



# Embracing Yoruba Folktales as a Tool for Moral Development in Children

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## ABSTRACT

It is sad to note that morality issues have become a subject of debate in many homes as society now embraces several wrong behaviours and seems not to appreciate the culture of morality. The present study set out to explore the views of adults on the use of Yoruba folktales as a tool for moral development. The two objectives were to explore the benefits of folktales to children and examine the role of demographics in the acceptance of folktales as a tool for moral development. The study adopted a mixed method of research, where a 10-item self-designed questionnaire was used to examine the two objectives of the study. Focus Group Discussion was also used to gain a deeper insight into the benefit of Yoruba Folktales for Moral Development in Children. The participants were selected from Oke 'Badan High School, Ibadan, Nigeria through a convenient sampling method. 150 valid responses were analysed using frequencies and chats. The findings also showed that Christians showed greater support for folktales than participants from the Islamic religion. The study concluded that folktales are a valuable addition that could be revived to help salvage the issue of morality among young people in Nigeria. The study recommended folktales be added to school literature to promote indigenous knowledge and mother tongue enhancement and also to teach acceptable behaviours in society.

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Publication History  
Received 13<sup>th</sup> May, 2024  
Accepted 24<sup>th</sup> July, 2024  
Published online 29<sup>th</sup> August, 2024

*Keywords: Yoruba Folktales, Moral Development, Children, Mother's Tongue*

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, morality issues have become a source of concern among several adults and they have continued to appear like Africans are totally getting it wrong in several communities in the African continent. Morals and values are becoming a thing of the past as several delinquencies have taken the center stage of humanity. The question now is how and where Africans missed the link between this "GenZ" and the last older age cohorts (Millennials and Boomers).

Traditionally, there have been ways in which adults and many of our grandparents raised us, one of such tools is African folktales. Life is a story and stories imitate life and life imitates stories, life reflects stories and stories reflect life. Folktale is creatively loaded with imaginative narrative (story in prose form). Most of the stories usually come and have a basis in real life, but generally, the story is an imaginative recreation of scenarios. The folktales come with identities like non-visual art performances like storytelling, singing, and drama among others to guide the moral development of

the audience, providing memory improvisation and artistic literary qualities. The benefits of folktales are the instilling of moral values of hard work, loyalty, patriotism, perseverance, honesty, sexual morality, goodness, compassion, commitment, tolerance, patience, pro-social behaviour, social responsibilities, forgiveness, and truthfulness. The rationale behind the use of folktales is for the propagation of morality of the people and it has a wider benefit in entertainment and spiritual development, relaxation leisure and amusement. Some of the folktales that have caught the attention are proverbs, parables, myths, legends, trickster tales, fairytales, tales of reversal of fortune, tales of intervention, folk belief, superstitions, magic and medicine among others.

### **The Concept of Folktales**

Folktales are common terms used for different variabilities of selections that convey conventional narratives. The method of telling the stories appears universally common to most societies alike. Verbal evidence shows that folktales are undoubtedly related to cultural activities hence why we found it from culture to culture. Oral tales can be told by anybody who has the tales. It becomes easy over time and there is mostly a collective consciousness of a people and an essential part of their culture. Though folktales differ from one culture to the other, but usually are perceptible, because of some basic features.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Uses of Folktales**

Morally, folktales guide a generation of people with virtuous lessons, so as to behave well, learn how to protect themselves and their environment, as well as equipping them with economic information, to be self-reliant. Yoruba folktales just like other folktales from other parts of the country deal with almost every aspect of human behaviours, which may not be limited to economic empowerment, leadership, politics, socio-interaction, ecosystem, environment, religion, geography, and traditional life of people, etc. Its teaching centred on the Skinnerian school of thought (reward and punishment). It also embedded the Moralistic school of thought as propounded by Kohlberg.<sup>1</sup> The reward for any action and saying is based on morally sound behaviours, and punishment is incurred on contrary behaviours.

Majority of the folklorists always ensure that the moral (s) of the story is conveyed to the audience at the end of their stories, this can sometimes be used as a tool to mention attention span, attentiveness and concentration in the children. Some folktales are used as tools to escape from harsh geographical conditions and biological limitations into a more exciting world of fantasy; as a means for the validation of social, and cultural norms, as pedagogic devices for the education of the young, as a means of applying social pressure, and exercising social control. Folktales can be used in almost all disciplines to teach and convey knowledge, especially about the do's and don'ts of any given society. It reveals a lot about behaviour during the past and gives insight into the future and the prevailing attitude held by the people.

Dauda noted that the audience is the most authentic parameter that judges and evaluates the success and the meaning of a story and this helps children to learn.<sup>2</sup> The audience of recent tale sessions is usually composed of children and adults. They will likely acquire various attitudes and behaviours as a result of their exposure to folktales. Many tales aim at sending a moral message to the audience, especially the children. Tale telling helps the audience grow upto be responsible members of the society, for future leadership. The moral lesson learnt in some stories helps the audience or listeners to determine the profile of their personality and future path in life. Ahmad in his paper titled *The Position of Tales and tale-telling in Hausa Society* view "with the coming of Islam, participation in storytelling was discouraged."<sup>3</sup> Arabs were enjoined to renounce old Bedawi ways including

<sup>1</sup> Lawrence Kohlberg, L. The young child as a philosopher. In L. Kohlberg (Ed.), *Child psychology and childhood education: A cognitive-developmental view* (pp. 13–44). (New York:Longman, 1987).

<sup>2</sup> B.T. Dauda, "Folktales And Moral Instruction: A Thematic Analysis Of Hausa Women Tales In Kumbotso Local Government In Kano State" ( Ahmadu Bello University, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Said Babura Ahmad, "Narrator as Interpreter," *Stability and Variation in Hausa*, 1997.

storytelling” tale telling was regarded as fululu (idle talk gossip) which is undesirable and therefore people were enjoined not to participate.

### Features of Oral Language

Using a range of vocabulary related to a particular topic, maintaining a receptive body stance in conversation, and; Speaking in a way that conveys feelings (whilst keeping emotions under control). In addition, there are five areas in which folktales contribute to communicative competence, especially in children. They are made up of the following.

1. Affective behaviours: It helps children to develop their communication skills that reveal positive attitudes and values.
2. Listening comprehension: This helps to develop their attention and concentration skills; this further helps their abilities to construct meaning from the stories told to them.
3. Speech Communication: It broadened their speech goals and expanded their repertoire of speaking strategies by experimenting with new ideas.
4. Critical/evaluative behaviour: This deals with children’s abilities to monitor their own speech and the messages they receive from others.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Moral development is directly within psychology’s view of human development. This simply implies that it is of immense importance in the understanding of human behaviour, as all the stages mentioned by Kohlberg have an explanation within the African Folktales.<sup>4</sup> The fictional styles that constitute the basis of this analysis are supported by most psychological views of moral development and how folktales can be used as a tool.

The selection of African tales provides suitable tales/stories to teach and correct all forms of behaviours, especially at the preconvention level of moral development or that can be tapped to arouse the development of morality at the early stage of development. African tales have been noted to demonstrate the possible consequences of an act of disobedience manifested in a child, the disrespect for elders has been seen to come with physical discomfort and regrets, which may be withdrawal of benefits and activities that the child considers as excitatory. Little children functioning at this stage of moral development are fortified in the use of the mother’s tongue for themselves in behaviours that are motivated by avoidance of punishment. African oral tales couched in punishing the justice system that emphasizes the painful aftermath of crime and disobedience in any given society.

The second stage of moral development is predominantly concerned with human relations and is primarily governed by concrete support from genuine relationships. Russo and Willis stated that the second level of moral development comes with the consciousness that morality has something to do with human behaviour and relationships.<sup>5</sup> There is an understanding of mutuality in relationships, at the adolescence level; the teen is expected to behave in certain acceptable ways to get positive approvals by their opposite genders. Desires for actions are motivated by reward drive or direct benefits whilst possible guilt reactions are seen as a matter of practicality. The conventional level includes the third stage of moral development. Here, the child is more concerned about living up standards and expectations of people to gain their acceptance. At the fourth stage of moral development, there is a larger social system that regulates the behaviour of individuals within it. In this case, authority or the social order is the source of morality. There is a conscious sense of duty or obligation to live up to socially defined roles and maintain existing social order for the general good of man, as an adult teaching the younger ones about folktales on acceptable behaviours has definitely placed you in a position, where the younger ones looked up to you and you dare not fail them.

The post-conventional level is mainly for adulthood, but poor upbringing implies that the person may not achieve that level of moral development. Only a few adults tend to achieve it. The

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<sup>4</sup> Lawrence Kohlberg, “The Psychology of Moral Development,” *Ethics* 97, no. 2 (1987).

<sup>5</sup> F. X. Russo and H.W. George, *Critical Issues in Education* (Needham Heights: Gin Press, 1988).

universal ethical principles can transcend the specific laws of a society. Failure to adhere to these principles brings self-condemnation and loss of self-respect.

Generally, given the significance of African oral tales for moral development, each stage of Kohlberg's moral development model has a specific folktale that can be used to nurture moral development in children. In summation, African folktales influence the moral development of the child and the human mind. Psychological processes can be seen in several fictional stories, like growing up, overcoming narcissistic disappointments, oedipal dilemmas, sibling rivalries, becoming able to relinquish childhood dependencies, gaining a feeling of self-worth and a sense of moral obligation – and several authored books on the shelves. The stories can help in analyzing behaviours like imagining, reflecting, reorganizing and daydreaming about story components in response to unconscious content into conscious illusions.

### **The Current Study**

From the foregoing, it is obvious that folktales are an invaluable aspect of indigenous knowledge creation system that can help in the development and the modification of human behaviour in the past. Folktales have been forsaken in the last few decades, because of the changes that have affected the African family systems. Some of the commonest issues that have affected the inculcating of traditional values systems are migration, work schedules, weakened family system, misinterpretation of the cultural systems and religion, and absence of grandparents among other issues. If folktales have helped shape behaviours in the past, then why are we not reintroducing them to reduce incessant issues of morality in society, and the teaching of the concept of right and wrong as defined by society? The present study sets out to explore the views of adults on the use of traditional folktales as a tool for moral development. Specifically, the study aimed to (a) explore the benefits of folktales to children and (b) examine the role of demographics in the acceptance of folktales as a tool for moral development.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study used a survey for the collection of data and a focus group discussion to gain direct insight into the phenomena. The data collection instruments employed for the study were a self-designed questionnaire containing questions directed at seeking the response of the respondents on their knowledge and benefit of African Folktales. A total of 150 valid questionnaires were retrieved after administration to the respondents by the researchers which were analyzed for the purpose of this study. The researcher developed and validated a scale to measure the benefits of folktales; the self-designed questionnaire was adopted by the researcher based on the preliminary study about the concept of folktales. It began with an oral interview with adults about the benefits of folktales, the themes were further refined to 20 items. Further refinement reduced the items to 10 items. The scale included the following items “*Do you think folktales and the telling of tales can build the parent-child relationship?*”, “*Do you think storytelling (folktales) can shape the behaviour of children?*” and “*Can folktales help improve the quality of mother's tongue in Nigeria?*” among others. The instrument was validated by an oral literature expert and a behaviour analyst. The questionnaire was mainly designed for adults in the English Language, with the motive of establishing the benefits of moral development of children. 165 adults were selected through a convenient sampling method to participate in the study. The analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS 29. It used a 3-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree, and the results were presented in frequencies and percentages.

### **Focus-Group Discussion**

The focus-group discussion strategy is based on the assumption that group interaction will be productive in widening the range of responses, activating forgotten details of the experience of how folktales were used, especially when there was no digital content to keep children busy. The respondents are adults and mostly parents. This afforded the researcher opportunities for mutual discovery, understanding, reflection, and explanation of the phenomenon in question. Interviews were

relevant to the study as they illuminated subjective life experiences and viewpoints from the respondents' perspective on how moral decadence has affected the present generation and how they benefitted from it as a tool for moral development. This research employed an exploratory design because it was well-suited to respond to the research questions appropriately and adequately. The design allowed the researcher to examine the researcher's selected participants who were knowledgeable about mother-tongue use in guiding children toward their understanding of folktales in Yoruba Land.

**Participants**

A total of 150 valid responses were analysed. 69(46%) males and 81(54%) females participated in the study. The ages were 18-40, 87(58%), 41-60, 45(30%), 61-Above 18(12%). 111(74%) Christian and 37(24.7%) Islam and other religions 2(1.3%) participated in the study. The participants' educational level was Secondary Education 37(24.7%), and participants with tertiary education 113(75.3%). The marital status showed that 2(1.3%) are single, 84 (56.0%) are married, and 64 (42.7%) are separated/Divorced.

**Location of Study**

The study was conducted in the Oke'Badan High School in Ibadan. The study comprised women and men at various levels within the school premises, including the teachers, clerical Staff, security personnel and the people in the informal sectors trading in shops within the school premises. The population was of great benefit to the researcher as it provided valuable information and experiences of knowledge about folktale uses among people considered to be Yoruba Language native speakers in Oyo State, Nigeria.

**Ethical Considerations**

Several ethical principles were considered throughout the study to ensure the upholding and adherence to high ethical standards. As a requirement for research, the researcher obtained direct consent from the participants, who volunteered to participate in the study. All participants completed consent forms before the research processes (questionnaires and focus group discussion) commenced.

**DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS**

**Analysis of Research Questions**

*Table 1: Do you think folktales and the telling of tales can build parent-child relationship?*

Q1	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree
	1 (0.7%)	45 (30.0%)	104 (69.3%)

Source: fieldwork 2024

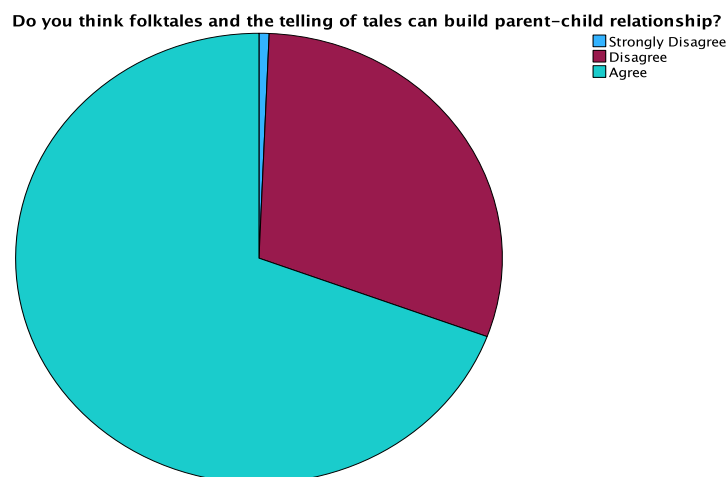


Table 1 above shows that 1 (0.7%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that folktales and the telling of tales can build a parent-child relationship. Also, 45 (30.0%) of the respondents disagreed that folktales and the telling of tales can build a parent-child relationship. However, 104 (69.3%) of the respondents agreed that folktales and the telling of tales can be used to build a parent-child relationship.

**Table 2: Do you think storytelling (folktales) can shape the behaviour of children?**

Q2	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree
	8 (5.3%)	53 (35.3%)	89 (59.4%)

Source: fieldwork 2024

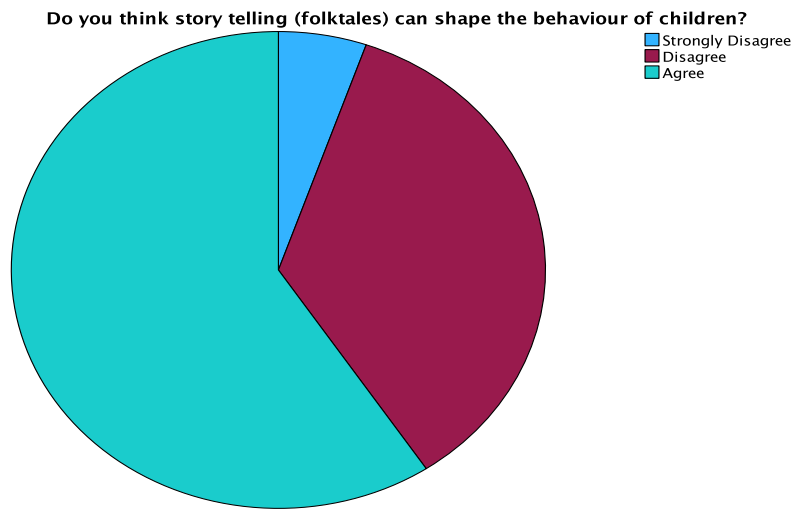


Table 2 above shows that 8 (5.3%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that storytelling (folktales) can shape the behaviour of children, and 53 (35.3%) of the respondents disagreed that storytelling (folktales) cannot shape the behaviour of children. However, 89 (59.4%) of the respondents agreed that storytelling (folktales) can be used to shape the behaviour of children.

**Table 3: Can folktales help improve the quality of mother tongue in Nigeria?**

Q3	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree
	4 (2.7%)	37 (24.7%)	109 (72.7%)

Source: fieldwork 2024

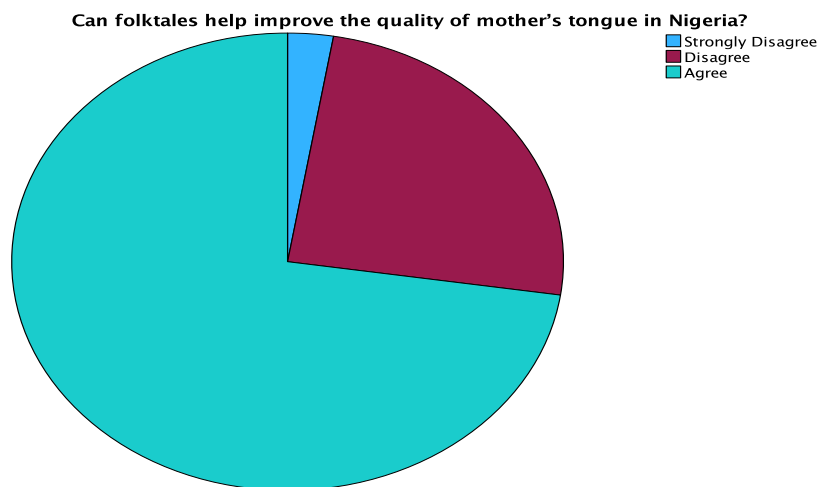


Table 3 above shows that 4 (2.7%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that folktales can help improve the quality of their mother tongue in Nigeria. Again, 37 (24.7%) of the respondents disagreed that folktales cannot help improve the quality of mother tongue in Nigeria. On the other hand, 109 (72.6%) of the respondents agreed that folktales can be used to help improve the quality of mother tongue in Nigeria.

**Table 4: Do you support the use of folktales to improve formal learning?**

Q4	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree
	2 (1.3%)	49 (32.7%)	99 (66.0%)

Source: fieldwork 2024

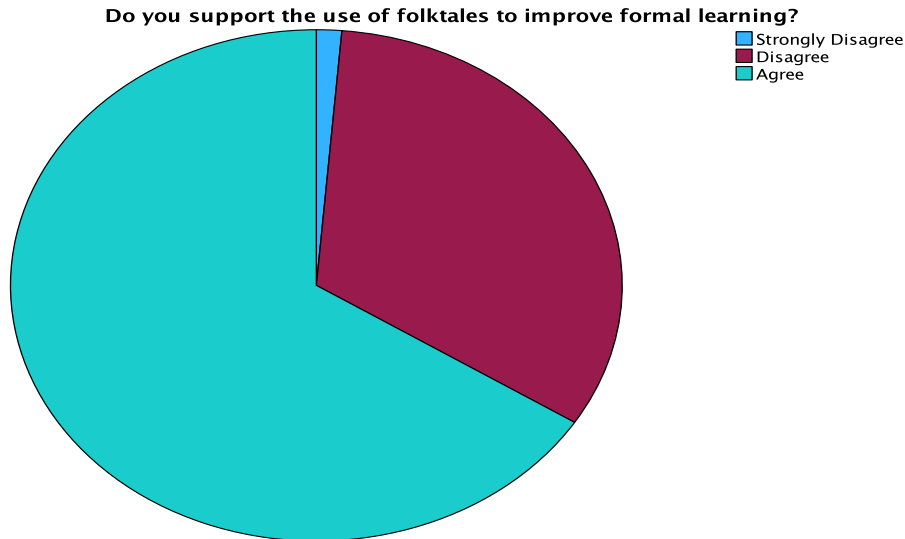


Table 4 above shows that 2 (1.3%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with supporting the use of folktales to improve formal learning, also, 49 (32.7%) of the respondents disagreed with supporting the use of folktales to improve formal learning. However, 99 (66.0%) of the respondents agreed to support the use of folktales to improve formal learning.

**Table 5: Do you think folktales can help the children's creative thinking?**

Q5	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree
	8 (5.3%)	59 (39.3%)	83 (55.4%)

Source: fieldwork 2024

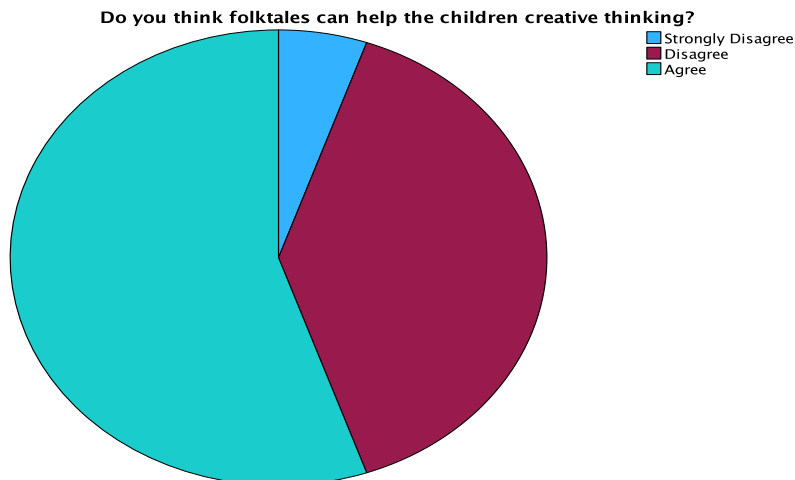


Table 5 above shows that 8 (5.3%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that folktales can help children's creative thinking. Also, 59 (39.3%) of the respondents disagreed that folktales cannot help children's creative thinking. However, 83 (55.4%) of the respondents agreed that folktales can be used to help children's creative thinking.

**Table 6: Do you think folktales can help the children's reasoning abilities?**

Q6	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree
	7 (4.7%)	41 (27.3%)	102 (68.0%)

Source: fieldwork 2024

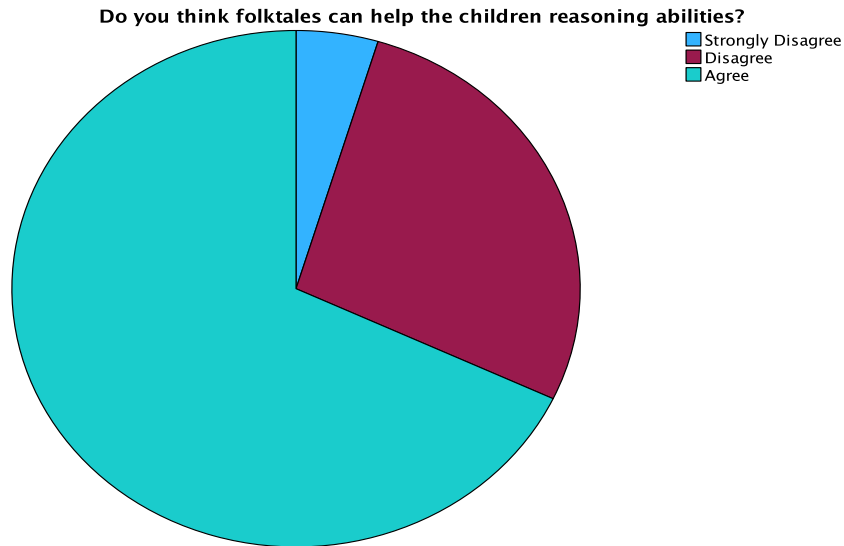


Table 6 above shows that 7 (4.7%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that folktales can help the children's reasoning abilities. Further, 41 (27.3%) of the respondents disagreed that folktales can help the children's reasoning abilities. 102 (68.0%) of the respondents however agreed that folktales can help the children reasoning abilities.

**Table 7: Do you think folktales can help the children to understand that respect must be accorded to every older person?**

Q7	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree
	5 (3.3%)	42 (28.0%)	103 (68.7%)

Source: fieldwork 2024

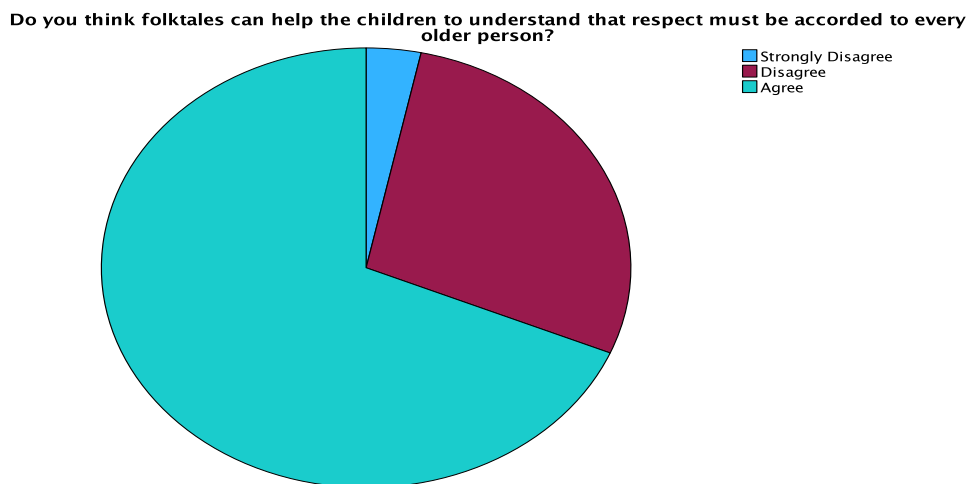




Table 7 above shows that 5 (3.3%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that folktales can help children to understand that respect must be accorded to every older person and 42 (28.0%) of the respondents disagreed that folktales can help children to understand that respect must be accorded to every older person. Nevertheless, 103 (68.7%) of the respondents agreed that folktales can be used to help children to understand that respect must be accorded to every older person.

**Table 8: Do you know that folktales can teach leadership and authority among children?**

Q8	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree
	6 (4.0%)	48 (32.0%)	96 (64.0%)

Source: fieldwork 2024

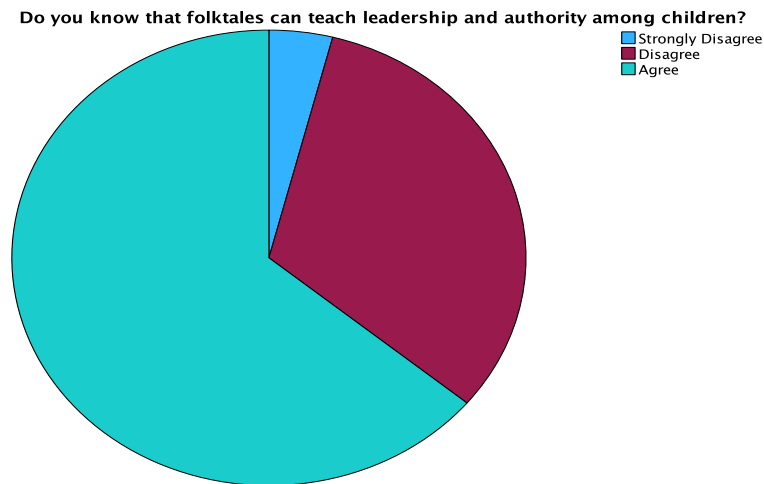


Table 7 above shows that 6 (4.0%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that folktales can teach leadership and authority to children. Also, 45 (32.0%) of the respondents disagreed that folktales can teach leadership and authority to children. 104 (64.0%) of the respondents on the other hand agreed that folktales can be used to teach leadership and authority among children.

**Table 9: Did you benefit from folktales as a little child?**

Q9	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree
	3 (2.0%)	36 (24.0%)	111 (74.0%)

Source: fieldwork 2024

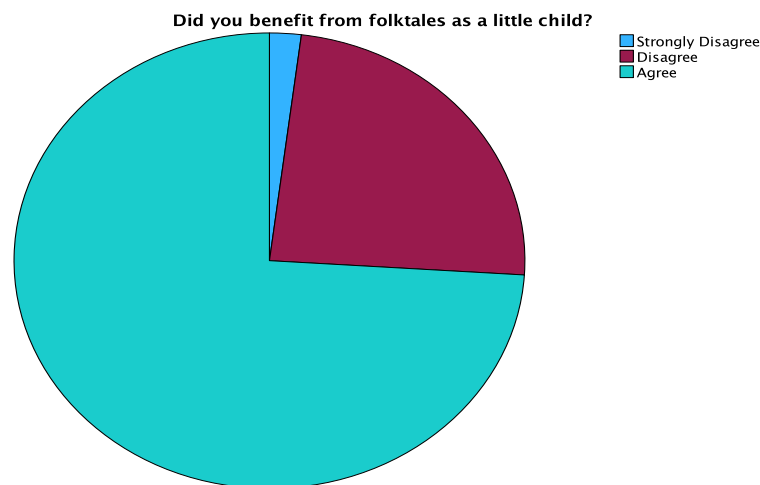


Table 9 above shows that 3 (2.0%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with benefiting from folktales as a little child. Further, 36 (24.0%) of the respondents disagreed with benefiting from folktales as a little child. Further, 111 (74.0%) of the respondents agreed with benefiting from folktales as a little child.

folktales as a little child. However, 111 (74.0%) of the respondents agreed to benefit from folktales as a little child.

**Table 10: Do you think that most aspects of our culture can be revived through the re-introduction of folktales?**

Q10	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree
	18 (12.0%)	51 (34.0%)	81 (54.0%)

Source: fieldwork 2024

Do you think that most aspect of our culture can be revived through the re-introduction of folktales?

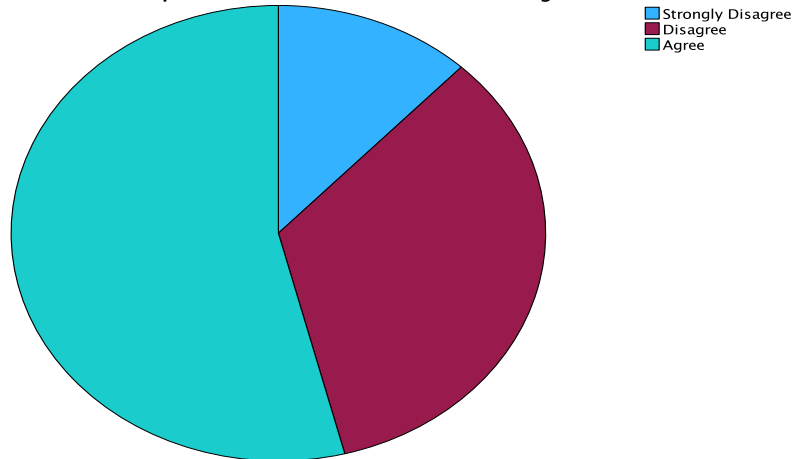


Table 10 above shows that 18 (12.0%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that most aspects of our culture can be revived through the re-introduction of folktales. Also, 51 (34.0%) of the respondents disagreed that most aspects of African culture can be revived through the re-introduction of folktales. With a contrary opinion, 81 (54.0%) of the respondents agreed that most aspects of African culture cannot be revived through the re-introduction of folktales.

**Analysis of Socio-Demographic Variables against Folktales**

**Table 11:**

Sex	Mean	Std. Deviation	F (%)
Male	26.12	3.03	69 (46.0)
Female	26.09	3.03	81 (54.0)

Table 11 above shows the participants' response to the reintroduction of folktales to society based on socio-demographic characteristics. 69 (46.0%) of the respondents, who were Male (Mean - 26.12) strongly supported the reintroduction of folktales into society. However, 81 (54.0%) of the respondents who were Females (Mean - 26.09) did not support the reintroduction of the folktales into the society as much as their other counterparts.

**Table 12:**

Age	Mean	Std. Deviation	F (%)
18-40 years	25.34	3.23	87 (58.0)
41-60 years	27.18	2.34	45 (30.0)
61 years and above	27.06	2.39	18 (12.0)

Table 12 above shows the participants' response to the reintroduction of folktales to society, based on socio-demographic characteristics. 87 (58.0) of the respondents who were between the ages of 18 and 40 years (Mean - 25.34) showed the lowest support for the reintroduction of folktales into society. However, 45 (30.0) of the respondents between the ages of 41-60 years (Mean - 27.18)

strongly support the reintroduction of folktales into society, 18 (12.0) of the respondents between the age of 61 years and above (Mean – 27.06) did not support the reintroduction of the folktales into the society as much as their other counterpart.

**Table 13:**

Religion	Mean	Std. Deviation	F (%)
Christianity	26.40	2.95	111 (74.0)
Islam	25.30	3.05	37 (24.7)
Others	24.50	4.95	2 (1.3)

Table 13 above shows the participants' response to the reintroduction of folktales to society, based on socio-demographic characteristics. 111 (74.0) of the respondents who were Christians (Mean - 26.40) strongly supported the reintroduction of folktales into society. However, 37 (24.7) of the respondents who were Islam (Mean - 25.30) did not support the reintroduction of the folktales into society as much as their other counterparts. 2 (1.3) of the respondents who have other religion (Mean - 24.50) shows the lowest support for the reintroduction of the folktales into the society.

**Table 14:**

Marital Status	Mean	Std. Deviation	F (%)
Married	25.62	3.17	84 (56.0)
Divorce/Separated	26.75	2.74	64 (42.7)
Single	25.50	.71	2 (1.3)

Table 14 above shows participants' responses to the reintroduction of folktales to society, based on socio-demographic characteristics. 84 (56.0) of the respondents who were Married (Mean - 25.62) did not support the reintroduction of the folktales into society as much as their other counterparts though, 64 (42.7) of the respondents, who were divorced/separated (Mean - 26.75) strongly support the reintroduction of the folktales into the society. On the other hand, 2 (1.3) of the respondents who were single (Mean - 25.50) shows the lowest support for the reintroduction of the folktales into the society.

**The Participants' Oral Transcripts during the FGDs were as follows:**

Participant 1: *“Folktales really helped us as children to bond and socialize, whilst we were growing up, the houses did not have a wall, and all of us mostly gathered together in the evening to listen to the adult, who usually led the storytelling, it is a different ball game today as houses are with high fences and we don’t even know one another anymore”*

Participant 2: *“The religions we have now have taken away many of our traditional approaches to childrearing, our children mostly go to church for evening lesson or spend extra time at schools. My own children have never listened to folktales because; I do not have the time to spend on such activities.”*

Participant 3: *“I enjoyed my childhood days as I lived with my grandmother who loves to share stories and folktales with us as children, it was a sweet experience that I would have loved to see my children benefit from, some of those stories are still with me today. They have a lot of benefits to children and I hope that lifestyle can be brought back”.*

Participant 4: *“How I wish my children also have the opportunity to learn from my parents. I have lost my parents and we have disconnected from our cultural system, it was a fantastic experience for us, we learnt so many things from how not to be greedy, to how we are supposed to behave in public*

places. I could remember how my grandmother shared stories of how a man married two wives and how one of the wives died as a result of jealousy”.

Participant 5: “I will say my children do not miss the folktales because they didn’t get to meet the tradition, I birth them in the Tellytubby era where all they see and enjoy is what is available on the TV set, but I must confess that I benefitted from it when I was growing up because we didn’t have any major social activities then, so it was like the major event we looked forward to in the evening. I developed my passion for a teaching job in it because I read many Yoruba tales from the Yoruba texts we read in primary schools”.

Participant 6: “To the best of my knowledge, folktales are good for assisting children in knowing what is right and wrong in any given society, most of the values I embrace today came from the training I got mostly verbal ones from my mother’s tongue, I think we need to embrace our mother’s tongue for value teaching to assist the next generation. Is really bad now because many parents cannot speak their own native language, all they speak is English”.

Participant 7: “I think we need to start by encouraging media houses to start using native language to document some of the things going on, we are gradually losing the culture of speaking our native languages, we need to go back and check why this generation is weak in moral values, I know that we all need to work harder to encourage our children to speak Yoruba”.

Participant 8 “We have gotten to the level where we must learn from countries like China and how they teach their children Physics and Chemistry in their native language. We can actually do it if we have the right encouragement. Folktales were helpful and I think reintroducing them again maybe in schools will help teach moral development”.

## DISCUSSION

The study characteristics analysis is presented in Tables 1 to 10, they focused on each of the items in the questionnaire. The analysis presented in the table answered the first research objective of the study, which explored the benefits of folktales to children. Akinwale, reported that parenting in the twenty-first century has taken a different shape as parents have now neglected their roles for guidance and now allow their children to pay attention to digital content.<sup>6</sup> The analysis shows that the participants, who are mainly adults, support the reintroduction of folktales to foster parent-child relationships, particularly in the formative years, where moral development is fundamental. A considerable number of the participants support the use of folktales in shaping the behaviour of children. It was further revealed in the study that folktales can help improve the quality of the mother tongue in Nigeria. It is sad to note that the mother tongue is gradually fading away because of heavy reliance on the English Language, which is not a mother tongue among the Yoruba language speakers in Nigeria.

It was further revealed that the use of folktales can help to improve formal learning among children; for example, verbal reasoning, and abacus among other uses in formal education. Folktales are also noted to help critical thinking, especially when we have tales that involve the unscrambling of facts and direction of thought. It is noted that folktales can help children improve on critical thinking, which is a tool that transcends beyond just language but the ability to resolve crises among other valuable importance of creative thinking in a child’s moral development. A noteworthy number of the participants accept that children’s reasoning abilities can be improved especially when the tapestry of the presentation of the tales involves the ability to reason outside the box. On the seventh and eighth items explored, which is if respect, leadership and authority can be taught through folktales, it is remarkable to note that the tales are craftily presented to cover issues of authority, seniority, respect

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<sup>6</sup> G. A. Akinwale and U. N. Israel, “Parenting in the 21st Century,” in *Issues of Child Development in Nigeria. A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Agiobu-Kemmer*, ed. Tilton- Weaver, Akinbode, Gabriel et al Lauree (Markabliss Press, 2022), 258–71.

and administration. The tricksters in the Yoruba folklore are mostly tortoises and the emphasis of the position cut across several domains of politics, and economics among others in the presentation. A higher percentage of the participants agreed to the reintroduction of folktales and the possible revitalizing of them as a tool for moral development, the objective strongly supported the study conducted in Cameroon by Ngam & Jick, the study reemphasizes the view of other scholars that African oral tales constitute a rich source of moral enrichment to tender minds.<sup>7</sup>

The second objective examined the role of demographics in the acceptance of folktales as a tool for moral development, the demographic variables show that men support the restoration and use of folktales for moral development than women. It is surprising to note that men are more in support of reviving the tales than women; this further shows society is patriarchal, where men see issues of moral decadence as part of cultural changes in the family systems. Contrary to expectation, the Middle Age people who are in the conventional stage of moral development as postulated by Kolberg support folktales as a tool for moral development, the young adults are not showing strong support for it, the explanation for this may just be because they are still young and many may still be new parents whom may not have much experience about the moral decadence among the present GenZ.

Participants who are Christians show high support for the reintroduction of folktales for moral development, this could be explained by the religious views of Christians, who strongly believe in high moral standards with several examples of how there are consequences of bad behaviours in the Bible. It is foreseeable to see that Muslims do not show support for folktales, as is known that folktales and animation are not Islamic, as much as it is for Christians. The marital status of the participants also pointed to the weak family systems as noted in the study participants who are divorced/separated show the strongest support for the introduction of folktales as a tool for moral development. This reason is not far-fetched for single parents because many of them are struggling with teenagers and adolescents that are having morality issues. Single parents mostly desire the presence of other older adults who can assist in lending their voices in the nurturing of their children, especially in the area of moral development. They typically yearn for an adult figure that will support them in the area of their lack to instil lessons in their children.

The participants' oral transcripts during the FGD extracts also helped in upholding several of the claims as it gives insight into where some of the insights are coming from. The mixed method eventually gave the study a blend of objective and subjective perspectives on the study, which centres on embracing Yoruba folktales as a tool for moral development.

## RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings and discussions, it is recommended that schools should instil folktales and the practicable lessons from them in the curriculum for moral education. These are the moral views or general ethos which is widely acceptable and followed in society. Morality is the weakest link in the chain of national development in Nigeria as several stakeholders are paying less attention to it. Moral education should be a regular feature in the curriculum at all levels of the education system to help the moral health of the nation. Folktales should be introduced in the curriculum to train the child, especially those that are relevant to commitment, leadership service, diligence, and trustworthiness to fellow citizens and the society at large. Parents are the first contact of the child in society, therefore good language, good behaviour and moral lessons from folklore should be inculcated into the children. The folktales, whether narrated (*alo*) and chanted (*ewi*) should form part of the tool for moral development.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has provided a detailed outline of how folktales can be used for moral development. The study elicited responses from only native speakers, who speak the Yoruba language as a mother tongue. The findings of this study are imperative for stakeholders in the field of human development. The moral decadence currently experiencing is becoming problematic for the government, schools and society at large. No stone should be left unturned in reviving the cultural heritage for value-added

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<sup>7</sup> Gilead Nkwain Ngam and Henry Kah Jick, "Kohlberg's Cognitive-Developmental Paradigm: A Systematic Application of the African Oral Tale for Moral Edification," *Journal of Culture, Society and Development*, 22 (2016).

knowledge and moral development. African tales are carefully crafted and methodically related to children in a way that is harmonious with the five stages of Kohlberg's cognitive developmental theory. Their moral content would be reinforced and their ruining capacities curtailed.

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