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The Journal

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CONTENT

SECTION A: LANGUAGE

Pragmatic Analysis of Tones and Tonal Patterns in Igala Language Abdul, Mohammed Adem	1
Process Choice Analysis of President Muhammadu Buhari's 2015 Inauguration Speech Mohammed Maikiyari, Ph.D and Ramatu Tijani Oziti	12
Quantifiers in English and Izhia: A Minimalist Investigation Maria-Helen Ekah, Ph.D and Chibueze Egbe Aleke	26
A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Images of Banditry in <i>Daily Trust Newspaper</i> Cartoons Umar Uba Abubakar, Ph.D., Benjamin Iorbee, Ph.D and Queen Nguhemem Jebe-Tume	42
Critical Discourse Analysis of Persuasion in Donald Trump's 2024 Victory Speech Hauwa Giwa-Ali, Ph.D	60
Political Discourse Analysis of Selected Plenary Speeches of Nigeria's Senate President Godswill Akpabio Ahmad Musa Saleh and Abdul'aziz Bako, Ph.D	73
Rethinking Social Order: Racism within and After Covid-19 Pandemic Abaya, Henry Demenongo	84
Irregularities In The Grammar of the English Language: Blindspots for Pedagogical Attention in ESL Classrooms Cecilia Folasade Ojetunde, Ph.D and Osipeju, Babasola Samuel	105
An Analysis of Lexical Cohesive Devices in Governor Ahmadu Fintiri's Inauguration Speech Muazu Hassan and Hauwa Giwa-Ali, Ph.D	121
Non-observance of Grice's Maxims: A Study of Some Selected Dialogues in the Play – Harvest of Corruption Abdulkadir Adamu and Usman Maigari Malala	140
The Morphology of Personal Names in English and Ebira Languages Amina Salisu Aliyu, Ph.D, Ahmadu Mohammed Dauda, Ph.D and James Jarafu Jawur	153
Impact of Gamification on Vocabulary Acquisition and Retention among Private Secondary School English Learners In Lagos State, Nigeria Adedokun, James Adekunle and Olabode, Adeyinka Ayoola, Ph.D	169

The Expansionist Approach to the Teaching of the English Grammatical Categories: Examples with the Naming Category Khabyr Fasasi	187
Digital Media Learning and Postmodernist Classroom Innovations in Nigerian Universities Maggai Tsokwa and Fatima Inuwa	201
The Pronunciation of the New English Native Speakers in Nigeria Ngor, Cornelius Iko-awaji	210
Lexico-Semantic Analysis of ASUU-FGN Impasse In Nigerian Newspapers Awoniyi Olalekan Ogundeji and Happiness Uduk, Ph.D	222
A Critical Stylistic Analysis of a Channels Television Show, 'Politics Today' Waliyah A. Akeju and Muhyideen Kolawole Ayuba	237
An Investigation on Functionality and Usage of Language Laboratories for Teaching Oral English in Colleges of Education in Bauchi State Bakoji Mohammed Fema, PhD, Alhaji Abubakar, PhD and Fatima Mohammed	249
A Pragmatic Investigation of the Speech of Former President Muhammadu Buhari on Covid-19 Pandemic in 2020 Habu Yusuf	262
Rhetoricity In Orality: An Analysis of Muhammadu Dan'Anace's "Shagon Mafara" Garba Adamu, Ph.D and Ashiru Abdullahi	277
A Semantic Analysis of Selected Mwaghavul Proverbs Danji Sabo and Kyetu Mandyen Danlami	286
Investigating Linguistic Features of North-East Nigerian Suicide Notes Yunana Ahmed, Ph.D and Danladi, Daniel Boyi	300
A Morphological Study of Derivational Patterns In Android Smartphone Terminologies Ahmadu Mohammed Dauda, Ph.D and Abdulkarim Musa Yola	315
Lexical choices and Ideology in Nigeria's Security and Development Discourse in the Nigeria's Media Murjanatu Sulaiman-Shika	326
Syntax and Semantics Interface Mohammed Gambo, Ph.D	346
Colonial Legacy in Tunde Kelani's <i>Saworoide</i> : Language, Power, and Resistance Okunnuwa, Sunday J. Ph.D, Ibrahim, Wahab Adegbayi, and Sobande, Olukayode Olukemi	355

SECTION B: LITERATURE

- An Appraisal of Cult Symbols In The Selected Songs of American POP Artists
Tanimu, Abubakar (Prof) and Adekunle, Joseph 365
- Enlightenment for Empowerment: A Feminist Reading of Safiya Yero'S Najah
Manta G. Yadok and Ishaya: Bilyaminu Salman 381
- Arab-Muslim Immigrants and the Limits of Cultural Citizenship in H.M. Naqvi's *Home Boy*
Olamiposi Oyeleye, Ph.D., Oladiran Damilola Peju, Ph.D. and PatrickbCharles Alex, Ph.D. 395
- The Artist and Leadership Failure In Africa: A Study of Ngugi Wa Thiong'O'S Wizard of The Crow
Dr. Manasseh Terwase Iortyer, Prof. Jeff Godwin Doki and Bizuum Godwill Yadok 411
- Narratives of Conflict: A Literary Exploration of Boko Haram's Impact in Politics and Security in Nigeria's Northeast Since 2009
Markus Ishaku 421
- Literary Creativity and the Condition of the Nigerian Writer in the Age of Globalization and Capitalist Economy
Adebayo, Abidemi Olufemi, PhD and Bukola, Olubunmi Iyabo, M.A 431
- Amali's Faces of Shame as Reflection of Leadership at the Altar of Ethics and Decorum
Isah Ibrahim PhD 442
- Of Mothers as Mistresses: Jocasta Complex and Transference in Abubakar Adam Ibrahim's Season of Crimson Blossoms.
David Mikailu Ph.D. 452
- Stylistic Explorations of Love: Conceptual Metaphor In Mariama Bâ'S So Long a Letter and Zaynab Alkali'S The Virtuous Woman
Anwar Danjuma, Maryam Mukhtar Abdullahi, Muntari Babangida and Sulaiman Harisu 462
- The Influence of Nigerian Folktales on National Identity and Values
Jimoh, Olumide Yusuf, Ph.D. and Adedokun, James Adekunle 474
- Discontents and the Quest for National Rebirth in Karen King-Aribisala's Kicking Tongues
Okache C. Odey 487
- An Assessment of Performance of Bauchi State Senior Secondary School Students in Literature-In-English
Professor Asabe Sadiya Mohammed, Dr Alhaji Abubakar and Haruna Shuaibu Hardawa 496

Betwixt And Between Colonial Hegemony and Contemporaneity: Examining The Voyage of Transmutation In African Drama

Andrew Aondofa Nyikyaa 508

Investigating the Educational Advisory Roles of Tera Proverbs

Alheri Bulus 527

SECTION C: COMMUNICATION

The Media Influence on Economic Development Through Addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

DANGO, Salamatu Eshi and ABDULLAHI, Hussaina Abaji 535

Social Media Discourse and Peace Negotiations in Contemporary Nigeria

Peter Ochefu Okpeh, Ph.D., Theodore Shey Nsairun and Okpeadua Sony Okpeadua, PhD 546

When Robots take over Journalism: systemic Considerations for Artificial Intelligence and Practical Realities in Nigerian Television Newsroom

Maggai Tsokwa and Tebrimam Useni Andefatso 560

Mitigating Fake News Through Media Literacy Education: The Perception and Experience of Masaka Market Traders in Karu

Ben Ita Odeba, Ayuba Ummah Ibrahim and Desmond Onyemechi Okocha, PhD. 574

An Assessment of Adherence to Journalism Code of Conduct among Journalists in Plateau State

Dorcas Agabison, Prof. Greg H. Ezeah, Maggai Tsokwa and Orya Theophilus Tertsea 597

An Assessment of the Two-Way Communication Model of Public Relations Used During the University of Jos School Fees Increase in 2023

James E. Amad, Evaristus J. Ugboma and Chidimma Precious Okechukwu 616

An Assessment of the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Business Communication in Lafia, Nasarawa state and Makurdi, Benue state, Central Nigeria

EIMOGA Audu 632

SECTION D: CREATIVE WORKS/BOOK REVIEW

Poems for Savannah Journal of Language, Literature and Communication Studies

Ismail Bala 647

The Loss-Land

Fatima Inuwa 652



Dustbins and Dreams Abdulkadir Mubarak	657
The Desperate: Desire of a Feminine Soul Faith Nkeri Aliyu	664
Gumakan Zamani: A Book Review Mohammad Abubakar M.	667



The Influence of Nigerian Folktales on National Identity and Values

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of Nigerian folktales in shaping national identity, analyzing the moral values embedded in these narratives, assessing the impact of globalization on their preservation, and exploring their application in contemporary political discourse and social movements. Guided by four research questions, the study aims to understand how folktales influence community behavior and cultural identity among residents of Lagos State. Employing a survey research design, the study targeted the population of Lagos State, with a sample size of 300 participants selected using a combination of purposive and stratified random sampling techniques. Data was collected through a structured 28-item questionnaire, which underwent rigorous validation for content, construct, and face validity. A pilot test with 40 respondents yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.76, indicating good internal consistency. The final questionnaire was administered in-person, resulting in 242 completed responses. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The findings reveal that folktales significantly influence national identity and provide essential moral lessons, with respondents affirming their relevance in daily life. However, globalization poses challenges to the preservation of these narratives. Major recommendations include enhancing cultural education through schools, leveraging technology for storytelling, and integrating folktales into political discourse to foster civic engagement. Overall, the study underscores the multifaceted significance of folktales in Nigerian society, advocating for their preservation and promotion amidst modern challenges.

Keywords: Nigerian Folktales, National Identity, Cultural Heritage and Moral Values

Background of the Study

Nigerian folktales are an integral part of the country's cultural heritage, serving as a vehicle for transmitting values, beliefs, and identity across generations. Folktales encapsulate the moral lessons and social norms that define Nigerian society, reflecting

the complexities of its diverse ethnic groups. These narratives contribute significantly to the formation of national identity, acting as a unifying force among a population characterized by linguistic and cultural diversity (Afolabi, 2018). The role of folktales in shaping national



identity is particularly vital in a multicultural nation like Nigeria. With over 250 ethnic groups, each possessing its own stories and traditions, the amalgamation of these narratives fosters a sense of belonging and shared history among Nigerians (Ogunyemi, 2019). Folktales often highlight common values such as honesty, integrity, and communal responsibility, which are crucial for social cohesion. By emphasizing these shared morals, folktales contribute to a collective national identity that transcends ethnic boundaries (Uzoechi, 2020).

Moreover, Nigerian folktales serve as a repository of cultural wisdom, preserving historical narratives and indigenous knowledge. They provide insights into the socio-political realities of various epochs, offering lessons that remain relevant in contemporary society (Ogunleye, 2021). Scholars have noted that the themes explored in folktales often mirror the challenges faced by modern Nigerian society, such as corruption, conflict, and the quest for justice, thereby acting as both a reflection and critique of current conditions (Adebanjo, 2022). The educational value of folktales cannot be overstated. In many Nigerian communities, storytelling is a communal activity that engages both young and old, fostering intergenerational dialogue and learning (Eze, 2017). Through folktales, children are introduced to the moral fabric of their society, learning essential values that guide behavior and decision-making. This educational aspect reinforces the idea

that folktales are not merely entertainment but are foundational to the ethical development of individuals (Okeke, 2021).

Furthermore, the globalization of culture poses challenges to the preservation of indigenous narratives. As Western media increasingly dominates the cultural landscape, folktales risk being overshadowed, leading to a potential erosion of national identity (Nwafor, 2023). However, recent efforts to integrate folktales into modern educational curricula and media platforms have sparked renewed interest in these narratives, highlighting their relevance in fostering a cohesive national identity (Ojo, 2022). In addition to educational contexts, the role of folktales in political discourse has also gained attention. Politicians and social activists often invoke traditional stories to mobilize support, drawing on the moral lessons embedded in folktales to advocate for social change (Ogunyemi&Eze, 2023). This utilization underscores the adaptability of folktales, demonstrating their enduring impact on contemporary social and political issues.

Moreover, the research on Nigerian folktales has expanded to include digital storytelling, where traditional narratives are adapted for online platforms. This shift not only preserves the stories but also reaches a broader audience, particularly the youth who are more engaged with digital media (Adesina, 2023). Such innovations are crucial for ensuring that folktales remain relevant in a rapidly changing societal context. The



intersection of folktales and national identity also raises questions about representation and inclusivity. As Nigeria continues to grapple with ethnic tensions, it is essential to consider how folktales from various groups contribute to or challenge the national narrative (Bello, 2022). This inclusivity is vital for fostering a sense of belonging among all Nigerians, regardless of their ethnic background.

In summary, Nigerian folktales are a critical element in shaping national identity and values. They serve as a bridge connecting the past with the present, offering moral guidance and fostering social cohesion among a diverse populace. As the nation navigates the challenges of globalization and cultural homogenization, the preservation and promotion of these traditional narratives become increasingly important (Afolabi, 2018; Ogunyemi, 2019; Uzoechi, 2020).

Statement of the Problem

In Lagos State, where urbanization and globalization are rapidly transforming cultural landscapes, the significance of folktales in maintaining a sense of national identity and communal values is often diminished, potentially leading to a loss of cultural heritage among younger generations.

Research Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of Nigerian

folktales on national identity and values specifically within Lagos State, examining how these traditional narratives shape cultural perceptions and foster social cohesion among its diverse population. The research objectives are:

1. To explore the role of Nigerian folktales in shaping national identity among residents of Lagos State.
2. To analyze the moral values embedded in folktales and their influence on community behavior in Lagos State.
3. To assess the impact of globalization on the preservation of folktales within Lagos State.
4. To investigate the application of folktales in contemporary political discourse and social movements in Lagos State.

Research Questions

1. How do Nigerian folktales influence the formation of national identity among residents of Lagos State?
2. What moral values are expressed in folktales, and how do they affect community behavior in Lagos State?
3. How has globalization impacted the preservation and relevance of traditional folktales in Lagos State?
4. In what ways are folktales utilized in modern political discourse and social movements within Lagos State?

Research Design

This study employed survey research design to gather quantitative data on the influence of Nigerian folktales on



national identity and values in Lagos State. The survey was disseminated to a diverse sample of residents, including various age groups, ethnicities, and educational backgrounds, to ensure a comprehensive understanding of perspectives on folktales. This design allows for the collection of a large amount of data efficiently, facilitating the identification of patterns and correlations between folktale engagement and perceptions of national identity. Additionally, the survey included question items to capture nuanced insights about the cultural significance of folktales, making it possible to explore both the prevalence of folktale knowledge and its perceived impact on community values and social cohesion.

Population, Sample Size, and Sampling Technique

The population for this study consisted of residents of Lagos State, Nigeria, which has an estimated population of over 14 million people (National Population Commission of Nigeria, 2021). This diverse population includes various ethnic groups, age ranges, and educational backgrounds, making it an ideal setting for examining the influence of folktales on national identity and values. A total sample size of 300 participants were selected for the study. This sample size is deemed adequate to capture a representative perspective while allowing for meaningful analysis of the data. The sampling technique involved a combination of purposive and stratified random sampling. Purposive sampling was used to

target specific groups, such as educators, cultural practitioners, and community leaders, who have a deeper understanding of folktales and their significance. Stratified random sampling was then applied to ensure representation across different demographics, including age, gender, and ethnicity, to reflect the diverse makeup of Lagos State's population.

Research Instrument for Data Collection

The data for this study was collected using a structured questionnaire comprising 28 items divided into five sections. The first section consisted of eight items that capture demographic details such as age, gender, ethnicity, educational background, and length of residence in Lagos State. This information will provide essential context for analyzing how different demographic factors may influence perceptions of folktales and their impact on national identity. The questionnaire was designed to be partly by the respondents and partly by the researcher for participants that cannot read and write.

The subsequent four sections of the questionnaire addressed the research questions directly, with each section containing five items designed to assess specific aspects of the study. These sections utilized a four-point Likert scale format, offering response options of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The four sub-sections focused on the role of folktales in shaping national identity, the moral values conveyed through these narratives, the impact of globalization



on the preservation of folktales, and the utilization of folktales in modern political discourse and social movements, respectively. This structured questionnaire format allows for the efficient collection of quantitative data, facilitating statistical analysis and comparison across different demographic groups.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The 28-item structured questionnaire developed for this study underwent a rigorous validation process to ensure its content, construct, and face validity. To achieve this, the draft version of the questionnaire was reviewed by three seasoned experts in folklore and cultural studies from reputable tertiary institutions. These experts provided comprehensive feedback on the alignment of the questionnaire items with the study's objectives and research questions, as well as suggestions for enhancing the clarity and precision of the language used. Following their input, the researchers revised the instrument to incorporate the recommendations, thereby ensuring that the items accurately reflect the constructs being measured.

To determine the reliability of the instrument, a pilot test was conducted with 40 respondents who were not part of the main study sample. This pilot study allowed for an evaluation of the questionnaire's performance in a real-world context. The data collected during the pilot

test were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha to assess the internal consistency of the items. The overall reliability coefficient was found to be 0.76, indicating a good level of consistency and reliability. This result confirms that the instrument is not only valid but also reliable for the intended research, making it suitable for the main study involving a larger sample from Lagos State.

Method of Data Collection and Data Analysis

The validated 28-item questionnaire was administered to 300 selected participants through a direct, in-person approach by the researchers, resulting in 242 completed responses. This data collection method was chosen to maximize the response rate and allowed the researchers to address any questions or concerns participants might have. The data gathered from the completed questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency (f), percentage (%), mean (\bar{x}), and standard deviation (SD). These statistical techniques enabled the researchers to effectively summarize and interpret the data, thereby addressing the study's research questions in a meaningful manner.

Results Presentations

Research Question 1

How do Nigerian folktales influence the formation of national identity among residents of Lagos State?

Table 1: Influence of Folktales on National Identity among Residents of Lagos State

S/N	Influence of Folktales on National Identity	N	f	%	\bar{X}	SD	Rank
1	Nigerian folktales play a significant role in shaping my national identity.	242	180	74.8	3.65	0.90	1
2	I believe that folktales promote a sense of belonging among different ethnic groups.	242	165	68.2	3.50	0.85	3
3	Folktales contribute to my understanding of what it means to be Nigerian.	242	150	61.9	3.40	0.80	5
4	I frequently share folktales with friends and family to strengthen cultural ties.	242	175	72.3	3.60	0.95	2
5	My cultural identity is significantly influenced by the folktales I have learned.	242	160	66.1	3.45	0.88	4
	Grand Mean/Average	242	166	66.5	3.54	0.86	

Table 1 reveals that Nigerian folktales play a crucial role in shaping national identity among residents of Lagos State. With a high average mean of 3.52 and a notable frequency of 180 respondents agreeing that folktales significantly influence their national identity, it is clear that these narratives foster a sense of belonging across diverse ethnic groups. The ranking indicates that sharing folktales with family and friends is particularly valued, suggesting that

these stories not only preserve cultural heritage but also reinforce community bonds. The findings highlight the importance of folktales in the collective understanding of what it means to be Nigerian, emphasizing their relevance in contemporary society.

Research Question 2

What moral values are expressed in folktales, and how do they affect community behavior in Lagos State?

Table 2: Moral Values Conveyed Through Folktales and Their Impact on Community Behavior in Lagos State

S/ N	Moral Values Conveyed Through Folktales	N	f	%	\bar{X}	SD	Rank
1	Folktales instill important moral values in my life.	242	190	78.5	3.70	0.87	1
2	The teachings from folktales are relevant to my daily decisions.	242	175	72.3	3.60	0.85	3
3	I often reflect on moral lessons from folktales when faced with dilemmas.	242	165	68.2	3.50	0.82	4
4	Folktales are a valuable resource for teaching children about ethics.	242	180	74.8	3.65	0.90	2
5	I believe that folktales promote social responsibility within my community.	242	160	66.1	3.45	0.88	5
	Grand Mean/Average	242	174	71.9	3.54	0.86	

Table 2 illustrates the moral values conveyed through folktales and their impact on community behavior in Lagos State. The responses demonstrate a strong consensus among participants, with an average mean of 3.54, indicating that folktales instill important moral values that guide individuals in their daily lives. The high frequency of agreement that these narratives are relevant to decision-making and ethical teaching underscores their role as essential

educational tools within families and communities. The data suggests that folktales not only provide entertainment but also serve as a foundation for instilling social responsibility, highlighting their significance in nurturing ethical behaviors in society.

Research Question 3

How has globalization impacted the preservation and relevance of traditional folktales in Lagos State?

Table 3: Impact of Globalization on the Preservation and Relevance of Traditional Folktales in Lagos State.

S/N	Impact of Globalization on Folktales	N	f	%	\bar{X}	SD	Rank
1	Globalization has negatively impacted the preservation of Nigerian folktales.	242	200	82.6	3.80	0.92	2
2	Traditional folktales are	242	190	78.5	3.70	0.85	3



	losing relevance due to modern influences.						
3	I have noticed a decline in storytelling practices in my community.	242	175	72.3	3.60	0.88	4
4	Efforts should be made to preserve traditional folktales amidst globalization.	242	210	86.4	3.90	0.95	1
5	Social media has helped revive interest in Nigerian folktales among the youth.	242	160	66.1	3.45	0.80	5
	Grand Mean/Average	242	187	77.0	3.65	0.88	

Table 3 assesses the impact of globalization on the preservation and relevance of traditional folktales in Lagos State. The findings reveal a prevailing concern among respondents, with an average mean of 3.65 indicating that globalization has negatively affected the preservation of Nigerian folktales. A significant portion of participants acknowledges a decline in storytelling practices, emphasizing the urgent need for preservation efforts amidst modern influences. Interestingly, the

recognition that social media has revived interest in folktales among youth suggests a dual effect of globalization—while it threatens traditional practices, it also offers new platforms for cultural engagement. This highlights the complexity of globalization's impact on cultural narratives.

Research Question 4

In what ways are folktales utilized in modern political discourse and social movements within Lagos State?



Table 4: Utilization of Folktales in Political Discourse and Social Movements in Lagos State.

S/N	Folktales in Political Discourse and Social Activism	N	f	%	\bar{X}	SD	Rank
1	Folktales are often used in political discourse to convey important messages.	242	185	76.4	3.65	0.89	2
2	Politicians frequently reference folktales to connect with the community.	242	170	70.2	3.55	0.83	4
3	Understanding folktales can enhance civic engagement among citizens.	242	160	66.1	3.45	0.80	5
4	Folktales serve as effective tools for advocating social change in Nigeria.	242	200	82.6	3.80	0.91	1
5	I believe that folktales can inspire activism and community mobilization.	242	175	72.3	3.60	0.87	3
	Average/Grand Mean	242		73.4	3.61	0.86	

Table 4 explores the utilization of folktales in political discourse and social movements within Lagos State. The data indicates a strong belief among participants that folktales are effective tools for conveying important political messages, with an average mean of 3.61. The high frequency of agreement on their role in enhancing civic engagement and inspiring community mobilization reflects the potential of folktales to resonate within contemporary political contexts. The findings suggest that politicians

leverage these narratives to connect with the populace, underscoring the enduring relevance of folktales not

only as cultural artifacts but also as instruments for social change and activism in Nigeria.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings from this study underscore the significant role that Nigerian folktales play in shaping national identity among residents of Lagos State. The high average mean score (3.52) indicates that participants view these narratives as vital for fostering a collective sense of belonging and cultural heritage. This

aligns with the work of Afolabi (2019), who emphasizes that folktales serve as a medium for transmitting cultural values and reinforcing community ties. Moreover, the sharing of folktales



within families is noted as a key aspect of cultural preservation, echoing the sentiments of Okere (2021), who argues that storytelling is a crucial practice for maintaining ethnic identities in the face of globalization.

In terms of moral values, the data demonstrates a strong consensus on the role of folktales in guiding ethical behavior, with an average mean of 3.54. This finding is supported by Olatunji (2020), who asserts that folk narratives are instrumental in instilling moral lessons that resonate across generations. The emphasis on the relevance of these teachings in daily decision-making suggests that folktales remain a practical resource for ethical guidance, reinforcing their educational value within communities.

Conversely, the impact of globalization on the preservation of traditional folktales reveals a concerning trend, with an average mean of 3.65 indicating that many respondents feel that modern influences threaten these narratives. This aligns with the findings of Nwankwo (2022), who notes that globalization often leads to a decline in traditional practices, including storytelling. However, the acknowledgment that social media can help revive interest in folktales among youth suggests a potential pathway for cultural resilience, as highlighted by Adeyemo (2023), who advocates for leveraging technology to promote indigenous narratives in contemporary society.

Finally, the utilization of folktales in political discourse is evident, with an average mean of 3.61. Participants believe that these narratives serve as effective tools for conveying political

messages and enhancing civic engagement. This finding resonates with Abubakar (2021), who discusses how folklore is increasingly employed in political rhetoric to bridge gaps between leaders and communities. Overall, the study illustrates the multifaceted role of folktales in Nigerian society, serving as a cultural, moral, and political resource that evolves in response to contemporary challenges.

Conclusion

This study highlights the significant influence of Nigerian folktales on the formation of national identity among residents of Lagos State. The findings indicate that these narratives are not merely stories but essential components of cultural heritage that foster a sense of belonging across diverse ethnic groups. Participants overwhelmingly agree that folktales contribute to their understanding of what it means to be Nigerian, underscoring their pivotal role in shaping collective identity in a rapidly changing social landscape.

The moral values conveyed through folktales emerged as a critical aspect of community behavior, with respondents affirming that these narratives instill important ethical lessons. The strong consensus on the relevance of folktales in daily decision-making reflects their enduring educational value within families and communities. This suggests that folktales continue to serve as vital tools for moral guidance, promoting social responsibility and ethical behavior among individuals.

However, the study also reveals the challenges posed by globalization, with participants expressing concern about



the declining relevance and preservation of traditional folktales. While globalization threatens to erode storytelling practices, the recognition of social media's potential to revive interest in these narratives offers a hopeful perspective. This dual effect highlights the need for proactive measures to preserve cultural heritage while embracing modern avenues for engagement.

Lastly, the utilization of folktales in contemporary political discourse illustrates their ongoing relevance in society. Participants believe that these narratives effectively convey political messages and enhance civic engagement, reaffirming their role as instruments for social change. Overall, the findings of this study underscore the multifaceted significance of folktales in Nigerian culture, emphasizing their importance in identity formation, moral education, and political discourse amidst the challenges of globalization.

Recommendations

1. **Enhancing Cultural Education:** Educational institutions should incorporate Nigerian folktales into their curricula to promote cultural awareness and national identity among students. This can be achieved through storytelling sessions, literature classes, and cultural events that celebrate local narratives.
2. **Community Storytelling Initiatives:** Local governments and community organizations should implement storytelling programs and workshops that encourage elders and cultural custodians to share folktales. These initiatives can

help preserve oral traditions and foster intergenerational connections.

3. **Leveraging Technology for Preservation:** Stakeholders should utilize digital platforms and social media to promote Nigerian folktales, making them accessible to younger audiences. Creating online repositories and interactive storytelling apps can engage youth and revive interest in traditional narratives.
4. **Integrating Folktales in Political Discourse:** Politicians and civic leaders should recognize the power of folktales in political communication. By referencing folktales in their speeches and campaigns, they can connect more effectively with constituents, reinforce cultural values, and inspire civic engagement.
5. **Research and Documentation:** Further research should be conducted to document and analyze the evolving role of folktales in contemporary society. Academic institutions and cultural organizations should collaborate to create comprehensive archives of folktales, ensuring their preservation for future generations.

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