

STRATEGIC USE OF FOLKTALES AND PROVERBS AND THE REALIZATION OF MORAL AWAKENING AMONG EMOHUA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA YOUTHS

¹Obinna Esobie, ²Barigbon Gbara Nsereka and ³Itieke-Idamieba Harry

E-mail: obinna.esobie@ust.edu.ng

^{1,2&3}Faulty of Communication and Media Studies, Department of Mass Communication, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Moral values remain the bedrock of every healthy society. Its adherence promotes wellbeing of a society. However, moral values appeared to be relegated to the background by some youths in Emohua Local Government Area through their involvement in criminality which has made the place unsafe and uncondusive for native and non-native residents, thereby pauperizing the people and hindering meaningful development in the area. In view of moral erosion in the L.G.A., this study sought to investigate the use of folktales and proverbs in reawakening moral values in Emohua Local Government. To achieve this, a purposive sample was drawn from the population of Emohua LGA and focus group discussion, interview and participant observation were used to generate data. Findings revealed that the causes of moral decadence in Emohua Local Government Area are lack of parental influence on children, peer pressure to indulge in nefarious activities, glorification of social vices by government officials, lack of proper upbringing, illiteracy, paucity of welfare packages for the less privilege in society and the moral bankruptcy of the political class. It further disclosed that integration of folktales and proverbs into school curricular, a community quiz competition on folktales and proverbs as well as gatherings that teach folktales and proverbs can help in restoring morally upright, society in Emohua Local Government Area. It also revealed that folktales such as snail and tortoise, carnivorous mother and her son, a rich man and his eight wives and tortoise and a stout can champion moral rebirth in Emohua Local Government Area. Finding further showed that introduction of folktales and proverbs in homes as well as availability of folktales in a readable form can reawaken societal norms and morals in Emohua Local Government Area. The study lamented the neglect of folktales and proverbs in the area. It, however, recommend that youths within the Local Government Area should be meaningfully engaged to prevent them from being attracted to cult groups which is a vehicle for social vices in society.

Keywords: *Reawakening, Mores, Moral Values, Youths, Folktales, Proverbs.*

INTRODUCTION

Folktales and proverbs are indispensable in actualization of moral revivals in a society. Folktales and proverbs remain the nitty-gritty of moral reawakening among the youths. They remain the pillar of moral revivals as well as a means of inculcating moral values to the people of a given society. Folktales and proverbs are vehicles that can be employed to spur moral renaissance in a society.

Folktales have been one of the aspects of folk narratives that have remained in use despite the invasion of western cultures in various African societies. Folktales have stood the test of time as well as provided moral guide for Africans from time immemorial. Folktales offer variety of themes with characters ranging from humans to animals and even spirits and other supernatural beings. Their settings are as diverse as the themes they treat.

These settings could be the earth, sky, heaven, under the water, forest, caves. (Akpabio, 2003). These stories are enjoyed greatly by the children, as they teach morals and values of the society in an entertainment form. Folktales are used as the vehicle of entertainment as well as a means of passing messages "in the socialization process and to underline arguments or positions taken by speakers in formal and in formal context" (Akpabio, 2003, P.714).

Folktales are among the most common types of Folk narrative. A Folktale is a story, myth or legend forming part of an oral tradition. It does not have a single, identifiable author or

writer and it is passed down from one generation to the other “as a form of common Folklore, folktales sugarcoat the hard lessons of life so as to give listeners or readers guidance about how they should behave. In this way, Folktales help pass values and beliefs, traditions and culture across the generations” (Nhung, 2016, p. 24).

Moreover, folktales are stories that give people a way of communicating with each other about each other’s fears, hopes, dreams and fantasies giving their explanations of why the world is the way it is. It is in stories like these that a child learns who his parents are and who he will become.

Folktales have been the cement of society. They not only expressed but codified and reinforced the way people thought, felt, believed and behaved. It is used to teach general attitudes and principles but ridicule vices and misbehavior. Folktales are stories originating in particular culture typically passed on by words of mouth.

Folktales is one of the popular sources of entertainment. From time immemorial, it has been considered as an important asset of our society. Some are the literary creations of a society which may be taken as the common property shared by all.

Additionally, “folktales are stories accepted because of the entertainment and moral lessons that could be derived from them. They can also be called Moonlight leisure stories which may be told on subjects such as supernatural characters or beings, great human beings and animals” (Ukonu & Wogu, 2008, p. 20). In the same vein, the main aim of a proverb, just like folktale, is to teach moral lesson and inculcate moral values to the young ones. According to Ukonu and Wogu “proverbs are short witty expressions used to refer indirectly, but usually more vividly, to a situation, an idea or to describe a person or an act. The aim is to teach a moral lesson or to point out something, often an ill without mentioning names, or speaking directly to the person involved” (2008, p. 18). “Proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten” (Achebe cited in Ukonu & Wogu, 2008, p. 18).

Proverbs most often carry with them moral lessons as they are employed in offering advice, praise, information, and in rebuking. They are precise and concise and men of wisdom usually use them as occasion demands, having been informed by the wisdom of the past which has been summarized clearly in memorable forms. Proverbs are more appreciated or lauded when applied in the right context in which they have meaning or are suited.

Moreover, “proverbs are succinct and pithy saying in general use, expressing commonly held ideas and beliefs. Proverbs are part of every spoken language and are related to such other forms of Folk literature as riddles and fables that have originated in oral tradition” (Sathyabama, 2021, p. 56).

Proverbs and Folktales play a pivotal role in instilling the needed moral values to the children in the society which is aimed towards making them a responsible and well-behaved adult that the society will cherish, celebrate and yearns for more like minds that will spur societal development and peace.

Statement of the Problem

Moral values and remain the pillar and foundation of a healthy society. Its observance and adherence actively promote the wellbeing of society. It places importance on the good conduct and behaviour of every member of a culture with a view to establishing a morally upright society as well as maintaining peaceful co-existence among the people in the society. That is why its violations attract widespread and social disapproval.

However, it appears that the moral values which serve as the bedrock and pillar of a society have been disregarded and relegated to the background by the some youths in Emohua

Local Government Area through their involvement in social vices such as kidnapping, killing, armed robbery, oil bunkering, stealing and what have you, which are against the values of the people of Emohua Local Government Area.

The actions of these youths have led to a high level of moral decadence in the area which has caused the deserting of the area by investors, visitors, native and non-native residents of the area thereby impoverishing the people and causing a high level of underdevelopment in the Local Government. In view of this moral erosion, this study seeks to investigate the use of folktales and proverbs in reawakening moral values in the youths of Emohua Local Government Area.

Objectives of the Study

This study seeks to:

- (1) determine the causes of moral decadence in Emohua Local Government Area.
- (2) ascertain the relevance of folktales and proverbs in reawakening moral values in the youths of Emohua Local Government Area.
- (3) find out how folktales and proverbs can be used to restore morally upright society in Emohua Local Government Area.
- (4) determine how folktales and proverbs can be used to reawaken moral values in Emohua Local Government Area.
- (5) Find out which folktales and proverbs that can be used to champion moral rebirth in Emohua Local Government Area.

Research Questions

1. What are the causes of moral decadence in Emohua Local Government Area?
2. What is the relevance of folktales and proverbs in reawakening moral values in Emohua Local Government Area?
3. How can folktales and proverbs be used to restore morally upright society in Emohua Local Government Area?
4. How can folktales and proverbs be used to reawaken moral values in Emohua Local Government Area?
5. Which folktales and proverbs can be used to champion moral rebirth in Emohua Local Government Area?

Theoretical Framework

This study is hinged on public sphere theory as well as socio-cultural theory.

Public Sphere Theory

This theory was propounded by Jurgen Habermas in 1962. In his book entitled *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, he defined public sphere as a notional space which provides more or less autonomous and open arena or forum for public debate. He states that public sphere is like an intermediary system of communication between formally organized and informal face to face deliberations in arenas at both the top and bottom of the political system. Habermas (2006). This sphere is not made up of experts or intellectuals, but ordinary citizens who ordinarily would not have the opportunity of deliberating issues with the political class. It is not a unilateral discussion or communication platform. It is, in the view of Hauser (2007), a place for information seeking, discussion of issues, exposure of multiple perspectives and responding to the views and arguments of others.

Hauser (2007) further notes that a public sphere is not a debating society but a multiple discursive arena where complex public problems are discussed. This arena is so wide and large that it cut across nations and societies. This discussion provides an ordinary citizen the opportunity of engaging in dialogue that effects his or her life.

Nwachukwu, Asak & Asadu, 2013 opines: "Access to the space is free and freedom of assembly, association and expression is guaranteed" (P. 86).

Gutman, (2007) sees public deliberation as a discourse among people on issues that concern the public good and that is initiated in a specific social context and carried out in manner aiming to be reflexive and egalitarian. Through this, public sphere provides individual citizens with more educative goals, contributes to more informed and reflective public judgements, enhances civility and creates a greater sense of political efficacy. The theory is, in the view of Herbamas, 2003, "rooted in network for wild flow of messages with an informative polemical educational of entertaining content" (p. 45). The contents do not come from one central source but from multiplicity of sources, all trying to influence the opinion of one another. Herbamas, however, does not believe that the mass media system can provide a good platform for this type of discussion. His fear is rooted in the fact that the system where media moguls turn the content of news coverage into advocacy for a political agenda, format news programmes for entertainment value and structure news programming to garner advertising dollars does not support the deliberative nature of public sphere. This theory is germane to the study because of its promotion of an arena or forum for discussing issues that affect the people. In other words, it encourages the coming together or gathering of people in a forum or town hall to seek solutions to their problems. On the other hand, socio-cultural theory, according to Scott Palincsar (2013 p. 16), Legev S. Vygotsky, a psychologist in Russia who began his work following the Russian revolution of 1917, mostly is associated with socio-cultural theory. (Vygotsky 1979), Wertsch & Bivens (1992), argues that the "social dimension of consciousness is primary in time and in fact. The individual dimension of social consciousness is derivative and secondary" (P. 30). The work of socio-cultural theory is to explain how individual mental functioning is related to cultural, institutional, and historical context; hence, the focus of the socio-cultural perspective is on the roles that participation in social interactions and culturally organized activities play in influencing psychological development. In other words, human development, behavior and cognition are shaped by cultural and social factors. This mental functioning of the individual is not simply derived from social interaction; rather, what can be traced to the individual's interactions with others are the specific structures and processes revealed by him or her. Vygotsky claimed that human cognition, even when carried out in isolation, is inherently socio-cultural because it is affected by the beliefs, values, and tools of intellectual adaptation passed to individuals by their culture. These values and intellectual tools may vary dramatically from culture to culture. In other words, this theory emphasizes the role of culture and society in influencing individual thoughts, beliefs and actions. This theory is important to this study because it states how culture influences people's behavior in a society.

Review of concepts

Moral Values

African culture is embedded in strong moral considerations. It has a system of various beliefs and customs which every individual ought to keep in order to live long and to avoid

bringing curses on them and others. Adultery, stealing and other forms of immoral behaviour are strongly discouraged and whenever a suspected offender denies a charge brought against him, he would be taken to a soothsayer or made to take an oath for proof of innocence. In Ibibio land for instance, **ukang** (ordeal) is very popular as a method of crime detection. The soothsayer who specializes in it sets a pot of boiling oil, drops a stone into it and asks the suspects to attempt to retrieve the stone. The guiltless can reach to the bottom of the pot and retrieve the stone without the hair on his arms getting burnt. But when the culprit approaches the pot, it rages and boils over in a manner that even the most daring criminal would hesitate to make an attempt at retrieving the stone. The fear of being made to go through such ordeal or to be stripped naked and taken round the community as in the case of stealing, adequately checks crimes of some sort. African proverbs and wise sayings have a rich repository of wisdom. The proverbs warn the African against evil conduct and, according to Mbiti (1977), are "therefore a major source of African wisdom and a valuable part of African heritage" (p. 8). African culture has a moral code that forbids doing harm to a relative, a kinsman, an in-law, a foreigner and a stranger, except when such a person is involved in an immoral act; and if that is the case, it is advisable to stay away from such an individual and even at death, their corpses would not be dignified with a noble burial in a coffin and grave. Moral values remain the fulcrum of every decent society. It is the basis upon which a polite society is strongly anchored on. "Moral values are socially shared ideas about what is right. It is deeply held criteria for judging what is good or bad, desirable or undesirable, beautiful or ugly" (Light & Keller cited in Ifeanacho, 2015, p. 155).

Moral values do not only determine what is right or wrong. It transcends all situations in a society and influences a lot of what people do. Simply put, the Moral values in any society states in normative terms the premium placed over things, modes of reasoning and behavioural patterns. It differs from one society to the other.

Value Orientation

Value orientation refers to the conscious efforts made towards inculcating in children the harmless values that are accepted and practiced in their cultural environment to behave in a culturally acceptable manner. Value orientation is the process of directing the interest and passion of individuals to the desired socio-cultural values that promote social development and good human relations. Value orientation means inculcating in the children humanism, a deep concern for the wellbeing of others and the nation. The process of involving the principles of right or wrong that are accepted by an individual or a social group is called value orientation. Value orientations represents the choices of an individual regarding the value pluralities that are grouped in organized and generalized categories and influence the person at an attitudinal and behavioural level.

Value orientations find expression in the norms, practices and institutions of a society. The orientations help to shape the contingencies to which people must adapt in their daily lives. They help to determine the individual behaviours, attitudes, and value preferences that are likely to be viewed as more or less legitimate in common social contexts, to be encouraged or discouraged (Schwartz cited in Majebi *et al.*, 2021, p. 91).

It represents the basic and core beliefs of culture. These basic beliefs deal with human's relationships with one another and with their world. Values, therefore, represents the most basic and core beliefs of a society.

Oramedia in Africa

Africa has different forms of traditional media and communication systems called by several labels: Folkmedia, popular arts, folklore, oral poetry, indigenous communication practices, informal communication, or oral tradition. Although these terminologies manifest specific nuances and diverse intellectual standpoints, they come under the ambit of what Ugboajah (1985) calls oramedia. This view has influenced the interpretations of African traditional communication since then. In specific terms, he conceptualizes oramedia as popular arts, which cover Africa's opera, dance, music, idioms, poetry and folktales. He also argues that oramedia is useful for both interpersonal communication and cultural orientation. A different typology is proposed by Salawu (2004) which looks at oramedia from the literary arts domain. Three main types of oramedia are identified: (i) Folklore (myths, legends, observances, ballads, practices, beliefs, customs, and superstition); (ii) folktales (fictions, stories and tales told by griots to transmit values and cultural heritage) and (iii) oral poetry (dirge, satire, praise poetry, epic stories, and erotic songs sometimes by local professionals). This classification delves into the literary domain and socio-cultural messaging approaches of the African society. It is similar to the perspectives provided by Panford et al. (2001) which equates oramedia with folklore comprising, storytelling puppetry, proverbs, visual arts, drama, role- j playing, concerts, gong beating, dirges, and songs, drumming and dancing, fables, mythology; legends, and genealogies.

In a documentation of oramedia in East Africa, UNESCO (2008) describes oral tradition as non-physical components of a people's culture which cover performing arts, social practices, social craftsmanship and cosmology and which are part of the intangible cultural heritage integrated into the social processes and traditions of various populations in the region. They are also essential for transmitting values that embody the history, culture and collective wisdom of the society. However, Ogwezzy (2008) encapsulates all previous typologies in a comprehensive perspective of African traditional communication systems. To her, African communication systems span. Both tradition, verbal and non-verbal communication; iconographic and demonstrative channels; membranophones and aerophones; interlocutors (mediums) and intermediaries; poetry and incantations; and dance, music and songs. The various classifications described above demonstrate significant overlaps in their conceptions. But the span of elements brought under the rubric of traditional communication is too broad and unwieldy. Some delve into social practices and conventions while others are beyond the realm of oral transmission of information and ideas. Some embrace elements from psycholinguistics and oral literature which are on the borderline of media and communication. In addition, what is described as oramedia is a conglomeration of communication formats, messaging, channels and media types. It also reveals that oramedia is a set of media or a group of channels of communication as well as a pattern of codification peculiar to the African society. This diversity also creates a major challenge in making assumptions and generalizations on oramedia. Despite the conceptual challenges, it is safe to conclude that oramedia expresses a rich tapestry of African traditional communication channels, modalities, approaches and processes.

Folktales

Folktales, as an aspect of folklore, are fictional in nature and the authorship is unknown. A folktale is, therefore, impersonal and could not be taken seriously by the audience. Folktales usually come in the form of fictional stories of persons, villages, animals, gods etc in an attempts to drive home certain messages to the listeners. The nature of folktales normally carries certain meanings, themes, genres and styles of storytelling, and thus differs from culture to culture. Animal tales are best known as one of the various types of African folktales. Though tales of legends, hunters, adventures, kings and commoners etc are equally common, these tales are usually centered on themes that apply to human experiences. This may include gratitude and ingratitude, loyalty and betrayal, fidelity and infidelity, jealousy between co-wives, rivalry between brothers etc.

These tales, in traditional African society, were told by elders at night, sometimes around a mother's or grandmother's fire while the evening meal was being cooked. It would amount to stating the obvious to assert that folktales are ingrained in the African traditional system. Accordingly, folktales are part of the folklore of a given culture. The defining element in a folktale is its fictional characteristics (Olarinwoye, 2013). Similarly, the African communication system is replete with elements of folktales. Indigenous techniques of communication include songs, role playing, riddles, proverbs and telling of folktales that are used in most indigenous societies (Fabusuye, 2014). It reflects blatantly in every sphere and fabric of the African society, sticking with its people from cradle to the grave. Listening to folktales momentarily transports the audience, mostly children, to a different world. Later reflection connects the folktale world to the real world that they would soon face as adults (Penjore, 2005). It goes without saying that folktales reveal the identity and uniqueness of a people. A society expresses itself through oral tales. These, in turn, reflect the society and its beliefs (Obiechina, 1967, cited in Kekinde, 2000).

The relation of the folktale with their social, historical and cultural content has been introduced in folklore research from the beginning of the 20th century and even earlier (Ilias. Georgios & Imarianthe, 2010). They explain that since the 1960s and 1970s, it has received a further emphasis following an important shift of international scholarship to the socio-historical study and understanding of folk and fairy tales which is the framework of oral story telling in traditional societies. Besides, anthropologists have suggested that folktales are more than the literary and oral expression of the people, but the totality of their ethnography. And if systematized by a researcher, give a penetrating picture of a given way of life, of what was-and what has come to be (Olarinmoye, 2013). Consequently, several definitions have been given by scholars of the concept of folktale. Bascom (1965) defines folktales as "prose narratives that are regarded as fiction. They are not considered as dogma or history; they may or may not have happened and they are not taken seriously... It is often said that they were only said for amusement"(p.33). Folktales are essentially narrative complexes that collapse many mythic stories into one simpler story (Miller, 1976, cited in Lukoff & Lukoff, 2011). Campbell (1972) explains that most folktales can be traced back to earlier myths, with the story compressed and simplified. However, Novalis (1984) cited in Fabusuyi (2014) observes that all folktales are only dreams of past native world, which are everywhere, yet nowhere. Novalis explains that they are not specific to a particular culture; they are narratives found in all cultures in the world and which contain inherent traditions of each folk. Even if folktales exist in different cultures, they more or less share some common characteristics. This is the view of Zdybienska (2004) cited in Fabusuyi (2014)

who highlights content and diction of folktales, amongst things. In content, Fabusuyi (2014) notes that folktales tend to structure events chronologically. This means that folktales generally follow a sequential order, ensuring an easy comprehension. The plots of the stories, he explains, are predictable so that it is easy to guess what is coming next. On diction, Fabusuyi (2014) explains that generally, the language used in folktale narration is simple. Folktales are enjoyable and meaningful (Kokonenko, 1998). They represent human experience, values and history; thus, they can provide both entertainment and opportunities for further discussion. Because of its universal value, most people find it easy to remember folktale (Fabusuyi, 2014).

Folktales broaden the parameters of verbal art (Mphasha, 2015). Mphasha explains that a folktale is made up of the following: narrator, folktale and audience. These three components indicate the inter-subject relationship that can be represented in the following way: Narrator (writer) Folktale (text) and Audience (readers). "Folktales are stories accepted because of the entertainment and moral lessons that could be derived from them. "They can also be called moonlight leisure stories which may be told on subjects such as supernatural characters or beings, great human being, heroic exploits, animals etc" (Ukonu & Wogu, 2008, p. 20). The stories, sometimes, showcase some unique attributes of different animals. The tortoise, for instance, is noted for its cunningness. Stories about the sheep reflect stupidity and the lion is valour. Through such stories, children learn and are encouraged not to be stupid but to be brave. The elders of course, would ask the children to say what they learned after each story. According to Akporobaro (2005),

Apart from the aesthetic pleasure derived by those who tell the tales at moonlight after dinner, they also help in shaping and moulding the character and life of the young ones who listen to them by way of bringing to their focus, the consequences and rewards of evil and brave deeds. (p. 8)

In the same vein, Ejeagha cited in Nnyaguargues: "Folktales are very important as they are used to educate our people. They are full of moral lessons and thus, I cannot conclude my tales without pointing out the moral lessons that they carry" (2018, p. 94). It is for the lessons of wit carried by Folktales that parents in the past, dedicated time, mainly at night to tell Folktales to their children.

Folktales extol virtues and condemn vices. For instance, a wicked one in a Folktale is always made to pay the price of his wickedness while kind gesture is always rewarded. It is believed that the moral lessons carried by Folktales would help to positively affect the life of the child.

Proverbs

Proverb is an element of folklore which is usually concise but carries with it a deep meaning for thought. There is hardly any African society without proverbs. Proverbs are, however, not the exclusive preserve of Africans. All societies of the world use proverbs to add flavour to arguments and topical comments. They are used to instruct, admonish starts or parry a verbal attack, soothe, or caution. Many tales, particularly those told to children, have a moral ending which makes use of proverbs. nAmong the Yoruba-speaking people of Nigeria,

“the proverb is believed to be the words horse, just as the word is the proverb’s horse. If a word is lost, a proverb is used to search for it” (Taiwa, 2016, p. 36). Proverbs are used to ‘sum up a situation, pass judgment and recommend a course of action’ (Awe, 2010, p. 5) Nwoga 2016, divides proverbs into two groups namely: “Those which directly reinforces ideas by recalling traditional wisdom to support a given statement and those commenting on situational behavior in praise or rebuke. These kinds of proverbs are often indirect. The audience is not necessarily the culprit as it is aimed at smoothening the rough edges of communication” p. 36. Proverbs play a great role in passing knowledge of the ancient wisdom and experience of several ages from one generation to another. This is why the Nigerian author, Chinua Achebe, in his book *Things Fall Apart*, describes proverbs as “the wisdom of many and the wit of one” p. 23 Proverbs are drawn from all activities of society, natural activities and phenomena. In many society, proverbs act as a catalyst of knowledge, wisdom, philosophy, ethics and morals which provoke further reflection and call for deeper thinking and wisdom and consideration of issues.

Proverbs are viewed in many societies to occupy a very central position in creative arts, oration and moral teachings. It is also used to bring about peace where there is hatred particularly during settlement of disputes, conflicts and misunderstandings to facilitate pardon where there is injury.

Both on traditional and modern Africa societies, proverbs are generally accepted as the quintessence of passage of ideas and ethics to the old and the young. In fact, a scenario is best explained when a speaker encapsulates his thoughts and ideas in a suitable and appropriate proverbs. Proverbs have become ingrained in Africa societies as such no single individual or a group can claim sole authorship of the proverbs that have come to be part of communication in contemporary society. This is because almost all the proverbs in use in today’s world have their versions and meaning in every society. Africa is rich in its oral arts and proverbs are the most widely used of the continent’s traditional oral arts. Proverbs do not only play an aesthetic role of beautifying speeches and ideological representations. They serve as an acceptable medium of transmitting knowledge and convention from one generation to another. Proverbs are methods used mainly by old people to express themselves tactfully and concisely while giving warnings, moral lessons and advice. The traditional wisdom which is contained in proverbs can be applied to understanding the values of the society and personal abilities. Indeed, proverbs are potent in giving one the energy to undertake ventures that can change one’s society for the better.

In traditional African society, proverbs play different roles. Scholars believe that proverbs which are formulated from real life experiences and observations over a long period of time, act as guidelines for individual, family, village and community as well as human behaviour. Since proverbs express the collective wisdom of the people and reflect their thinking, values and behaviour, proverbs are indices that identify and dignify a culture. Proverbs clarify vision and unify different perspective, adding humour and diffusing tension around otherwise very sensitive or edgy issues. In other words, African society has used proverbs for centuries to ease uncomfortable situations, confront issues and build institutions and relationships. This places proverbs in African society as a strategic communication instrument of solving problems, entertaining and relieving tension. Proverbs have been and should be used in teaching as a didactic tool because of its ability to impart wisdom. Since proverbs are entrenched in the mores of basically all the native speakers, they are indeed very effective devices to communicate wisdom and knowledge about human nature and the world at large. Proverbs are capable of incarnating ideas that will strengthen the power of teaching.

In line with the foregoing, Akinmade asserts that proverbs would continue to be of great advantage to man in the incarnation of ideas and knowledge that will sustain human society as well as strengthening the power of teaching. In his view, proverbs are the most powerful and potent vehicle for culture dissemination from one generation to another. Proverbs express the nature of African wisdom as they perform diverse functions, ranging from bringing peace where there is conflict and misunderstandings, giving hope where there is despair and light where there is darkness in human relationships and interaction (2012, p. 128). In the words of Lawal, proverbs are common wealth of society as such they are passed from one generation to another (1997, p. 68). According to him, proverbs emanate from elders and the old. Therefore, for young people to use proverbs, they refer to the elders. That is why in most African societies, any young person that uses proverbs must say, "our elders say". Proverbs present, new and creative ways of communicating and discussing societal principles that transcend common communication barriers in Africa societies. Being an important means of communicating idea in society, proverbs make community life more meaningful. Proverbs are didactic statements, short popular sayings usually of ancient origin. They express effectively some common place truth or useful thought.

According to Ukonu and Wogu (2008).

Proverbs are short witty expressions used to refer indirectly but usually more vividly to a situation, an idea or to describe a person, or an act. The aim is to teach a moral lesson or to point out something, often an ill without mentioning names or speaking directly to the person involved. (p. 18).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted Focus Group Discussion (FGD), participant observation, and interview which are qualitative research methods aimed at assessing critically the roles of folktales and proverbs in reawakening moral values in the youths of Emohua Local Government Area.

Population of the study

The population of youths in Emohua Local Government Area is projected to be 130,191 using annual projection rate of 2.7 as available on the website of the National Population Commission.

Sample size and sampling Techniques

This study used purposive sampling techniques to painstakingly select 22 participants from the 14 wards of Emohua Local Government Area who are knowledgeable about the culture of the people as well as the importance of folktales and proverbs in inculcating moral values to the youths in Emohua Local Government Area. Out of the 22 Participants, 14 interviewees were selected for interview while 8 participants were selected for focus group discussion. According to Okwandu (2016), in this sampling method, "selection of sampling units is based upon the assumption that a researcher can identify sampling units that serve the research purpose (p. 122).

Qualitative researchers usually opt for a small sample size. As a result, sampling in qualitative research is purposive. Meaning that research subjects/samples are selected for their typicality as the best exemplar that represents or

reflects all the attributes of other samples that were left out (Maxwell, 2017, p. 8).

In the same vein Fussch et al (2017, p. 932) explain that the non-use of statistical sample premises the fact that “one is not looking for a representative sample but instead the sample one looks for in qualitative research is a sample that represents particular participants who have the knowledge, skill and expertise to answer the research questions”. They further argue that in qualitative sampling, one should focus on quality as opposed to quantity data. Similarly, Silverman and Marvasti (2008) affirm that qualitative sampling is based on how relevant what is to be sampled will be to the explanation the researcher would pursue in their research. In the words of (Silverman & Marvasti, (2008) “qualitative sampling targets settings and interactional contexts that are replete with the kind of data necessary for the explanation the researcher will construct” (p.167).

Findings

In the course of carrying out this study, a number of findings were uncovered. To this end, it was revealed that the causes of moral erosion in Emohua L.G.A. are lack of parental influence on children, peer pressure to indulge in nefarious activities, glorification of social vices by government officials, lack of proper moral upbringing, illiteracy, paucity of welfare packages for the less privilege in society, bad governance, corruption, moral bankruptcy of the political class and poverty. Furthermore, it was discovered that folktales and proverbs play a vital role in reawakening moral value in society by encouraging member of a given culture to conform to standard of behaviour acceptable within their domain and imbibe values, such as, honesty, kindness, humility and respect for elders as well as shape the behaviour of people. Moreover, finding also showed that integration of folktales and proverbs into school curricula, community quiz competitions on folktales and proverbs as well as community gatherings that teach folktales and proverbs can help in restoring morally upright society in Emohua L.G.A. It has also been revealed that introduction of folktales and Proverbs in homes as well as availability of folktales and proverbs in a readable form can reawake societal norms and moral values in Emohua L.G.A. Additionally, findings discovered also that sharing folktales about heroes and heroines who have demonstrated good values and norms together with sharing folktales and proverbs that connect youths to their cultural roots highlighting traditions and customs which reward good behaviour can morally rearm the youths in Emohua LGA. It was also revealed that folktales such as snail and tortoise, carnivorous mother and her son, a rich man and a stout can be used to champion moral rebirth in Emohua LGA.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing from the findings, the following recommendations are hereby put forward:

- (1) There should be re-introduction of folktales and proverbs in homes so as to teach children and youths the vital norms and moral values of traditional African society which will effect moral rebirth in Emohua L.G.A.
- (2) Again, importance should be placed on the teaching of folktales and proverbs in school since it will bring about good behavioural change by inculcating values and good norms of society to children and youths in Emohua Local Government Area.

- (3) It is also germane to submit that folktales and proverbs should be converted into readable forms like books since it will help in teaching moral lessons and values to children and youths as well as speed up the restoration of morally upright society.
- (4) Elders and community leaders should continually organize quiz competitions on those folktales and proverbs that contain moral lessons that touch on values and good norms of society that will make the youths and children conform to morally acceptable behaviour within their area as well as reawakening societal values and re-instill mores and moral values in the youths of Emohua L.G.A.

CONCLUSION

Social vices have been pervasive across communities in Emohua Local Government Area because of moral turpitudes that have become prevalent and trendy among a number of youths within the Local Government Area who viewed indulgence in criminality and depravity as a means to achieve fame, wealth and respect within their domain leading to lack of meaningful development in the area. Parents, however, should live up to their responsibility of proper upbringing of their children in order to bring about moral values and norms which will foster peaceful co-existence among the people within the Emohua Local Government Area. There should be re-introduction of folktales and proverbs in homes to inculcate needed values and norms to the youth. It is worrisome that this important driver of moral values has been relegated to the back ground in society that is in dire need of moral reawakening for restoration of peace and it is the reason for speedy erosion of our moral values and norms that has become a big threat to society. For this reason, there must be a decisive action geared towards returning families in Emohua Local Government Area to where values and norms of society will be taught and imbibed in homes.

It is when parents begin to mould the character of their children from homes that we will have responsible and law-abiding citizens who will bring about the much desired peace and re-instill values and norms as well as development in Emohua Local Government Area.

REFERENCES

- Akpabio, E. (2003). *African communication system: an introductory text*. Lagos: Bprint.
- Bagunas, I. (2023). *Mores, Folkways, values, norms, Laws*. Retrieved from <https://www.scribd.com/document/414576998/mores-folkways-values-norms-laws>.
- Ifeanacho, M. I. (2015). *Fundamental of sociology*. Nigeria: University of Port Harcourt Press.
- Fusch, P. I., Fusch, G. E. and Ness, L. R. (2017). How to conduct a mini-ethnographic case study: A guide for novice researchers. *The qualitative report* 22 (3), 923-941. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/vol22/ISS3/16>.
- Goodman, N. (1992). *Introduction to sociology. USA*: Harper Collins Publisher.
- Gudhlangu, F. S. & Makandze, M. (2011). *Useful or less serious literature: A critical appraisal of the role of Ngano Folktales among the schona of Zimbakwe*. *International Journal of Asian Social Sciences*, 2(12), 289 – 310.

- Gutman, N. (2007). Bringing the mountain to the public; Dilemas and contradiction in the procedure of public deliberation initiatives that aim to get ordinary citizen to deliberate policy issues. *Communication theory* (17).
- Hauser, G. A. (2007). Vernacular Discourse and the epistemic dimension of public opinion communication theory. 17(4) pp. 333 – 339.
- Idang G. E. (2015) African culture and values. *Journal of University of Uyo*, 16 (2).
- Ihejirika, W. C. & Omego, C. (2013). *Research methods in linguistics and communication studies, Nigeria*: University of Port Harcourt.
- Kehinde, A. (2010). *Story-telling in the service of society*: Exploring the utilitarian values of Nigerian Folktales. *Lumina*, 21(2), 1 – 17.
- Kendall, D. (2008). *Sociology in our times*. Canada: Thomson Wacswortt.
- Lawal, R. A. (1997). *A pragmatic study of selected pairs of Yoruba proverbs*. *Journal of pragmatics*, 20(12), 635 – 652.
- Macionis, J. J. (2015). *Sociology*. USA: Pearson.
- Majebi, I. O.; Olowe, P. K. & Leigh, F. R. (2021). *Cultural value orientation in early years: A platform for building strong nation*. *Journal of Social Studies*. 24(2), 85 – 118.
- Mota, M. T. (2009). *The role of Folktales in building personality: The case of the Lunda-cokwe people of Angola*. Published Master of Arts (MA) Thesis, University of South Africa.
- Mphasha, L. E. (2015). *Folktales reveal the cultural values of the community: A SWOT (strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats) analysis*. *Anthropologist*. 19(1), 295 – 302.
- Ndimele, O. M. & Innocenty, K. H. (2006). *Fundamentals of Mass Communication*. Port Harcourt: M & J Grand Orbit Communications Limited.
- Nhung, P. T. H. (2016). *Folktales as a valuable rich cultural and linguistic resource to teach a foreign language to young learners: International Journal of Education, Culture and Society*. *International Journal of Education, Culture and Society*, 1(1), 23 – 28.
- Nickerson, C. (2023). *Mores in sociology*: Definition and examples. Retrieved from <https://simplysociology.com/Mores-sociology-definition.examples.html>.
- Nnyagu, U. (2018). *Folktale as a tool for character development: Journal of African Research Preview*. 12(3) 92 – 98.

- Nsereka, B. G. (2015). *Proverbs in the service of humanity: The case of Khana Local Government Area of Rivers State*. *Review of Communication and Media Studies*, 1(2), 85 – 97.
- Nwachukwu, F. G.; Asak, M. O. C. & Asadu, A. (2013). *Communication theories, models, and hypothesis*, Port Harcourt: Accuracy prints.
- Okwandu, G. A. (2006). *Research methods in business and social sciences. Nigeria: Civincs publishers*.
- Olarinmoye, A. W. (2013). The images of women in Yoruba. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3(4) 135 – 149.
- Olawoyin, O. B. K. (2021). *Persistent benefit of traditional education in Nigerian Society: A lesson for social studies*. *Journal of Social Studies*, 24(2), 329 – 341.
- Sabnam, C. (2019). More (strongest social norms) in sociology and example. Retrieved from www.sociologygroup.comm/mores-meaning-examples.
- Saka, L. A. (2021). *Constraints in teaching and learning of values in Nigerian schools: Journal of Social Studies*, 24(2), 119 – 135.
- Sathyabama (2021). *Folkiterative*. Nigeria: Accuracy prints.
- Schaefer, R. T. (2006). *Sociology: A brief introduction*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Shittu, L. O. & Gamde, J. N. (2021). *Effective value reorientation for nation building amongst Nigerian Students: The indispensable role of social studies*. *Journal of Social Studies*, 24(2), 178 – 193.
- Soberekon, W. S. (2021). *Values re-orientation as an antidote of examination malpractices in Nigeria: Journal of Social Studies*, 24(2), 169 – 177.