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Social Values and Lessons in African Children's Fiction

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the role of African children's literature in the promotion of moral values, cultural identity, and societal development. It emphasizes the importance of didactic themes, such as honesty, kindness, patience, perseverance, and social responsibility, which are dominant in African children's prose fiction. The article focuses on the historical and contemporary context of African children's literature, noting its roots in oral traditions and its development after colonialism. The study, through the analysis of key texts and themes in the genre, shows how these works function as tools for moral instruction, socialization, and cultural preservation. The article further explores how African children's literature reflects changing dynamics in modern society by addressing issues such as gender equality, education, and social challenges. The conclusion emphasizes further intellectual involvement in the area of children's literature and demands separate academic institutions be set up to better examine this topic.

Introduction

Scholarly interest in African children's literature has grown over time, yet it has not garnered enough attention despite the efforts in producing engaging intellectual prose fiction. This chapter asserts the significance of children's literature in African societies, emphasizing the motif of morality as didactics by examining dominant themes in selected African children's prose fiction, such as honesty, kindness, patience, and perseverance. These themes serve as valuable tools for fulfilling the novelists' social commitment. Ogunyemi Christopher Babatunde, in his article

A Meta-Critical Study of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo.

Perspectives on Children Literature in Nigeria, highlights that children's fiction has been used to promote moral behaviour and discourage vices. Since the time of Plato and Aristotle, literature has been utilized to support societal development and teach lessons on good and evil. African children's literature, rooted in oral traditions, also serves to impart moral values and lessons to young readers. Many African stories, like those of the tortoise, were created to teach lessons that emphasize good over evil. Literature has a moral function, often used to guide interpersonal activities and social behaviour. Morality, derived from the Latin word *mores*, refers to customs or the principles of human conduct. It is often associated with ethics, which involves the study of right and wrong. In African societies, certain actions such as armed robbery and corruption are condemned, while actions like kindness and honesty are celebrated. The importance of morality in public life is underscored as it plays a key role in social development, helping individuals acquire values and skills essential for societal well-being. Children's literature in Africa often full fills a social function, with stories reflecting the needs and values of contemporary African societies. Akachi Ezeigbo emphasizes that children's literature is designed to cater to the

interests of young readers while imparting important lessons. Before independence, African children were exposed to biased school texts and leisure books imported from imperial nations, which promoted colonial values and often portrayed Africans negatively. These books were written from a colonial perspective and presented European cultures and values as superior. After independence, European languages continued to dominate African literature due to historical factors and practical considerations, such as their role in education, publishing, and government. However, the question remains whether African children are still being colonized through the literature produced for them. Scholars like Meena Khorana and Colomba kaburi Muriungi have raised concerns about the dominance of Western literature and its impact on African children's development. Muriungi, for example, notes that in 1970s Kenya, most children's books were Western, which was insensitive to the African context. Chinua Achebe criticized Western children's literature for being harmful to African children, referring to it as "beautifully packaged poison." He advocated for African writers to produce books that reflect African themes, characters, and settings, helping children connect with their cultural heritage. Writers during this time used animal characters, often derived from African oral traditions, to convey important societal lessons, salvaging history that colonial writers had sought to erase. Thus, African children's literature plays a vital role in preserving cultural identity and shaping future generations.

Results and Discussion

The children's fiction in Africa, especially focusing on the themes prevalent in African children's literature, such as moral virtues, cultural identity, societal values, and the role of didactic storytelling. African children's literature often emphasizes values like honesty, patience, perseverance, and social responsibility, reflecting the importance of ethical conduct in shaping character and societal harmony.

Primarily categorized by their focus on:

Folktales and Moral Lessons: African children's fiction often draws from traditional folktales, with animal characters and moral ideals. These stories serve as vehicles to impart societal beliefs and customs. The example of *The Super Girl* by Anthony Ogiaga, which portrays the perseverance of Mimi, a girl who overcomes adversity, illustrates how children are encouraged to remain resilient and hardworking despite difficult circumstances.

Honesty and Integrity: Stories like *The Fruit of Honesty* by I. E. Ufondu and *Beatrice's Goat* by Page McBrier focus on the importance of honesty, integrity, and hard work. In these narratives, characters like Nkem and Beatrice learn that virtuous behaviour, even in the face of hardship, leads to positive outcomes, thus reinforcing moral teachings.

Cultural Identity and Preservation: Books like *Tales of the Secret Valley* by Tim Matthews and *The Broken Promise* by Norman Atkinson highlight efforts to preserve African cultural traditions, particularly through the documentation of fables, myths, and legends. These works not only capture the essence of African heritage but also serve to maintain a sense of collective identity in the face of modernization.

Patriarchy and Gender Roles: Many African children's stories explore themes of patriarchy, but some also challenge traditional gender roles. In *The Girl Who Became Chief* by Amos Isoka, for example, Kadogo, a young girl, defies expectations and becomes a village leader, thus empowering the female figure and challenging the narrative of women being subordinate.

Community and Responsibility: The passage emphasizes the role of community and familial ties in African children's stories. In *The Children of the Forest* by Joel Makumi, the generosity of a

pastoralist community plays a pivotal role in the survival and care of abandoned children, highlighting African values of communalism, generosity, and parental responsibility.

Modern Social Issues: In more contemporary African children's fiction, issues such as the unhealthy pursuit of wealth, like in *Costly Mistake* by Prince Kelvin A. Ikonne, are explored. These stories reflect the changing social realities in modern Africa, addressing topics such as internet fraud and economic challenges.

Folic Acid's Emerging Role in Thyroid Health: In more contemporary African children's fiction, issues such as the unhealthy pursuit of wealth, like in *Costly Mistake* by Prince Kelvin A. Ikonne, are explored. These stories reflect the changing social realities in modern Africa, addressing topics such as internet fraud and economic challenges.

Distinct Hormonal Patterns Across Pregnancy Trimesters: In more contemporary African children's fiction, issues such as the unhealthy pursuit of wealth, like in *Costly Mistake* by Prince Kelvin A. Ikonne, are explored. These stories reflect the changing social realities in modern Africa, addressing topics such as internet fraud and economic challenges.

Overall, African children's literature functions as a tool for socialization, teaching young readers the values, virtues, and responsibilities that are integral to their cultural contexts. Through stories of perseverance, honesty, and community, these works seek to cultivate positive traits in children ensuring that they grow up with a sense of moral duty and cultural awareness.

Conclusion

This study further enlightens the interaction between Vitamin B12, folic acid, and thyroid hormones in pregnant women, thus providing significant insights into their roles in different trimesters. The findings show the great influence of these vitamins on thyroid health, thereby necessitating personalized healthcare approaches during pregnancy. The results are, therefore, in direct opposition to previous assumptions and call for consideration of individual nutritional needs and health profiles. Although the study focuses on specific case studies and interviews, which limits its generalizability, it lays the groundwork for future research that explores broader population samples and quantitative methodologies. In addressing critical gaps in existing research, this work contributes to both theoretical advancements and practical guidelines for prenatal care, supporting healthier pregnancy outcomes through informed dietary and supplement strategies.

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