyatta University, Moi University, University of Nairobi and the Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library among others. Online journals available on Internet were also consulted.

Primary written documents on the topic were gathered from the Kenya National Archives. These are the first hand records from the participants and observers that have been passed down to posterity. Government monographs, ministry of culture reports, native council reports etc. were consulted for information relating to this research. Visits were made to the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation Library, the Institute of African Studies, East African Standard and Nation Newspapers Library, Music Copyright Association of Kenya etc. in order to refer to the recordings and the information available.

Another primary source was the carrying out of both participant and non-participant observations and interviews mainly within Bungoma district. Purposive sampling technique was used to identify respondents including circumcisers, initiates, song leaders, instrumentalists etc. among other key informant cultural consultants. Focused in-depth individual and group interviews were carried out.

Recordings on audiocassettes and videotapes captured group performances and individual interviews. Six research assistants were trained and employed to help in the research process. Participation, observation and the use of an interview schedule provided the

researcher with the opportunity to have the actual field experience and raise further questions.

The data collected from documentary sources and fieldwork was qualitatively analyzed. Here the information on audiotapes and videotapes was transcribed and interviews summarized and coded to come up with clear understandable statements and conclusions. The music collected was classified and analyzed according to the various stages of the Bukusu circumcision ceremony. This was done by counterchecking; comparing, contrasting and corroborating the information collected from various sources together with the theoretical framework outlined, research questions, hypothesis and objectives.

In order to gather the information required, oral interview schedules, observations and focus group discussions were utilized. Tape recorders were used during interviews to get information directly without much trouble of struggling to write it down; and hence disrupting the flow and coherency of information from respondents. This helped instill confidence in the interviewees. While using the oral interview schedule, the researcher's probing and prompting gave room for greater depth of response. Where necessary and appropriate, English, *Lubukusu*, and Kiswahili languages were used interchangeably. Moreover, still photo cameras and videotapes were used to capture some of the participants (dancers, initiates, and singers), dance formations and venues of music performance (see the CD and DVD accompanying this thesis).

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This section describes research design and methodology in terms of population, sampling, and administration of research instruments, data collection procedures, and the description of techniques used in data analysis all of which were utilized in order to answer the research questions and achieve the set objectives. The grammatical and speculative theories form the theoretical basis of the study. The

conceptual perspective of the study is based on qualitative research that includes designs, techniques and measures that do not produce discrete numerical data. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999:155), more often the data in qualitative research are in the form of words rather than numbers and these words are grouped into categories. They further observe that human behaviour is explained best by using qualitative research. Human phenomena that cannot be investigated by direct observation such as attitudes and other emotions are best studied using the qualitative method. In order to achieve the research objectives, the research design was based on descriptive and diagnostic research approach. On the role of qualitative research in information transfer Mugenda and Mugenda further observe:

Finally, emerging issues relating to social, political and economic development in poor countries have enhanced the use of qualitative approaches in search of sustainable solutions to the myriad problems facing these countries. Some research and evaluation experts have argued for the qualitative approach especially in Africa because communities in Africa have traditionally communicated information by word of mouth rather than in written form. The older members of the community are considered to have wisdom and it is their obligation to pass on this wisdom to the younger generation. Folklore, for example, has been an effective framework of communicating information, especially on issues related to sex and family life, religious beliefs, taboos, sickness, social mythology etc. Because of the tendency of African communities to pass information orally, there is a strong argument that the most appropriate research and evaluation approach in Africa is the qualitative approach because it emphasizes oral communication and gives respondents a chance to state their problems the way they perceive them and participate in seeking solutions to these problems as well as in effecting such solutions (1999: 202).

3.2.1 DESCRIPTIVE AND DIAGNOSTIC RESEARCH APPROACHES

In the current research, most of the procedures appertaining to descriptive and diagnostic research approaches were adhered to. To begin with, an oral interview schedule was pre-tested by using it as a

guide in interviewing several people who were familiar with Bukusu circumcision customs. This pilot study was conducted in Moi University, Eldoret town and Bungoma district prior to the actual circumcision ceremony period. Consequently, the gaps detected in the schedule were appropriately filled in order to reflect on the entire scope of the study in finer details.

3.2.2 CASE STUDY RESEARCH: THE QUALITATIVE DIMENSION

According to Gillham (2004:10), “qualitative methods are essentially descriptive and inferential in character and, for this reason, are often seen as ‘soft.’ You may have significant statistical results, but these have to be described and *interpreted*: ‘facts’ do not speak for themselves - someone has to speak for them.” This is a strong argument that justifies the use of qualitative methods to answer some questions in the current research. In this case, the philosophical base is that human behavior; thoughts and feelings are partly determined by their context. The researcher understands the Bukusu people in real life situations and by studying them in their context and in the way they operate he managed to situate the place of Bukusu circumcision music and hence make sense of it in terms of rules, contexts, functions, meanings, value and significance. This contextual approach led to the achievement of research objectives with ease. In further support for the qualitative approach, Gillham observes that ‘[o]bjectivity’ can ignore data important for adequate understanding (Ibid. 2004:12). Therefore, on the basis of the foregoing, this study adopted the qualitative approach in the collection and analysis of data. A researcher-administered oral interview schedule that was used as a guide in controlling the direction of interviews was in most cases effectively used. However, it is worth noting that due the discursive and descriptive nature of the qualitative approach it was often time consuming.

3.2.3 RESEARCH STRATEGY

This study employed two research strategies that were inter-twined. These are ethnography and case study. Ethnography has its origins in the work of anthropologists studying aspects of a particular group in depth. It involves the researcher becoming a member of the group being studied in order to share their experiences and try to understand why members of the group act in particular ways. In view of the fact that the focus of this study is on the performance of traditional Bukusu circumcision music, which is a culture-specific phenomenon, ethnographic and case study strategies were more applicable.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

3.3.1 INTRODUCTION

Case study was the main method within which other methods such as interviews, focus group discussions, observations and content analysis were utilized in the context of the study as explained below.

3.3.2 TRAINING RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

Six research assistants (see appendix no. 6) were trained by the researcher on how to administer an oral interview schedule. Each of them was given ample time to go through the research proposal before discussing it in detail with the researcher. The researcher had a session with all the six research assistants where he illuminated the perspective of the study as a social research. Research assistants raised pertinent contentious issues concerning the content and interpretation of various questions. Technical terms used in the questionnaire such as *form*, *content*, *performance*, *composition* etc. were clarified and exemplified by the researcher in relation to the context of the study. Furthermore, the researcher discussed with assistants the research objectives and hypotheses in detail. From the discussions it became necessary to formulate other guiding questions in addition to the interview schedule. This was a deliberate attempt to curb the foreseen digressions by the informants. Lastly, the researcher enlightened his assistants on the effective use of questioning

techniques, participant observation, and non-participant observation and on general issues concerning ethics in social research but with a specific inclination to the perspective of the current study. He also gave them guidelines on the effective use of still photo cameras, video cameras and audio tape recorders. After the theoretical and psychological preparation, the researcher equipped them with the necessary stationery and set them ready for fieldwork.

3.3.3 INTERVIEW METHOD

In this study interview method was employed when conducting key informant interviews and in focus group discussions as illustrated below. The interviews were guided by an oral interview schedule as discussed below.

3.3.3.1 Oral Interview Schedule

The current research used the unstructured interview schedule that is sometimes called an interview guide. In this kind of interview, the interviewers asked questions or made comments intended to lead the respondent towards giving data to meet the study objectives. Because of the open nature of unstructured interviews, probing was commonly used to get deeper information.

3.3.3.2 Key Informant Interview

A key informant interview is used to collect data from persons who are considered to hold crucial and relevant information. In this case the targeted respondents were among others, elderly members (elders) of the society who have experienced various changing phases of the practice of the Bukusu circumcision over a substantial period of time. Others were the initiates' parents, local administration officials such as headmen, councillors and chiefs (see photo no. 3.1). Apart from contributing other crucial information on the research topic, the local government officials also gave out views concerning the current Kenya government policy stand in regard to traditional Bukusu circumcision rite. They also articulated issues to do with the relationship between

the spread of HIV/AIDS and the traditional circumcision rite. Also interviewed were circumcisers who contributed information about the ceremony and the current emerging changes.

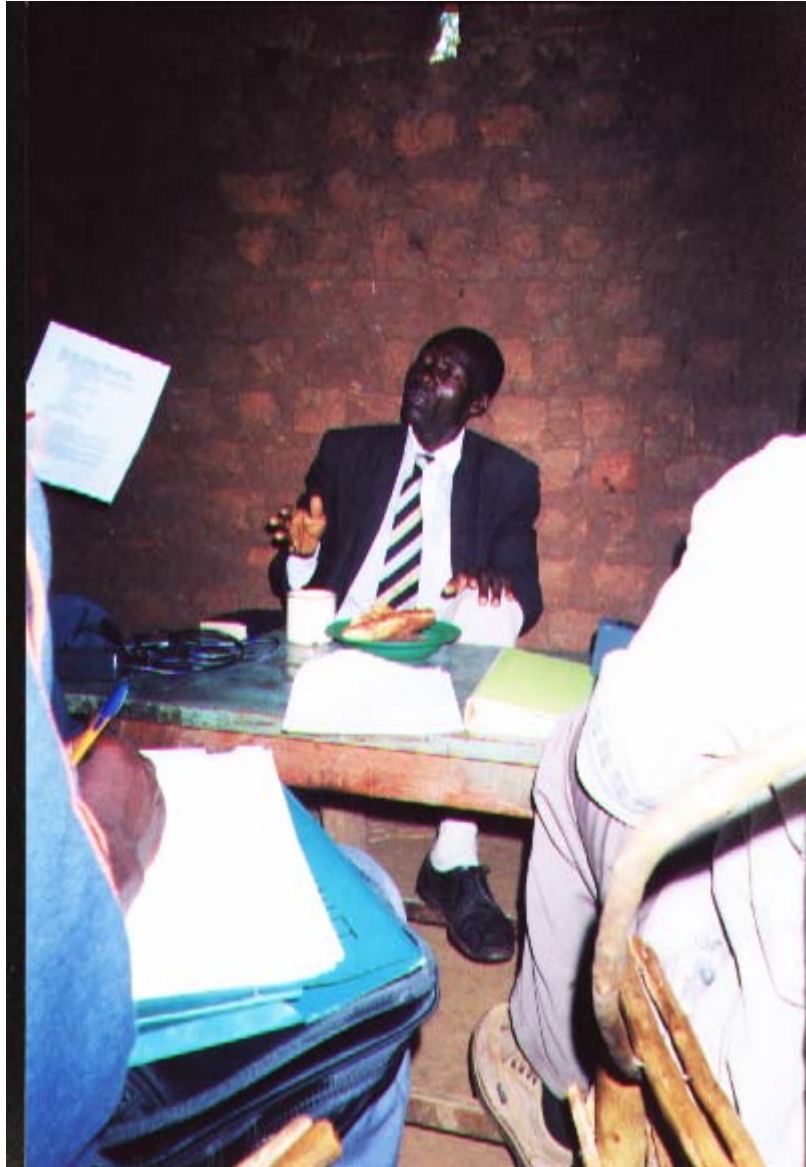


Photo no. 3.1; taken by the researcher: A Local Government administration official, Caleb Maseti of Bahai Bungoma District being interviewed.

The interview schedule had open-ended questions focusing on the research objectives. It was left open to enable the interviewees to express their perspectives. More often they would come up with a new perspective not captured in the instrument. The style of the interview was conversational, and the objectives were achieved through active engagement by the interviewee and the interviewer. An interview schedule with open-ended questions differs from the more structured composition and uniform style of the survey interview (Mason, 2002). The approach made the interview interactive, situational and had a generative approach to the acquisition of data. The questions in the schedule required the respondents to divulge information on culture as a changing phenomenon in reference to the organization and practice of the Bukusu circumcision ceremony in which the music under investigation in this study is part and parcel. All the respondents targeted for these data collection methods were successfully interviewed.

3.3.3.3 Focus Group Discussions

According to Litosseliti (2003:15), “focus group methodology has developed as a result of broader shift from quantitative to qualitative research methods. It is important for qualitative research and can combine flexibility and adaptability with rigor and theoretical grounding.” In this study, focus group discussions were used to gather views and opinions by giving participants a topic or a series of questions to discuss. The researcher’s main role in the discussions was to listen and moderate the discussion by probing and prompting views from the participants. The researcher used this methodology successfully by discussing research questions with groups of a few purposively sampled respondents such as circumcisers, initiates’ parents, Bukusu culture consultants, composers, singers and dancers.

3.3.4 OBSERVATION METHOD

The observation method is the most commonly used method especially in studies relating to behavioural sciences. Kothari observes that:

In a way we all observe things around us, but this sort of observation is not scientific observation. Observation becomes a scientific tool and the method of data collection for the researcher when it serves a formulated research purpose, is systematically planned and is subjected to checks and controls on validity and reliability (1990:118).

These views are corroborated with Binnet's (2003:97), when he notes that "observation is used as a research technique when data on actual practices are required. Like questionnaires, observation generates factual information rather than explanations."

As indicated above, the purpose of participant observation is to develop an insider's view of the setting and persons under study. Nevertheless, Patton (1990) advocates the combination of participation and observation because it gives the researcher the possibility of understanding the activity as an insider while describing the same for outsiders. In the current study, the researcher and research assistants took part in learning and performing the circumcision music. However, it was at times necessary for the researcher to get detached and have 'a birds eye view' of the activities from an angle especially when recording some crucial information or taking a picture of a particular dance, movement or sub-ritual. This technique assisted in avoiding gaps, which would arise from the participatory approach where the researcher would not be able to notice and capture gestures and performance patterns going on behind him.

3.3.5 CONTENT ANALYSIS

According to Achola in Mwiria and Wamahiu (1995:46), "content analysis is more appropriately defined as a research technique for systematic analysis, qualitative, quantitative or both, of the manifest or latent meanings of words, phrases, ideas or postures, objects or artifacts."

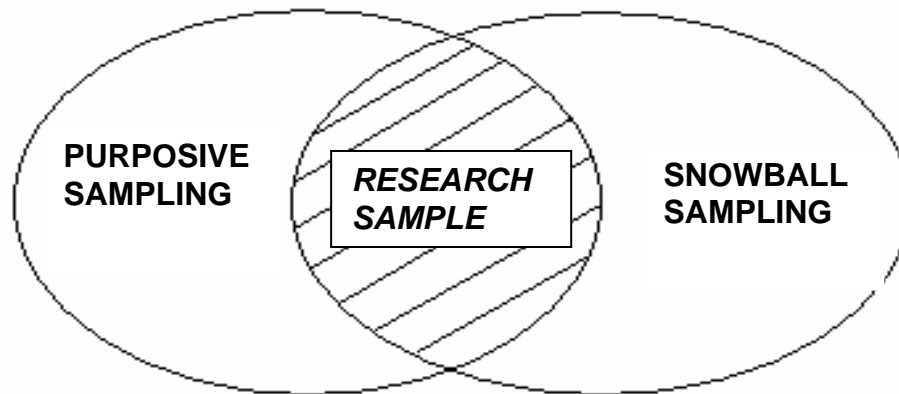
This research technique involves a detailed study of documents relevant to a study. Such documents took a number of forms, including books, local newspapers, existing databases of information, journals, relevant theses, audio and videotapes.

3.4 SAMPLING

In most ethnomusicological research, it is neither possible to determine the number of informants nor songs that give a fair representation of music in a given culture. Similarly, Merriam (1964:54) argues that “cutting across the two areas of field and laboratory techniques is the extremely difficult question of what constitutes an adequate sample of the music of a community, tribe or larger grouping.” He further argues that “creativity is a never ending process under whatever culture rules it is carried out; thus what might be conceived as a total sample one day, may be lacking the next. What percentage, then, of an infinite sample constitutes reliability? The answer is that there is no answer.”

As stated above, creativity in music is an on-going process, which is infinite, and as such, it is difficult to establish the amount of music, which is an adequate representative sample. However, in this study, the researcher used two non-probability sampling techniques namely: purposive sampling and snowball sampling. Kerlinger (1973:129) observes that “non-probability samples are often necessary and unavoidable. Their weaknesses can to some extent be mitigated by using knowledge expertise, and care in selecting samples and by replicating studies with different samples.” The current research integrated purposive and snowball sampling that led to a complimentary/symbiotic relationship as shown in figure 3.1.

FIGURE NO. 3.1: Researcher's Illustration of the Interface between Purposive and Snowball Sampling Techniques.



3.4.1 PURPOSIVE SAMPLING

Mugenda and Mugenda (1999:50) observe that purposive sampling is a sampling technique that allows a researcher to use cases that have the required information with respect to the objectives of his or her study. Therefore, subjects are hand picked because they are informative or they possess the required characteristics. In this study, the sample size of subjects consisted of four initiates, four initiates' parents, two circumcisers, three song leader/composers, two local government officers and two key Bukusu cultural informants who were purposively identified through snowball sampling. These together with other participants made up a total of 36 subjects that were interviewed at the end of the study (see appendix 9).

3.4.2 SNOWBALL SAMPLING

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999:51), in this method, initial subjects with the desired characteristics are identified using purposeful sampling technique. The few identified subjects name others that they know have the required characteristics until the researcher gets the

number of cases he or she requires. In this study, the researcher used snowball sampling by identifying some of his Bukusu students in Moi University (where the researcher teaches) whose brothers; relatives or neighbours were to be circumcised. This was done as from January to march, 2004. These students informed the initiates' parents or guardians of the intended study and its general objectives. Between April and June, 2004, the researcher organized meetings with the initiates' parents with whom he discussed the issue and further requested them to identify key informants, who mainly included elders from the respective localities that were knowledgeable in the study area. Moreover, the researcher requested the initiate's parents to identify local government officials such as headmen, chiefs and councillors who had crucial and relevant information in regard to this study.

3.5 DATA VALIDITY PROCEDURES

Perakyla (1997) and Leninger (1994) point out that it is possible to ensure validity of qualitative data if the researcher follows procedures that minimize biases. In the present study, several strategies were used to ensure the accuracy of the findings. Data collected through different techniques like observation, interviews and focus group discussions was triangulated to build coherent justification for various themes. The researcher and assistants compared notes at the end of every data collection to ensure that what was recorded was not subject to personal bias. Also, tape recorded data was used in cases where there was uncertainty or incomprehension of the respondents' actual words.

Since the research assistants were known within the study area, most respondents were willing to provide the necessary information. The research assistants also followed similar interview guides and the researcher impressed upon them to keep accurate and thorough field notes.

The collected Bukusu circumcision music was transcribed by using staff notation. This notation system has some limitations because it leaves out a number of inherent aspects of the Bukusu circumcision music. For instance, it does not have conventions for ululation and other vocal embellishments. Due to this fact, recorded music on audio cassette tapes; and still photos were used for the purpose of representing broader aspects of the music. In addition to the audio-recorded music, dance, movement, speech, paramusical and paralinguistic features were captured on videotapes and on digital videodisks (DVD). It is worth noting that in the performance of Bukusu circumcision music, in most cases, soloists have the freedom to extemporize with regard to rhythm and melody while repeating their phrases. In such cases, only the varied repeats were transcribed.

3.6 DATA PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS

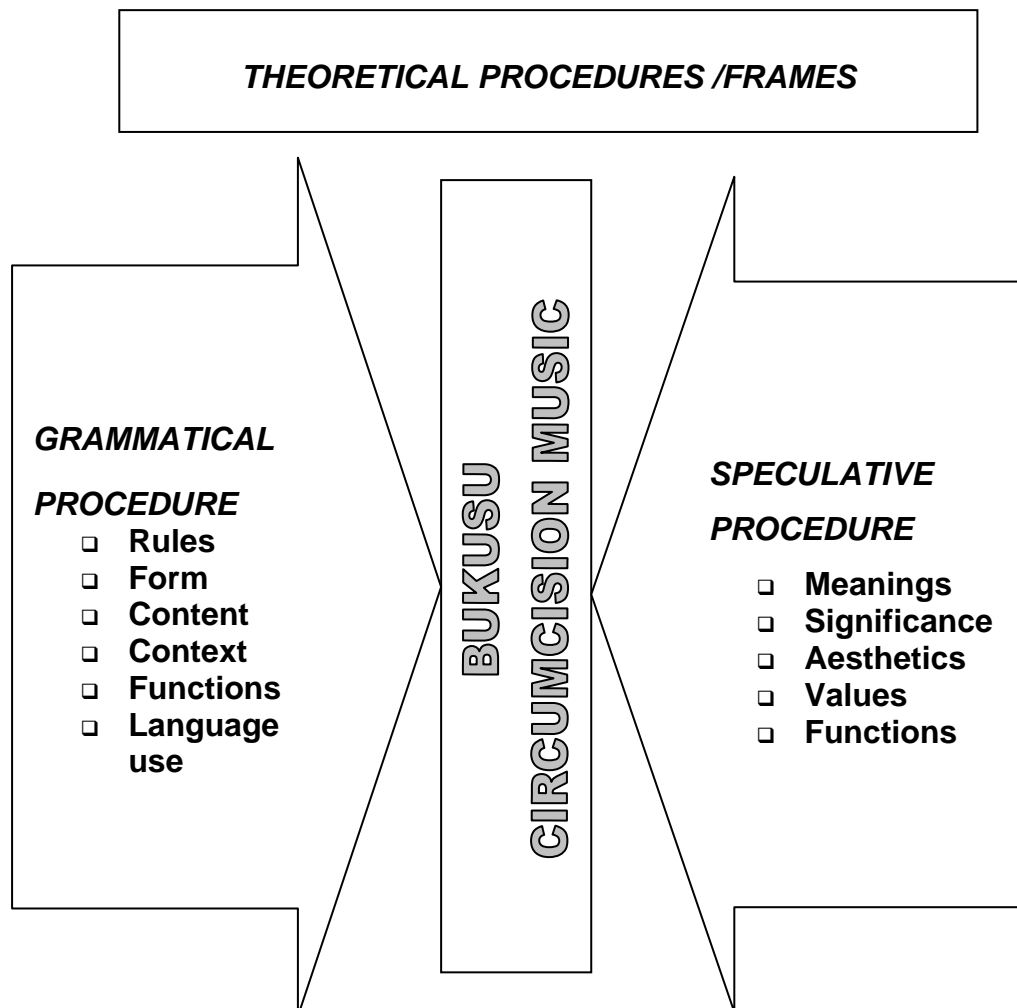
After the fieldwork, data collected from documentary sources and the field was qualitatively analyzed. Here the information on audiotapes and videotapes were edited and interviews summarized and coded to come up with clear understandable statements and conclusions. The songs collected from the field were classified and analyzed according to the various stages of the Bukusu circumcision ceremony. Descriptive data and evidence relating to each research question were classified into distinctive classes based on their common qualitative characteristics. Being basically a qualitative research, the results were discussed in a narrative manner. For purposes of quick reference, each line in every song is numbered chronologically.

3.6.1 UNITS OF ANALYSIS

Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) observe that the units of analysis, also called the units of statistical analysis refers to those units that we initially describe for the purpose of aggregating their characteristics in order to describe some larger group or abstract phenomenon. In the current study, the main units of analysis are derived from the form, content and performance of the Bukusu circumcision music.

Specifically, the main units are: Identification of the music as vocal, instrumental or vocal with instrumental accompaniment; basic forms, phraseology, harmonic principles and styles, performance/presentational form; and lastly, the nature and meaning of the text. The theoretical procedures/frames, as employed in the study, are fully illustrated in figure 3.2. In the figure, the theoretical procedures/frames are based on the grammatical and speculative theories that form the theoretical framework of the entire study as discussed in chapter two (section 2.3).

FIGURE NO. 3.2: Researcher’s illustration of theoretical procedures/frames derived from Nissio Fiagbedzi’s “Philosophy of theory in ethnomusicological research” in Djedje, J.G. and Carter, W.G. (eds.). (1989): Volume I. pp. 45-57.



3.7 SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The main units of analysis in this study were: the dominant solo-and-response song structure form, visual arts, verbal arts, dance and the creative-cultural-philosophical aspects underpinning the composition procedure and performance of the Bukusu circumcision music. Apart from being notated, the analyzed songs were translated from *Lubukusu* (the language spoken by the Bukusu people) to English language. It is worth noting that this research did not cover the notation of dance. However, descriptive approach was used to explain the basic dance formations evident in the performance of Bukusu circumcision music. Because the nature of the study is more of an indigenous knowledge product, qualitative research was the most suitable as it was necessary to explore complexities that were beyond the scope of more controlled approaches, which are usually based on quantity than quality.

Lastly, it is worth mentioning that the presence of electronic equipment such as still photo cameras, cassette recorders and video cameras led to respondents or performers shying away from the interviews or exaggerating their actions and/or gestures.

3.8 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the research methodology pertinent to the study is discussed. In sum, focus is put on research design; descriptive and diagnostic research approaches, the qualitative dimensions of case study research and research strategy. The effectiveness of the two sampling methods used namely: snowball and purposive sampling, is also discussed together with data validity, processing and analysis procedures. Moreover, data collection methods such as interview, focus group discussions, observations and content analysis are evaluated in terms of how they were effectively used. Lastly, while discussing the scope and limitations of the study, delimitations of the study and its impediments are illuminated.