



Igbo Tortoise Trickster Tales as Agents of Immoral Behaviour in Our Society: A Utilitarian Theoretic Approach

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Abstract. African folktales are primarily narrated to teach moral lessons, reprimand inappropriate behaviour, and Caution against immorality in African Society. Nevertheless, Igbo tortoise folktales do not seem to serve these functions. Instead, the tortoise in these folktales frequently exhibit behaviour that contravenes moral standards and is associated with immorality without any unpleasant consequences or punishment. The objectives of this study are to explore behaviour themes commonly associated with immorality as depicted by the Tortoise Character in Igbo folktales. The study also explores the moral degeneration phenomenon as portrayed in folktales and in society. Mbe (tortoise) and the modern-day occurrences of moral decadence are reported in digital media including radio, television and newspapers on daily basis. The Study is a qualitative research. The Study is anchored on Utilitarian theory of psychology to determine the extent to which tortoise folktales contravenes the notion of morality and the the function of of teaching moral precepts. The primary source of data Collection includes the moral precepts. The primary source of data collection includes the folktales collected from the Book of Igbo Folktales. The Secondary Sources of data Collection includes journal articles, and dissertations on African folktales. The findings of the study reveal that most Igbo tortoise folktales depict behaviours associated with immorality and as such its effectiveness in teaching about morality becomes compromised and flared. The behavioral theme of trick, violence, jealousy, murder and so on are abound in Igbo tortoise trickster tales.

Keywords: Trick, folktale, morality, immorality, Children and behaviour.

1. Introduction

African folktales are primarily narrated to teach moral lessons, reprimand inappropriate behaviour, and caution against immorality in African Society. Nevertheless, Igbo tortoise folktales do not seem to serve these functions. Instead, the Igbo tortoise folktales frequently exhibit behaviour that contravenes moral standards and is associated with moral degeneration without any unpleasant consequences or punishment.

Folktales are part of indigenous literature narratives encompassing the cultures and traditions of societies that have been passed on from generation to generation through word of mouth. According to Lubambo (2015), African folktales were usually narrated in the evening after day chores were completed. Folktales were told by the riverside with family members gathered to entertain themselves with stories. Folktales were told for entertainment and yet the purpose of teaching moral lessons to the audience who were usually children.

In previous research, it has been reported that one of the important functions of folktales is to teach moral lessons (Quintero and Makgabo, 2020). However, the Igbo tortoise trickster narratives, to some extent, do not seem to serve this function. The behaviour of the tortoise in folktales does not mirror that of morality, as described in this study. Additionally, the perpetrator of immoral behaviour in folktales often escapes from possible punishment and knows how to cover to its tracks and eliminate threats. The hero in Igbo folktale is the tortoise and is frequently flared because he is portrayed as the smartest character who knows how to lie, steal, cheat, deceive, and get away with murder.

This does not expose the inappropriateness of immoral behaviors, instead the behaviors are followed by positive outcomes such as getting what is desired and accomplishing missions. This strengthens the argument that the Igbo tortoise tales perpetuate and justify behaviors associated with immorality is that the perpetrator is often not caught, in this respect, it is questionable as to how do Igbo tortoise folktales teach moral lessons.

Tortoise trickster's tales, prominent in west African folklore, particularly among the Igbo and Yoruba people, feature the character of Mbe (tortoise), a cunning and often gluttonous figure known for his deceitful schemes. These tales, while entertaining, often depict the Tortoise engaging in acts of trickery, greed, and Selfishness to achieve his desires. Rather than straightforward moral lessons, these stories can be interpreted as explorations of moral boundaries, sometimes showcasing the negative consequences of unchecked desires and cunning.

While many Tricksters tales across culture serve to impact moral lessons, tortoise tales can present a more complex picture. They can be seen as agents of moral degeneration by subverting Traditional values. Tortoise actions often directly contradict values such as honesty, hard work, and respect for community. By repeatedly showcasing the tortoise's successful (or temporary successful), manipulation and deceit, the tales can create a world where cunning is valued over virtue.

Tortoise's Trickster tales seem to normalize immoral behavior. The humorous nature of the tales and the Tortoise's often endearing personality can normalize his negative behaviour. This can desensitize audiences, especially children, to the consequences of such actions.

Tortoise's trickster tales promote self-interest. The tortoise is primarily motivated by self-interest. This can promote a culture of individualism and competition, where personal gain is prioritized over the well-being of the community. The core characteristic of Tortoise trickster is his ability to deceive and manipulate others for his own personal gains. While some stories may end with the tortoise being punished, the initial portrayal of these actions could normalize or even encourage such behaviour among young audiences. While intention behind these tales is often to teach moral lessons about the consequences of negative actions, the emphasis on the tortoise cunning can overshadow these lessons, particularly if the tales are not presented with proper context and discussion according to research on the

subject. The children might focus on the success of the tortoise's trickery rather than the negative consequences they may or may not follow.

With escalation of media reports about juvenile delinquency, including crime substance abuse, ill-discipline and violence, society is under threat of a crisis of immorality, especially in children. While children being perpetrators of moral decadence is a concern, they still remain victims of fraud, murder and violence by their peers and adults in society. They are also observers of immorality displayed by adults. Some children grow up in households and communities where they witness incidences of deception, murder and violence. They grow up exposed to immoral behaviour associated with moral degeneration, thereby passing a potential risk of learning such behaviour displaying it in their adulthood. It is in this premise that this study tries to investigate Igbo tortoise trickster tales as agents of immorality in our society using functionalist approach to determine the extent to which tortoise folktales contravenes the notion of morality and the function of teaching moral precepts.

2. Literature Review

The related literature is reviewed under the following sub-headings: Conceptual framework, previous studies and theoretical framework finding the study.

2.1 Conceptual framework

Under conceptual framework, the following concepts are reviewed: folktale, morality, immorality, behaviour and children.

2.1.1 Folktale

Several authors describe the term 'folktales' to indigenous narratives that are adopting similar approach by referring to indigenous narratives that are handed over from generation to the next through word of mouth. Bascom (1965:4) defines folktales as "prose" narratives which are regarded as fiction". Fuinegan (1970) describes folktales as prose narratives that are narrated from generation to generation. These narratives comprise the stories that may have or not have in the past happened the past, however, folktales should not be confused to dogma or history. In the concept of this study, folktales are traditional stories that have been passed down orally through generations. Down orally through generations. Folktales are simple stories, easily understood, and told in straight forward language.

2.1.2 Morality

Morality is a psycho social phenomenon concerned with discerning between right and wrong, good and bad or acceptable and unacceptable social behaviour (Bull, 2010). Bull went further to state that it is the generally accepted code of behaviour in a society that all members of society are subjected to abide by to lead moral lives.

Haidt and Kesebir (2010) explain morality as a culture of not hurting of others and not infringing on their rights. Ellemer (2019;333) contends that morality evinces “what is a good virtuous, just, right, or ethical away for human to behave”. This implies that morality determines how human should behave in social settings.

In the context of this study, morality refers to a code of conduct that is endorsed by a society, group, or individual. It is a system of moral principles that distinguish between right or wrong.

2.1.3 Immorality

Masase (2016) describes the phenomenon of immorality in the context of social decaying, deteriorating, perishing, decreasing and a loss of sense of moral values, attitudes, behaviour and general humanness within modern societies. Immorality refers to conduct or thought that violates moral laws, norms, or standard. It involves an agent doing or thinking something they know or believe to be wrong. It is often described as evil, sinful or wicked behaviour and is avoided by those who are considered to be good.

In the context of this study, immorality occurs when people behave in a manner that contravenes the set moral standards, social codes and African philosophy of Ubuntu that portray a sense of degenerated morality. Loun (2009) notes that with the increase in media reports - about juvenile delinquency including crime, substance abuse, and violence, society is under threat of the crisis of moral degeneration, especially children.

2.1.4 Behaviour

According to piaget (1979:8), behaviour is “all actions directed by organisms toward the outside world to change change conditions therein or to change their own situation in relation to these surroundings”. According to merriam _ Webster online dictionary (2022), “behaviour is the way in which someone conducts oneself”. A combination of the two definitions of behaviour provided above is adopted in

this study. This implies that in this study, behaviour refers to the actions by Tortoise characters in folktales and members of modern society in response to their surroundings

2.1.5 Children

According to Merriam - Webster online dictionary, (2022), a child (plural children) is a young person especially between infancy and puberty.

In the context of this study, a child is any human being below the age of 18years as established by the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child (UNCRC).

2.2 Previous Studies.

Several studies and publications on African folktales exploring their transformative potential, educational value, and role in shaping identity and culture have been carried out by different Scholars. Among these studies includes; Kanu (2024) which explores the educational value of African folktales.

Kanu (2004) investigated the the educational value of African folktales. In the study, Kanu noted that all these stories, usually about nature - plants, animals, the other aspects of the environment, are employed in daily conversations to mirror the ideas of the African people and their general outlook of life, conduct and morals. The study attempts at studying the nature of African folktales, its types and educative value. For the achievement of the aim and objectives of this study, the phenomenological and hermeneutic methods of inquiry was employed. The Igwebuiketheoretical frame work was used for the interpretation and understanding of African reality and its relationships. The study discovered that apart from the African system of education which is tied to roles such as farming, hunting, firewood gathering and so on, the African got much more on instruction through tales, which has for centuries before the advent of western education, served as an integrated classroom.

Tembane (2025) carried out a research in the effects of bullying: A companion of Northern Sotho folktales and real-life situations. Bullying is an extremely challenging situation for anyone. It induces feelings of dread and degradation and frequently makes one feel worthless.

The Objective of this study is to explore the danger of bullying and its impact on real - life situation as compared with situations in folktales. The functional Attitude theory was employed as a frame work

because bullies in the folktale and in real life situations adopt attitudes that are essential to their psychological benefit. Data was analyzed using a descriptive qualitative approach. The Study used interview as the primary source of data collection, Secondary data such as published books, dissertations, articles, and these were used as method of Data Collection. The study revealed that there are different lessons employed in folktales to prevent bullying in societies.

RamoWale and Chauke (2004) conducted a research on echoes of empowerment: Unveiling gendered narratives in African folktales - Women abuse and resilience - Keleketla, Makgamatha. The abuse of women depicted in Africa in African folktales is a significant yet under explored theme in cultural narratives. This qualitative case shifting investigates the portrayal and implications of gender - based abuse in traditional African folktales, using focus group interviews, content analysis of folktales and cultural analysis as data collection methods. The findings of the study revealed that African folktales and cultural analysis as data collection methods. The findings of the study revealed that African folktales often portray women as vulnerable to various forms of abuse, reflecting entrenched patriarchal structures where women face physical violence, emotional manipulation and societal oppression. Also, these narratives serve as vehicle for transmitting and reinforcing societal norms, perpetuating the normalization of gender-based violence within Africa communities Furthermore, the study revealed that while abusive themes are prevalent, some folktales also depict female characters exhibiting resilience, agency, and resistance, challenging passive victimization and offering narratives for empowerment.

Eme and Nwankwere (2020) carried out a study on the stylistic study of Igbo folktales in musical rendition. Folktales from part of the Igbo oral tradition. They are meant for teaching and entertainment This study sets out to examine some stylistic use of language in the trickster folktale Mbe na Enyi (The Tortoise and the Elephant) , which was rendered into musicality minstrel, Gentleman Mike Ejeagha, The purpose of the study is to bring to the fore the artiste's creativity to show that the language of folktales derives from everyday speech of human life. The whole song was transcribed from Ejeagha's recorded CD containing different Igbo folktales. The transcription contributed the data from which excerpts were extracted to illustrate stylistic devices like personification, repetition, proverbs, onomatopoeia, sarcasm, enumeration, sound symbolism and character contrast among others. The findings of the study showed that

Gentleman Mike Ejeagha employed Igbo language use to showcase the richness and closeness of folWorie language of speech in daily life.

Similarly, he creatively weaved the subject devices into the folktale to achieve maximal stylistic effect and importantly, to show how animal activities are personified to teach and entertain mostly children and the youth.

Ogbalu (2019) explored the significance of trickster in Igbo folktales in education of the child. Folktale is universal, it is found in all parts of the world. One of the outstanding characteristics of the trickster. The main objective of the study is to explore the significance of trickster in Igbo folktales in education. The study analyzed six Igbo folktales and also interviewed some prominent Igbo people of ages ranging from 20 - 70 years of age. The study perused books and Journals relating to Igbo tortoise trickster tales, the finding of the study revealed that tortoise is the smallest among the characters that he tricks. His greatest weapon is lies. The Igbo use Tortoise trickster tales to teach moral, yet children learn immoral acts by listening to tortoise trickster tales. These immoral acts in tortoise trickster tales and its negative effects on the children and youth are understudied. This could be one of the causes of moral degeneration in our society, thus, the need to investigate Igbo tortoise trickster tales as agents of moral degeneration in Igbo society becomes imperative.

2.3 Theoretical framework

This study is anchored on the utilitarian theory propounded by English philosopher Jeremy Bertham in (1789) and revised by John Stuart mill (1861). This study employed the Utilitarian theory to study the extent to which Igbo tortoise trickster tales maintain and / or contravene the notion of morality.

In view of Abumere (2017), utilitarian concerns the Consequentialism of actions. This implies that the moral rightness or wrongness of an action or behaviour is judged based on its direct consequences. Abumere (2019) further simplifies this view: an action or behaviour that causes pleasure or happiness to other people is deemed morally right, whereas behaviour that causes or unhappiness for others is deemed morally wrong. In all cases where the tortoise's behaviour causes pain for victims, he always escapes and is not punished for his immorality. This implies that the wrongness of such behaviour in folktales is not demonstrated and therefore, they do not depict the inappropriateness of adopting such behaviors. This echoes the law of behaviourism, which states that, for the perpetrator.

“behaviour that is followed by pleasant consequences is likely to be repeated, and behaviour followed by unpleasant consequences (for the perpetrator) is less likely to be repeated” (Mc leod, 2018). Punishment and not accomplishing missions are forms of the unpleasant consequences of behaviour.

From the Utilitarian perspective, the behaviour of the tortoise character in folktales is viewed as morally wrong as it often causes pain and unhappiness to the victims of his actions. From this view, it could be argued that the Igbo tortoise’s trickster tales do not embody the element of morality. Behaviourism strengthens this argument in that the tortoise's behaviour is mostly followed by pleasant consequences, in other words, he always gets what he wants and remains unpunished, regardless of the wrongness of his actions or behaviour.

The researcher assumes that the prevalence of immoral behaviors in folktales, which causes pain and unhappiness, accentuates that tortoise folktales perpetuate and justify behaviour associated with immorality in society. It can therefore, not be effective in teaching moral precepts and cautioning against moral behaviour.

The utilitarian function of an attitude concerns the concerns the role an attitude can play to obtain reward or avoid punishment. For example, a person might adopt a positive attitude towards something they can benefit from or negative attitude if they are not to gain anything from it. Utilitarianism concedes that actions are correct if they are favourable to the majority of people and an action considered right if it guides conduct that promotes happiness to a larger number of people in the society.

This theory is relevant to the present study in the sense that it is a moral theory that advocates actions that promote overall happiness or pleasure and rejects actions that promote overall happiness or pleasure and rejects actions that cause unhappiness or harm. In essence, it promotes the maxim of the greatest amount of good for the greatest number of people.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design. Data for the study was collected from primary and secondary sources. The primary sources of data collection include the folktales from books and Oral interview conducted during some folktale narration session in some selected communities in Igbo land. The secondary sources of data collection include journal articles and dissertations on African folktales.

Data collected were analyzed thematically by categorizing the behavioural Tricks, Violence and Murder.

4. Discussion of Behavioral themes in Igbo tortoise Trickster folktales.

4.1 Tricks

Trickster behaviour is one the most prevalent across Igbo tortoise folktales. The tortoise character deceives and cheats other characters to accomplish these missions. In Igbo land, the tortoise is the most popular and smartest trickster figure. While one can argue that the tortoise is smart and clever as he is able to trick characters, his study argues with the findings of Ashdown (2012) who argues that tortoise folktales are immoral in that the tortoise’s trickster behaviour results in victim's sorrow, injury, and even death. This is perceived in tortoise’s folktale where the tortoise cheats other animals on many occasions as seen in the excerpt 1 below;

Excerpt 1: Tortoise and other animals.

Once upon a time, tortoise went to to the marketplace. There he saw the wares on display. He had no money to buy his needs. He thought up a plan of taking away the wares without paying a dime. His plan was to dig a tunnel from his house to the market place so that he would threaten the market when it is in full session.

He employed Rabbit to dig the tunnel. One day he went to the marketplace through the tunnel as he played a drum and threatened to kill whoever waited to meet him. The threat sent fear through the spines of all the animals at the market place. They all ran away leaving their wares. Tortoise went out of the tunnel and carted all the wares to his house through the tunnel. He went home and ate as much as he wanted while other animals lamented of their losses.

This matter continued until other animals got so much worried. They suspected tortoise. They held a meeting without inviting tortoise. At the meeting, they employed monkey to hide on top of a tree while others would run away so that he would catch the offender.

On another day, tortoise repeated his crime. When other animals had run away, he came out to cart away the wares. Monkey threatened to raise an alarm when tortoise asked him not to do so that both of them would own the wares. Monkey accepted the condition not long after, tortoise asked monkey to allow him take the wares home so that he would know that they have really agreed to share from the wares they would

collect when next tortoise would strike at the market place.

Later on, the animals scheduled a meeting and tortoise sensed that monkey would give the account of his observation of the scare at the market place. He decided to make a plan of how to deal with monkey. He took a drum to king Leopard's house and played sweet music for him. The music attracted some animals., when king Leopard was about to go to the venue of the the meeting, Tortoise asked that he accompanied him with music because of his leadership position. Tortoise and the animals that gathered formed the entourage of Leopard.

At the venue, Tortoise played his sweet music so well that king Leopard and all the animals there danced so long a time that they forgot the meeting. Unfortunately, King Leopard stepped upon the drum and the membrane tore into pieces.

Tortoise cried bitterly for the destroyed drum, this attracted King Leopard's Sympathy for Tortoise. He asked Tortoise what it would cost to repair the drum. Tortoise told King Leopard he needed strings to repair it. King Leopard asked Tortoise where he could buy strings and he told the King that it was from the sinews of Monkey's hip and legs. King Leopard Jumped upon Monkey and tore the sinews in his body out. As a result, Monkey was no longer alive to tell animals that it was tortoise that caused the scare at the market place and carted away their wares for his satisfaction. So, Tortoise went unpunished (Ogbalu, 1973).

Tortoise cunning behaviour exposes his selfish personality of intentionally putting his folks in potential danger as long as he remains safe from being caught and punished. The tortoise in folktales is often portrayed as the clever one because he knows how to steal, cheat, and get away with murder.

According to the utilitarian perspective, the behaviour is morally wrong as it results in pain and unhappiness for the victim. It also contravenes the notion of morality and is associates with moral degeneration.

The main concern regarding this kind of behavior as a manifestation of immorality in society is that such behaviour have been witnessed among and continue to implicate people as perpetrators, victims and observers of trickster behaviour.

Trickster behaviour has been observed to be widely adopted by many people in Igbo land who attempt to deceive and cheat other people to obtain something from them. They engage in scams and fraudulent

syndicates to trick and cheat vulnerable victims of their hard-earned money and valuable possessions. The common trick is that the tortoise and these fraudsters both lie to their victims to accomplish their Trickster missions, often achieving their aims. If the tortoise constantly accomplishes its trickery missions and is never caught, the question arises as the to how these folktales can be effective in teaching moral lessons and discouraging trickster behaviour. The study argues that in no way could positively rewarded immoral behaviour be effective in discouraging individual from adopting similar behaviour in our society.

4.1.2 Deceit and Dishonesty

Tortoise trickster folktales promote deception and dishonesty. The main characteristic of the Tortoise trickster is his ability to deceive and manipulate others for personal gains as the excerpt 2 below illustrates.

Excerpt 2: The Tortoise and the Birds.

Once upon a time in a village in Igbo land, there lived a cleaver tortoise. The Tortoise always found of ways to trick the other animals and take their food.

One day, news came that the king of the Heavens was having a big feast, and all the birds were invited. The tortoise, feeling jealous, wanted to go, but he had no wings to fly to the heavens.

He thought of a plan, he went to the birds and said, "my friends, we live in the land. Why not take me with you? I promise to behave". The birds were unsure because they knew the tortoise was trickery. But, the tortoise begged and begged, and finally, they agreed. Each bird gave him a feather, and with these, he made himself wings.

Before they left, the tortoise said, "since we are meeting the king, we should all have a royal name. I will be called" All- of- you". The birds agreed and choose royal names too. When they arrived in the heaven, the feast was huge, with lots of food. When the King of the heaven told the servants to bring out food, he said, "serve the food to all - of - you". Using his name, the tortoise said," The king said the food is for "All- of - you', and that is me". the tortoise ate all the food leaving nothing for the birds'

The Birds were furious. They took back their feathers, leaving the tortoise stuck in the heavens with no way to fly home. The tortoise, realizing his greed, asked a bird to send a message to his wife to prepare something soft for him to land on. But the birds tricked him, and

his wife made a hard landing instead. With no other option, the Tortoise jumped from the heavens and fell to the ground. His shell cracked, and from that day on, it stayed broken, as a reminder of his greed.

Excerpt 3: The Tortoise captures the Elephant.

Once upon a time there lived a mighty king who longed for the greatest prize of all: The elephant, the king admired the elephant's size, strength and majesty, and he desired to keep it as part of his royal collection. Yet, despite his efforts, the prize had remained out of reach, many skilled hunters in the kingdom had tried and failed. None could capture the giant of the forest.

Determined, the king made an extraordinary promise. He declared before his people that anyone who could capture the elephant would be rewarded with half of his kingdom. The hunters rejoiced at the offer and tried harder than ever, but still they returned empty handed. When the Tortoise heard the king's challenge, he made his way to the palace. He bowed before the king and said, "Great ruler, I am ready to capture the elephant for you" The king laughed heartily, "you? Even my strongest hunters failed. How could you a small creature like you succeed? "But the Tortoise remained calm. "Give me two days, and I will deliver the elephant to your gates". The King, amused and curious, agreed.

The Tortoise left the palace and began to work towards his plan. He selected a path leading directly into the village, a road the elephant often used when wandering the forest. There, the tortoise dug a massive hole, deep and wide enough to swallow the mighty elephant. When the pit was ready, he covered it with branches, sticks, and leaves until it looked just like the forest floor. To any passerby, the trap was invisible. With the trap complete, the Tortoise set out to find the elephant. He approached the great beast and greeted him respectfully. "Noble elephant", he said, "do you not know that you are the largest and strongest animal in the forest? Truly, you should be king".

The elephant tilted his head, he had never thought of himself as a king, but the idea pleased him. His chest swelled with pride as the tortoise continued. The people of the village have chosen you. They wait eagerly for your arrival so they may crown you, their ruler. Come with me, and I will lead you to the throne". Excitement filled the elephant's heart. He agreed, and the tortoise decorated him with colorful beads and ornaments to make him look like royalty. Beating a gong and singing songs of praise, the tortoise led the way proudly toward the village.

At last, they reached the hidden trap. The tortoise, being light, crossed easily over the branches. The elephant, too heavy to notice the danger, followed behind. With a loud crash, the earth gave way beneath him and he tumbled into the deep pit. The tortoise looked down and smiled. His plan had worked perfectly.

He hurried back to the palace and inform the king. The hunters, villagers, and the king declared, "The tortoise has succeeded where all others have failed. He shall receive half of my kingdom". And so, the smallest creatures outsmarted the mightiest of animals, proving that wisdom often triumphs over brute strength.

Moral lesson: The story teaches us that intelligence and strategy can achieve what strength alone cannot.

4.2 Murder

Frequent murder prevails in Igbo tortoise's folktales. The tortoise is often the direct murderer in some folktales, while, at times, he is the architect behind the killings, persuading other characters to kill as the excerpt below illustrates:

Excerpt 4: Tortoise and the young Monkey

Once upon a time, there is a famine in the animal kingdom. For Tortoise to survive, he arms himself with a short sword, rubs a smelly substance on his body and lies down by the side of a foot path. This substance attracts to him swarms of flies. This his state deceives the young son of Monkey who goes to enjoy the putrefying mass of meat. When he comes near Tortoise, Tortoise stabs him to death and carries the carcass home. What punishment is allocated to him for his committing murder? None. But it is the stand of the Igbo ancestors that "it was a crime against the earth goddess to kill a clansman, and a man who committed it must flee from the land.

Excerpt 5: The tortoise and the Lion

In this story, after a hunting expedition, the animals leave the games they killed in the house of Lion but at night, young Tortoise goes and steals the meat. The following day lion is killed due to his negligence. In this way the following: sheep, Goat, Pig and Giant Rat are killed after they have been found negligent. In all these cases, the meat is stolen by young Tortoise. When it is the turn of tortoise to guard the proceeds of the hunting expedition, young Tortoise is caught and instead of exposing him to the public for him to pay with his life, he covers him with a mortar. The etiological part has it that "Till today, the tortoise

carries his mortar-shell on his back wherever he goes (Obodoechi, 2007).

In view of the lives he wasted, is covering him with a mortar enough punishment? Even, in some tales, after he has deceived his colleagues into being killed, he is allowed to turn their carcasses into food. Yet, the conflict is resolved in his favour.

The tortoise as the perpetrator is seldom caught to account for murder and always accomplishes his murderous missions. Children who are exposed to these folktales are then exposed to murder as an assisting tool in accomplishing life missions. The way murder is portrayed in tortoise's folktales teaches children that committing murder might solve some of the problems they encounter in life get them what they want, and eliminate possible human threats.

The Igbo is experiencing a high toll of murder cases and allegations of which some cases are unsolved where the perpetrators are not caught, similar to the tortoise who often escapes from any form of punishment for his murderous activities. The escalating incidents occurring in Igbo land regarding allegations of people being murdered for money and wealth is a source of concern. The allegation includes business associates murdering one another to avoid sharing money, as a result of fighting for tenders, and murdering family members in order to claim life and funeral insurance, pay-outs, and these are manifestations of moral degeneration. This exposes the greed for money character, an inhumane character who lacks a conscience as be seen in the contemporary society.

The folktales do not seem to reprimand this type of immoral behaviour in that no negative consequences follow the tortoise after having committed murder or persuading other characters to kill in the folktales. Nonetheless, this study does not assume that in modern society murderers are not punished or all alleged murderers always walk freely, but the folktales, which supposedly teach morality, are not effective in teaching moral precepts, in that murder is often not punished or discouraged.

4.3 Violence

In this study, it is elucidated that Igbo tortoise's folktales mirror the social issue of moral degeneration affecting society based on the prevalence immoral behaviour with no apparent unpleasant consequences or punishment for the perpetrator as shown in the excerpt below

Excerpt 6: The Tortoise and the Leopard

In this folktale, the tortoise tricks the leopard into a situation where the leopard gets stuck in a hollow log or tree trunk. The tortoise then mocks the leopard, and when the leopard becomes enraged and tries to break free, he injures himself trying to escape the trap set by the Tortoise. The tortoise beats the Leopard's head with stick until he is unconscious or dead.

Therefore, this folktale appears to be in support of moral degeneration rather than against it. This is primarily based on the analysis that was conducted, which accentuates the prevalence of violence as a manifestation of moral degeneration in folktales and modern society as excerpt 6 above illustrates.

Excerpt: 7 The Tortoise and the Snake (Python)

The tortoise often uses deception to get the snake to coil around a tree or object, and then the tortoise tricks the snake into believing it is being measured. When the snake is stretched out, the tortoise cuts the snake into pieces with a sharp knife, effectively killing it.

Excerpt 8: The Tortoise and the Hyena

In a tale about sharing meat, the tortoise tricks the Hyena into eating a piece of meat that has been poisoned or is otherwise harmful, leading to the Hyena becoming violently ill, while the tortoise eats the good portion.

These examples demonstrate that beyond the eye-gouging of the elephant, the tortoise is depicted in folktale as causing severe physical harm, injury, and even death to other animals through direct physical action, for example, beating the leopard or through lethal trickery, for example, cutting the snake's tail.

Excerpt 9: The Tortoise and the Pig

The tortoise borrowed money from the Pig, promising to repay it. When the pig comes to collect the money, the tortoise hides or uses deception to avoid paying as shown in the story below:

Once upon a time in the land of animal there lived Mbe the Tortoise. Mbe was well-known for his cunning ways and laziness. He was so unreliable that no one in the village was willing to help him anymore. Times were tough for Mbe. He was broke, with not a single coin to his name, and his aging mother lay sick at home. Desperate for help, Mbe knocked on many doors, but all were closed against him, and no one trusted him enough to offer a hand.

One day, as Mbe trudged home from another fruitless day of begging, he encountered Mr Pig (Ezi), who was on his way home from the market. Mbe, ever the smooth talker, greeted Pig warmly and lamented his struggles, sharing the story of his sick mother and his hunger. With his usual flair, Mbe promised that whoever helped him would be repaid tenfold. The Pig gave Mbe money to repay in seven days' time. After seven days, Mbe did not repay the money and the Pig came to Mbe's house looking for the money. Mbe tricked the Pig by telling his wife, Anim to place the roasted yam they were eating on his back. Pig entered the house and demanded, "Where is Mbe? I want my money ". Anim calm and collected, ignored pig's question and continued enjoying her meal. This infuriated Pig further and, in his rage, he grabbed the table, which was Mbe, and flunged it into the bushes beside the kitchen along with the bowl of yam. Suddenly, Mbe emerged from his shell and walked towards the door. Ah my good friend Pig! he exclaimed "where is my money ". Pig now beyond frustrated, growled "where is my money?". Mbe nodded. "No problem at all", he said. Turning to his wife, he called, Anim, please bring me the table from the kitchen. I hid some money in the shelf under it. Anim, with a dramatic sigh, replied, "Nna anyi, Mbe, the table is no more. Mr Pig flung it into the bushes in anger". Mbe then turned to Pig, "You threw the table away? That's where I hid your money! Now, if you want your money, you will have to go into the bushes and find the table. Desperate and greedy, Pig had no choice but to search for the missing table. Till today the pig is still rooting around in muddy and dirty water searching for the elusive table. In this folktale, the pig uses violence to demand for his money but eventually loses the money at last.

While children are observed to adopt violent behaviour, they are sometimes victimised with violence. Adults who engage in violent activities victimising vulnerable children may have been influenced by different factors, including experiences of and exposure to a form of violence during their childhood. Violence is intergenerational, as children who are exposed to violence in their early years are at increased risk of victimization or perpetration as they get older. A concern about folktales that display behaviours of moral degeneration, without any form of unpleasant consequences, is that they expose children to such behaviours, which may be carried through to adulthood, unless meaningful intervention is implemented.

While tortoise folktales do not display many different forms of violence., except violent fight and assaults, society continues to engage in and experience many forms of violence. Many children grow up in

households where different forms of violence prevail. Children exposure to violence may raise the likelihood of children becoming perpetrators or victims of violence when they reach adulthood. In the context of this study, it remains a concern that children observe violence from folktales and society at large, and that some folktales do not seem to caution against perpetrating violence and other behaviours associated with immorality. Consequently, some folktales such as the tortoise and the Pig appear to support moral degeneration, rather than being against it. Therefore, the efficacy of such folktales in teaching moral precepts becomes unreliable and questionable.

5. Findings of the Study

The findings of the study revealed that Igbo tortoise trickster tales ostensibly intended to teach moral lessons feature behaviour that contravenes the concept of morality. Igbo tortoise trickster tales expose children to a variety of immoral behaviour. Children after listening to tortoise trickster tales continue to become perpetrators, victims and witnesses of moral degeneration.

Igbo tortoise trickster tales justify the moral degeneration crises as inappropriate behaviour of the tortoise is always depicted to be followed by positive outcomes, unless meaningful intervention is implanted, children may mimic the behaviour of the characters they admire and continue to do so into adulthood.

The study also established that Igbo tortoise trickster tales depict trick, murder and violence which children mimic and display in their adulthood thereby perpetrating moral degeneration in our society.

6. Conclusion

The potential implication of Igbo tortoise trickster tales for the moral degeneration crisis of children in contemporary Igbo society was investigated in this study. The study found that the Igbo tortoise trickster tales have a potential of serving the opposite rather than the intended message after having thematically analyzed the behaviour of tortoise's characters in Igbo folktales. Igbo tortoise trickster tales depict morally questionable behaviors such as manipulation, greed, lying, trickster, jealousy, stealing and disloyalty. The main concern is that children are exposed to immoral behaviour through the content of tortoise tales and the potential risk is that children could mimic the behaviour seen in the folktales.

The findings aptly demonstrated that morally degenerated behaviour depicted by children and adults

in contemporary Igbo land reflects those of folktale characters such as the tortoise. The study further illustrated that the tortoise went unpunished for his immoral behaviour and according to the theory of moral development, behaviors that are not punishable, are perceived as appropriate as they are followed by positive outcomes and are consequently, likely to be reinforced and continued (Waling, 2019).

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