

Original Research Article

## Identifying the Six Pillars of the Character Counts Inherent in the Hausa Folktales

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**Abstract:** The goal of this study is to fill in the knowledge gap regarding the character development found in Hausa literature, especially in Hausa folktales. This study must inevitably rely on primary and secondary sources drawn from (a) fieldwork story collections generated through interviews with storytellers in Kaduna State's Zaria Local Government Area and (b) published works, including Usman (2018), Yahaya (1974), and Josephson Institute of Ethics (2015). There are so many moral lessons that could be derived from Hausa folk tales. This paper has identified the six pillars of the character count inherent in the Hausa folktales. It also explains how folktales in our schools could help uphold core ethical values and instil the six pillars of character count in our students. The Hausa folktales *The Dove and the Bush Bird*, *The Water of Cure*, *The Mother of the Little Rats*, *Nababa- Duka's Two Wives*, *Jealousy*, and *Animal Kingdom and the Small Ant* all contain elements that represent the six pillars of character count: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship, respectively. It is suggested that the government should make the teaching of our indigenous languages compulsory so that this aspect of the literary genre that has been integrated into the curriculum could be taught so that the students could learn and appreciate all the six pillars of the Character Counts embedded in the Hausa folktales.

**Keywords:** Hausa Folktales, Character Counts, Character Development, Moral Value.

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### INTRODUCTION

Moral lessons are one of the characteristics of African folktales. Hausa folktale is a literary genre in the form of oral narratives which describes an event, people, animal, place, or the metaphysical world. Therefore, there are various types of oral narratives, including myths, legends, fables, monster stories, fairy tales, and spirit tales.

In the past, folktales served as a medium through which knowledge and moral values were passed down to children. In this case, the narrator is an educator, entertainer, philosopher, and counsellor. Fafunwa (1974: 13) observes that: The aim of traditional African education is multilateral and the end objective is to produce an individual who is honest, respectful, skilled, co-operative and conforms to the social order.

There are so many moral lessons that could be derived from folk tales as observed by Adeyemi (1997:

115) in her reference to Yoruba folktales where she observes that folktales:

can be used to inculcate in the children of pre-school age virtues such as humility, gratitude, respect for elders and constituted authority, perseverance, conformity to societal norms, co-operation, hospitality, truthfulness, honesty, willingness to take advice, patriotism, courage, and love, loyalty to one's fatherland, hard work and the fear of God.

Therefore, this paper has identified the six pillars of the character counts inherent in the Hausa folktales. It also explains how folktales in our schools could help uphold core ethical values and instil the six pillars of character counts in our students.

Today, many social vices extend to institutions of learning where students display many immoral acts. They lack respect for adults (mostly constituted authority) and are generally lazy, unpatriotic, cheat in examinations, greedy, dishonest, callous, and corrupt. Some engage in moral misconduct ranging from

robbery, rape, banditry, informant to the bandit, forgery, insurgency, cultism, drug abuse and trafficking, certificate racketeering, get-rich-quick syndrome, indecent dressing, fraud, etc.

It is suggested that the government should make the teaching of our indigenous languages compulsory; so that this aspect of the literary genre that has been integrated into the curriculum could be taught so that the students could learn and appreciate all the six pillars of the Character Counts embedded in the Hausa folktales. This will prepare the student to become a person of character.

Education is indeed a powerful instrument that can be used to correct the moral decline in society through the re-orientation of the people, most especially youths. In concordance with this view, the Hausa teachers are encouraged to pay attention to the Hausa literary texts that can inculcate these six pillars of Character Count in the students.

### **CHARACTER COUNTS!**

A resource is the exercising Character curriculum developed by Peggy Adkins (Josephson Institute of Ethics, 1995) to fortify the lives of young people starting at a very young age with consensus ethical values "six pillars of character". Adults and teens use this curriculum in schools, faith communities, and youth organizations such as, organizations, agencies, businesses, schools, individuals, and educators are encouraged to create and conduct educational, reinforcement and recognition activities appropriate to their educational setting. It allows educators to incorporate the teaching of the "six pillars of character" into their existing curricula, policies, rules, activities and events.

Adkins (2001) stated, "The goal of CHARACTER COUNTS! is to integrate trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship purposely, pervasively, repetitively, concretely, consistently, and creatively into the community culture and the school culture." Good character requires the insight to see what is right and the courage to do it, regardless of the cost in popularity, money, prestige or pleasure. The commitment of adults to be models of good character and spend time with young people can make a difference.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Because this is a study of folklore, it is guided by the folkloric school of thought. The idea is relevant to this work because it allows the authors to document and analyse the verbal materials of Hausa folktale tellers as custodians of social norms and culture. Through an investigation of their folktales and oral traditions, the Hausa people's history, culture, tradition, and beliefs, in general, are investigated.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Dauda (2013) investigates the crucial moral, traditional, educational, and other functions that Hausa women's folktales leave to children. She also investigates how stories contribute to the moral development of the Hausa kids, as well as determines the prevalent themes and characters in the stories. She also examines the Hausa woman and folk storytelling, as well as the roles of the narrators and the audience, the components of teaching morals through folktales, and the woman as a channel for educating children.

Buba *et al.*, (2018) a folktale is regarded as one of the tools utilized in the past to protect society's purity, discipline, and morality through oral tradition. The article attempted to investigate some moral ideals derived from the Guddiri Folktale. It was also dismayed to see how this rare gem was being jeopardized, which culminated in the pervasive indiscipline and immorality seen in our culture, including the monster of Boko Haram. Suggestions for rehabilitating the Guddiri folktale society were made.

Amali, (2014) Folktales inspire writers, resulting in the publication of several literary masterpieces. Folktales, despite their numerous benefits, are on the verge of extinction. As a result, a bridge must be built between the folktale genre and the media, with the latter interfering in the genre's promotion to ensure its survival in society. This study investigates the role of folktales in educating and preparing youngsters for 21st-century concerns. Children have benefited from folktale-based learning. Idoma's folktales provide a variety of lessons. Discipline, moral uprightness, hard labour, and courage are among the lessons learned. Children are taught to resist vices such as stealing, rudeness, antagonism, wickedness, and dishonesty through a variety of lessons.

All of the aforementioned studies discuss the moral lessons that can be drawn from folktales. The goal of this study is to fill in the knowledge gap regarding the character development found in Hausa literature, especially in Hausa folktales.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study must inevitably rely on primary and secondary sources drawn from (a) fieldwork story collections generated through interviews with storytellers in Kaduna State's Zaria Local Government Area; (b) published works, including Usman (2018), Yahaya (1974), and Josephson Institute of Ethics (2015).

### **DATA PRESENTATION TRUSTWORTHINESS**

According to Josephson (2002), trustworthiness is the most complicated of the six core

ethical values and encompasses a wide range of traits, including honesty, integrity, dependability, and loyalty. Being TRUSTWORTHINESS means being sincere, telling the truth, keeping your word, and being loyal to others. Those who are trustworthy don't steal, cheat, or lie. They possess the moral fortitude and integrity to uphold their moral values in the face of opposition. Therefore, "A person of character is trustworthy, lives with integrity, and is honest, reliable, and loyal." (Josephson Institute of Ethics, 2015, p 26).

The trait of Trustworthiness is essential to building positive relationships with others. Trustworthy people live by their principles no matter what others say, and they dare to do what is right even when it is hard to do or failure might result. (Pachappa, n.d).

These traits of being trustworthy are inherent in many Hausa folktales as we can see in the following tale titled "The Dove and the Bush Bird".

The dove, Kurciya, was happily wed to her husband. Her friend Suda, the striking bird, borrowed her beak with the promise to return it after their nuptials. She betrayed her friend for many months and broke her promise. After setting out to find her, the dove eventually found her in her marital residence. She grabbed her beak, leaving her with just her disgusting mouth. When Suda's husband came home, he was angry seeing her ugly mouth and drove her out of his house.

Thus, the students can derive the following trustworthiness lessons from the tale:

- i. The dove is honest and reliable therefore, it is a trustworthy
- ii. The Suda on other hand is deceptive and unreliable, therefore it is untrustworthy.
- iii. We should keep our promises and honour our words and commitments
- iv. Be a good friend and look out for those who care about you
- v. Don't betray a trust or hurt somebody.

## RESPECT

According to Josephson, respect is to "Treat others with respect and follow the Golden Rules [<sup>1</sup>]. Be tolerant and accepting of differences • Use good manners, not bad language • Be considerate of the feelings of others • Don't threaten, hit or hurt anyone •

<sup>1</sup> "Treat others the way you want to be treated. Respect the dignity, privacy and freedom of all individuals. Value and honour all people for them-selves, not what they can do for you or to you. Respect other's property- take good care of the property you are allowed to use and don't take or use the property without permission. Respect the autonomy of others. Tell them what they should know to make good choices about their own lives" (Hawk *et al.*, 2010, p 68).

Deal peacefully with anger, insults, and disagreements" (Josephson, 2002, p..). Lickona notes that "respect means showing regard for the worth of someone or something" (Lickona, 1991, p. 43).

These traits could be traced in a tale titled "The Water of Cure"

The orphan girl was asked to take the hides to the river water of cure and wash it. She would ask the other rivers whether a particular river is the water of cure. The river would answer her it was not the river but the other was ahead. She was near the river and there came the rainstorm. She entered the hut and she met a talking leg on the chair and a dog by its side. The girl Salamed them and she was welcomed. After the rain, she was directed on how to go to the river of cure. She successfully washed the hides and returned home with two eggs given to her by a talking leg. Upon seeing the orphan girl with a lot of booties, the stepmother asked her daughter to go to the river of cure to wash a hide's skin too. The girl misbehaved on her way and refused to respect the talking leg and the dog. Finally, she was escorted to her home town by lepers, and this and the people of the town deserted her. The mother died of hypertension due to agony.

The respect lessons that could be derived from the tale are:

- i. Be tolerant, respectful and accepting of those who are different from you.
- ii. Resolve disagreements, respond to insults, and deal with anger peacefully and without violence
- iii. Be courteous and polite to everyone.
- iv. Don't be disrespectful, rude and

## Responsibility

Thomas Lickona, a pioneer in character education, provides a working definition of responsibility as an expansion of respect. We value people if we respect them. If we value them, we take some responsibility for their well- being. The ability to respond is defined as responsibility. It entails being aware of people, paying attention to them, and effectively responding to their needs. (Lickona, 1991) As a result, a person of character fulfils the requirements of responsibility, is accountable, strives for perfection, and exercises self-control. (Josephson Institute of Ethics, 2015, p 4).

Therefore, responsibility involves the fundamental belief that each of us has a mutual agreement with those around us to do our bit, shoulder our fair share of the burden, and bear the consequences of our actions.

The character traits of responsibility are inherent in many Hausa folktales as we can see in the following tale titled "The Little Rats' Mother".

The mother of some rats told it not to leave the house because it would be eaten by a cat. The mother left after the mice vowed to obey her. A cat spotted the rats and moved softly towards them as it was eating. The mother rat narrowly fled with her babies into her burrow, as the cat chased them both down the trail towards its own hole.

Lessons derived from the tale are:

- i. As the mother rat does for her mice, responsible people keep their homes and teach their children.
- ii. One of the responsibilities of parents is to provide food, housing, clothes, and guidance for their children, much as the mother rat does for her mice.
- iii. Do your best, endure, be prepared, be diligent, work hard, and make whatever you do proud.

### **Fairness**

According to Oxford Learners Dictionaries, fairness is “the quality of treating people equally or in a way that is reasonable”.

Being fair and just in all of your dealings with people entails treating them equally. Avoid favouritism in your decision-making and don't exploit others. Don't unfairly or carelessly assign responsibility to others. Take only your fair share, share with others, and rotate.

Therefore, “A person of character is fair and just, is impartial, listens, and is open to different viewpoints.” (Josephson Institute of Ethics, 2015, p 110).

These aspects of fairness are inherent in many Hausa folktales, as we can see in the following tale titled “Nababa-Duka’s Two Wives”.

Nababa-Duka was married to two wives, although he preferred Mowa to the other Bora. He moved to the city one day. He excavated two pits, the deeper of which was sunk first. He lit some small pieces of firewood (yanga) that he had placed deeper than the others. He then went ahead and covered the two holes with a mat.

He told the spouses to pack their belongings when he returned home since he would be joining them. They would arrive at the location, stay there for two days, and then continue on their journey. The pits and the one he wanted Mowa, his favourite wife, to sit in were previously discussed. When she arrived, the favoured wife sat down on the mat, fell into the pit, and was burned. The husband believed that his estranged wife had indeed fallen into the pit as intended. He began to revel in his success in killing the Bora. He speared himself to death after realizing Bora was still alive.

We derive the following lessons from the tale:

- i. Be neutral, unbiased, and open-minded.
- ii. Instead of making an emotional judgment, we should base our conclusion on reason and actual data.
- iii. We should be tolerant and non-discriminating.
- iv. We should treat our spouses, children, and brothers fairly and without bias.

### **Caring**

Caring is one of the six pillars of character counts that focuses on demonstrating understanding of others by treating them with kindness, compassion, generosity, and a forgiving spirit. Therefore, caring includes the virtues of loving, sympathy, charity, kindness, compassion, altruism, kindness, and sharing. Caring, according to Josephson (2002), lies at the centre of ethics and ethical decision-making. It is difficult to be fully ethical while being careless about the welfare of others. This is because ethics is ultimately about having healthy relationships with others. A caring person demonstrates a concern for the well-being of others. All these virtues existed from a single Hausa folktale titled “Jealousy”.

A daughter raised in a polygamous home gets married to a prince as a reward for caring for both humans and animals, whereas the nemesis of marrying a mad man befalls her rude sister.

In the folktale, the first daughter was very kind, loving and considerate, “The first wife sent her daughter to milk her cow. As she was about to do so, the cow pleaded with her to hold on, that she was pregnant and needed to give birth. The girl waited for days for the cow to be delivered of her offspring, and she milked the cow.” Usman, (2018: 487). The girl cares for the pregnant cow and her offspring by waiting for her to get delivered. The husband is also charitable and altruistic, “Their husband who had two cows gave one to each of his two wives.” Usman, (2018: 487). The children can also learn to be grateful when they learnt that “the cow thanked her for being patient with it, and gave her a ring. The girl took the ring home and as she got home, the ring made her very beautiful. One of the princes saw her and admired her. He married her and they became husband and wife.” Usman, (2018: 487).

This folktale can also change the children from self-centred, rude and selfish creatures into caring individuals when they learn that the other girl was not patient with the cow; she forcefully milked the cow and was given a ring that made her very ugly.

Indeed the students could learn how to be compassionate and empathetic about others by reading or listening to this folktale that displays a caring pillar of the character that counts! The folktale teaches the following caring traits:

- i. Help people in need

- ii. Treat others the way you want to be treated
- iii. Show appreciation to parents
- iv. Be patient
- v. Be kind to both humans and animals
- vi. Be aware of others' needs
- vii. Don't be selfish
- viii. Don't be rude

### Citizenship

Citizenship is the sixth pillar of the Character Counts with purple colour to indicate how a community can work together to help each other, protect the environment, be a good neighbour and obey the laws and rules of the community. Therefore, "A person of character is a good citizen, does his or her share, helps the community, plays by the rules, and respects authority and law." (Hawk *et al.*, 2015, p 36) Citizenship, according to Josephson (2002), entails civic obligations and qualities that set forth how we should conduct ourselves as members of a society. A law-abiding individual does more than just know the rules and follow them. She contributes more than she receives to help society function now and for future generations.

Being involved in efforts to improve the community, country, or world is an indication of good citizenship. Good citizens are those who take an active interest in their community's needs, whether in significant or minor ways. Understanding, appreciating, and taking action to improve your own and others' lives is what it means to be a good citizen in practice. Participation, involvement, and contribution are requirements of citizenship. Good citizens go beyond their interests, show empathy for other people, and understand that it is their responsibility to improve their community, country, and the globe. Citizenship is a reciprocal relationship that comes with both responsibilities and rights. Nobody has any impact if they aren't engaged. These traits of a good citizen are inherent in Hausa folktales.

In a tale titled "Animal Kingdom and the Small Ant"

In the animal kingdom, there was a terrible famine. All the animals were unaware of what caused the famine. Before that, hunters had always attacked the animals, and it had taken an ant's effort to put a stop to their activities.

The little ant used to sneak up on the body of the hunter and continuously bite him whenever he was on his approach to the forest. As he searched for the ant to kill it, the hunter would get agitated. The hunter would scream and rush home after failing to kill the ant, and as he did so, the ant would creep out from inside of him. None of the other animals was aware of the efforts.

But something then happened. The little ant was crushed under the elephant's feet as it travelled through the forest. The animals started to suffer from

the food shortage from that point on until they ran out of things to eat. Because they were concerned, the animals went in search of something to eat. They were travelling when they came across a woman, and they were so hungry that they wanted to eat her. The woman warned them not to eat her and instructed them to return to the forest in search of the small ant that had been crushed underground. She also instructed them to take care of the ant so that it would recover.

Because they did not entirely accept the woman's advice, the animals returned to the forest reluctantly. They arrived at the jungle, looked around, and discovered the tiny ant. The little ant recovered after receiving kind treatment from them. The famine ended at that point, and the animals had food to eat.

The following citizenship lessons could be derived from the tale.

- i. The tiny ant makes a tremendous sacrifice to make the animal kingdom a more secure and pleasant place to live.
- ii. No matter their size, position, or number, committed citizens have the power to change the world as the small ant did.
- iii. When we treat other living creatures with respect, they reciprocate by showing respect for us.
- iv. We should be motivated to live for something by bringing joy to others, advancing humanity, and providing hope and compassion to the isolated and desolate.
- v. Serving the country is an essential part of citizenship
- vi. Never doubt the power of a small, thoughtful, dedicated group of people to affect global change. The fact is that it is the only thing that has ever

### CONCLUSION

The characteristics of the six pillars of character count could be found in the Hausa folktales, as seen from the examination of the narratives above. The Hausa folktales The Dove and the Bush Bird, The Water of Cure, The Mother of the Little Rats, Nababa-Two Duka's Wives, Jealousy, and Animal Kingdom and the Small Ant all contain elements that represent the six pillars of character count: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship, respectively. Unfortunately, this valuable medium of inculcating good character and moral upbringing is being neglected by the greater number of the community members. It is suggested that the government should make the teaching of our indigenous languages compulsory; so that this aspect of the literary genre that has been integrated into the curriculum could be taught so that the students could learn and appreciate all the six pillars of the Character Counts embedded in the Hausa folktales. This will prepare the student to become a person of character. Unfortunately, the majority of

community members have ignored this important tool for instilling good character and moral development. It is proposed that the government make the teaching of our indigenous languages mandatory so that this aspect of the literary genre, which has been integrated into the curriculum, can be taught so that students can learn and appreciate all six pillars of the Character Counts embedded in Hausa folktales. This will help the pupil develop into a character.

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