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**Africentric Perception of Intelligent Behaviours and the Use of Folklore to
Facilitate Moral and Interpersonal Skills in Children**

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Abstract

Purpose: One of the current interests in developmental psychology is the impact of culture on cognitive development. This paper is built on a study whose purpose was to investigate how Nso people of the North West Region of Cameroon perceive intelligent behaviours in children and the cultural strategies for facilitating these behaviours. The study highlighted how folklore influences the Nso child's ability to make moral judgements and develop interpersonal skills as forms of intelligent behaviours.

Methodology: A concurrent nested mixed research design was used for the study which called for both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection, through the use of a questionnaire and interview guide. The sample was composed of 33 children and 35 parents in three villages in *Nkum* subdivision in Bui division. The qualitative data were analysed using content and narrative analysis. Descriptive statistics were used for quantitative data. Data was presented using tables, charts and conceptual maps.

Findings: The following findings showed that by interpreting proverbs and folktales children are encouraged to practice virtues such as respect, honesty and compassion and discouraged from societal vices and equally learned various aspects of interpersonal skills such as Conflict resolution.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The study was underpinned by Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory of Cognitive Development (1978), Nsamenang's Social Ontogenetic Theory (1992), Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (1983, 1999) and Sternberg's Triarchic Theory of Intelligence (1985). It is recommended that educational programmes should inculcate the teaching and evaluation of native proverbs and folktales. Novels that embody these proverbs and folktales should be taught in schools as a means of preserving ethical values and development of other cognitive skills in child.

Keywords: *Intelligence, Folklore, Proverbs, Moral Behaviour, Interpersonal Skills*

INTRODUCTION

The development of social, moral and practical skills as aspects of intelligent behaviour is supported by Super and Harkness (1997) who introduced “the developmental niche framework” for directing research in different cultures and Ogbu (1994) who posited the “frame of reference” paradigm for understanding the differences in development within technologically advanced cultures and those that are not. Super and Harkness (1997) and Ogbu (1994) suggest that different cultures have different kinds of intelligence and these differences are embedded in the eco-cultural and social environment in which the child is nurtured.

Historically, the concept of Intelligence has witnessed a lot of psychological development. In the past, emphasis was laid on the psychometric approach to intelligence, dominated by the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) and General Intelligence Factor. Such intelligence quotient (IQ) tests include the Stanford-Binet, Raven's Progressive Matrices, the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale and the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children. Spearman (1904) is generally credited with defining general intelligence. Thurstone (1938) extended and generalized Spearman's method of factor analysis into what is called the multiple factor analysis. Thurstone's research led him to propose a model of intelligence that included seven unrelated factors (that is, verbal comprehension, word fluency, number facility, spatial visualization, associative memory, perceptual speed and reasoning, referred to as the Primary Mental Abilities. (Becker, 2003).

In a critical review of the adult testing literature, Cattell (1943) proposed two types of cognitive abilities in a revision of Spearman's concept of general intelligence. Fluid intelligence (Gf) which he considered as the ability to discriminate and perceive relations and crystallized intelligence (Gc) which is described as the ability to discriminate relations that had been established originally through Gf, but no longer required the identification of the relation (commonly assessed using information or vocabulary tests). Development in psychometric intelligence has received a lot of criticisms in recent years and has given birth to theories of multiple intelligences championed by Howard Gardner and Robert Sternberg.

Howard Gardner's (1983, 1999) theory of multiple intelligences led him to break intelligence down into at least eight different components: logical, linguistic, spatial, musical, kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal (Gardner, 1983) and naturalist intelligences (Gardner, 1999). He argues that psychometric tests address only linguistic, logical and some aspects of spatial intelligence.

Sternberg (1985) proposed the triarchic theory of intelligence to provide a more comprehensive description of intellectual competence than traditional differential or cognitive theories of human ability. The triarchic theory describes three fundamental aspects of intelligence: analytic intelligence, creative intelligence and practical intelligence. The triarchic theory does not argue against the validity of a general intelligence factor; instead, the theory posits that general intelligence is part of analytic intelligence, and only by considering all three aspects of intelligence can the full range of intellectual functioning be fully understood.

Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory of cognitive development, has led to increased interest in the relationship between culture and intelligence. According to him intelligence is always displayed in a cultural context. The acts that constitute intelligent behavior vary from one culture to another. Intelligence may be conceived in different ways in different cultures (Serpell, 2000;

Sternberg, 2004). Such differences are important, because cultures evaluate their members, as well as members of other cultures, in terms of their own conceptions of intelligence. Barbara Rogoff (1990) inspired by Vygotsky's theory emphasizes this point when she says that children's cognitive development must be understood not only as taking place with social support in interaction with others, but also as involving the development of skill with socio-historically developed tools that mediate intellectual activity.

Contextually, measures of intelligence in Africa, have found that people in non-Western cultures often have ideas about intelligence that differ from those that have shaped Western intelligence tests. Commenting on cross-cultural differences in intellectual behaviours, Serpell (1993, 1994) states that in western cultures, people tend to view intelligence as a means for individuals to devise categories and to engage in rational debate, while in Eastern cultures, people see it as a way for members of a community to recognize contradiction and complexity and to play their social roles successfully. In the same vein, when rural parents in Africa talk about the intelligence of children, they refer to social responsibility.

The Africentric notion and understanding of intelligent behavior stresses social competence and responsibility rather than academic competence. For instance, Grigorenko (2001) have found that ideas about intelligence among the Luo people of Kenya consist of four broad concepts: riekó, which corresponds to the Western idea of academic intelligence, but also includes specific skills; luoro, which includes social qualities like respect, responsibility and consideration; paro, or practical thinking; and winjo, or comprehension. Only one of the four--rieko--is correlated with traditional Western measures of intelligence. Research on these differences provide support for some of the more diversified definitions of intelligence, such as those proposed by Sternberg (1985) in his Triarchic Theory of Intelligence and Gardner (1983, 1999) in his Theory of Multiple Intelligences.

There is therefore the need to re-emphasize the role played by culture in shaping what constitutes intellectual behavior within African cultures. This paper is built on a study whose purpose was to investigate how Nso people of the North West Region of Cameroon perceive intelligent behaviours in children and the cultural strategies for facilitating these behaviours. The study highlighted how folklore influences the Nso child's ability to make moral judgements and develop interpersonal skills as forms of intelligent behaviours.

Conceptual and Theoretical Considerations

Intelligence

Numerous definitions of and hypotheses about intelligence have been proposed even before the twentieth century, with no consensus yet reached by scholars. Within the discipline of psychology, various approaches to human intelligence have been adopted. In the past the psychometric approach has been especially familiar to the general public, dominated by the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) and General Intelligence Factor (Spearman, 1904). The IQs of a large enough population are calculated so that they conform to a normal distribution. Despite the variety of concepts of intelligence, the approach to understanding intelligence with most supporters, and published research over the longest period of time is based on psychometric testing. Such intelligence quotient (IQ) tests include the Stanford-Binet, Raven's Progressive Matrices, the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale and the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children (Becker, 2003).

Charles Spearman (1904) is generally credited with defining general intelligence. Based on the results of a series of studies collected in Hampshire, England, Spearman concluded that there was a common function (or group of functions) across intellectual activities including what he called intelligence (that is school rank, which Spearman thought of as "present efficiency" in school courses; the difference between school rank and age, which was conceptualized as "native capacity;" teacher ratings; and peer ratings provided by the two oldest students, which was termed "common sense") and sensory discriminations (that is, discrimination of pitch, brightness, and weight). This common function became known as "g" or general intelligence. To objectively determine and measure general intelligence, Spearman invented the first technique of factor analysis (the method of Tetrad Differences) as a mathematical proof of the Two-Factor Theory. The factor analytic results indicated that every variable measured a common function to varying degrees, which led Spearman to develop the somewhat misleadingly named Two-Factor Theory of Intelligence. The Two-Factor Theory of Intelligence holds that every test can be divided into a "g" factor and an "s" factor. The g-factor measures the "general" factor or common function among ability tests. The s-factor measures the "specific" factor unique to a particular ability test. Spearman's g-factor account for positive correlations among any cognitive ability tests.

Thurstone (1938) extended and generalized Spearman's method of factor analysis into what is called the Centroid method and which became the basis for modern factor analysis. Thurstone demonstrated that Spearman's one common factor method (Spearman's method yielded only a single factor) was a special case of his multiple factor analysis. Thurstone's research led him to propose a model of intelligence that included seven orthogonal (unrelated) factors (that is, verbal comprehension, word fluency, number facility, spatial visualization, associative memory, perceptual speed and reasoning) referred to as the Primary Mental Abilities.

In a critical review of the adult testing literature, Cattell (1943) found that a considerable percentage of intelligence tests that purported to measure adult intellectual functioning had all of the trappings of using college students in their development. To account for differences between children/adolescents and adults, which past theory did not address, Cattell proposed two types of cognitive abilities in a revision of Spearman's concept of general intelligence. Fluid intelligence (Gf) was hypothesized as the ability to discriminate and perceive relations (For instance, analogical and syllogistic reasoning), and crystallized intelligence (Gc) was hypothesized as the ability to discriminate relations that had been established originally through Gf, but no longer required the identification of the relation (commonly assessed using information or vocabulary tests). In addition, fluid intelligence was hypothesized to increase until adolescence and then to slowly decline, and crystallized intelligence increases gradually and stays relatively stable across most of adulthood until it declines in late adulthood.

Despite the developments of psychometric intelligence, it has received a lot of criticisms within recent years. Critics of the psychometrics point out that intelligence is often more complex and broader in conception than what is measured by IQ tests. Furthermore, skeptics argue that even though tests of mental abilities are correlated, people still have unique strengths and weaknesses in specific areas. Consequently Gardner (1983) and Sternberg (1985) argue that psychometric theorists over-emphasized g, despite the fact that g was defined so as to encompass all inter-correlated capabilities and skills. A number of critics have challenged the relevance of psychometric intelligence in the context of everyday life. There have also been controversies over

genetic factors in intelligence, particularly questions regarding the relationship between race and intelligence and sex and intelligence. Another controversy in the field is how to interpret the increases in test scores that have occurred over time. These criticisms gave birth to theories of multiple intelligences championed by Howard Gardner and Robert Sternberg.

Howard Gardner's (1983, 1999) theory of multiple intelligences, is based on studies not only of normal children and adults but also by studies of gifted individuals (including so-called "savants"), of persons who have suffered brain damage, and of individuals from diverse cultures. This led Gardner (1983) to break intelligence down into at least eight different components: logical, linguistic, spatial, musical, kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalist intelligences (Gardner, 1999). He argues that psychometric tests address only linguistic and logical plus some aspects of spatial intelligence. A major criticism of Gardner's theory is that it has never been tested, or subjected to peer review, by Gardner or anyone else, and indeed that it is unfalsifiable.

Sternberg (1985) proposed the triarchic theory of intelligence to provide a more comprehensive description of intellectual competence than traditional differential or cognitive theories of human ability. The triarchic theory describes three fundamental aspects of intelligence. Analytic intelligence comprises the mental processes through which intelligence is expressed. Creative intelligence is necessary when an individual is confronted with a challenge that is nearly, but not entirely, novel or when an individual is engaged in automatizing the performance of a task. Practical intelligence is bound in a sociocultural milieu and involves adaptation to, selection of, and shaping of the environment to maximize fit in the context. The triarchic theory does not argue against the validity of a general intelligence factor; instead, the theory posits that general intelligence is part of analytic intelligence, and only by considering all three aspects of intelligence can the full range of intellectual functioning be fully understood.

More recently, the triarchic theory has been updated and renamed the Theory of Successful Intelligence by Sternberg. Intelligence is defined as an individual's assessment of success in life by the individual's own (idiographic) standards and within the individual's sociocultural context. Success is achieved by using combinations of analytical, creative, and practical intelligence. The three aspects of intelligence are referred to as processing skills. The processing skills are applied to the pursuit of success through what were the three elements of practical intelligence: adapting to, shaping of, and selecting of one's environments. The mechanisms that employ the processing skills to achieve success include utilizing one's strengths and compensating or correcting for one's weaknesses.

The African Cultural Content of Intellectual Behaviour

Illumined by Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences and Sternberg's triarchic theory of intelligence and based on studies carried out by Serpell (1994) in Zambia, Grigorenko (2001) and Sternberg (2001) in Kenya, we shall review four major components of intellectual behavior within cultures in Africa. These include; the child's acquisition of moral values and the ability to sustain interpersonal relationships.

Moral Values

Moral development can be defined as a change in people's sense of justice and of what is right and wrong, and in their behaviour related to moral issues. (Feldman, 2003). This involves how people reason, behave and feel when confronted with moral problems. It can therefore be inferred that

moral development is not limited to one particular domain; rather it embodies tenets of the cognitive, behavioural and emotive theories of human development.

In African Society, like other societies in the world, ethical principles are of two types: positive and negative. The positive values include justice, gratitude, honesty, loyalty, truthfulness, tolerance, responsibility, hard work, cooperation, generosity, kindness, fidelity to one's duty (Ayantayo, 1999). The society expects its members to apply these values to all social relations. Conversely, negative values, which are just direct opposites of positive values, consist of actions and ways of behaviour which are considered wrong and which people should abstain from. They include idleness, laziness, injustice, selfishness, greed, avarice, intolerance, stealing, exploitation, oppression, hatred, falsehood, dishonesty, irresponsibility and many other social vices (Brandt, 1961).

According to Kohlberg (1984) moral development is embedded in moral thinking (reasoning) and unveils itself in stages. His studies are based on interviews made primarily with male children, adolescents and adults on their responses to what he terms moral dilemmas. Kohlberg insists that changes in cognitive development, give and take relationship with parents and peers are essential factors that promote and develop advanced moral thinking in children. Kohlberg further suggests that moral development takes place in three levels. These include the pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional levels of moral development. Each of these levels is composed of two stages, making a total of six stages.

Kohlberg's theory is practically applicable within the African context because just as the child within Kohlberg's framework needs to think through moral dilemmas, the child within the African context need to think and make moral judgements from cultural folktales and proverbs so as to understand and practice what is generally accepted by society to be morally right or wrong. Within cultures in the African context, society is free to pass judgement on behaviour of people in the society. This is done to protect and foster ethical values of the society. Ethical judgements of these values are concerned with actions or kinds of actions that seek to uphold or destroy the moral values. Ethical judgement is possible after a careful ethical analysis of an action. Ethical analysis according to Niebuhr (1963) embraces evaluating moral values, goals, purpose and moral claims and aspirations, underlying human thought or actions. (Niebuhr, 1963). Ethical analysis goes hand in hand with ethical dimension of an action in which a person seeks to know ethical content of or ethical values inherent in an action such as speech, communication, etc. The major concern of ethics is the examination of implications which an action has on individuals and the entire society; hence, such ethical questions: Who is performing an action, what action does he perform, why is he performing it and what are the implications of the action for him (the performer) and for others (that is, people whom the action is directed to)? In all, every society expects its members to conform to the approved standards of behaviours.

Within cultures in Africa, Ethics and Morality are highly valued as important aspects of intellectual behavior. For instance, the virtues of respect for community hierarchy, obedience to parents and elders, sharing with others, good dressing habits, morning salutations and care for ageing parents are greatly upheld within the African context. These moral values are culturally transmitted to children through oral language by the use of cultural folktales, proverbs, riddles and metaphors out of which the child is expected to draw out moral significances.

Hence moral development in children is influenced with use of folktales, proverbs, riddles and metaphors. These forms of folklore, have inbuilt moral messages which children are supposed to diagnose and internalize. For instance the Nso of the Northwest region of Cameroon have a proverb as *Mbe yo yii kuy shaa kitu*. Literally, this means that “The shoulder never grows higher than the head”. In moral development, children are expected to interpret the moral lesson from the proverb, which means that “You have to respect and obey your elders because they are older than you”.

Interpersonal Skills

This involves the child’s ability to make and sustain healthy relationship with peers and other members of the community through the exhibition of pro-social intelligent behavior. Commenting on interpersonal relationships as an aspect of intellectual behavior Gardner (1983) considers interpersonal relationships as the ability to communicate and engage in effective social relationships with others.

Within the African context, Nyota and Mapara (2008) reveal that through games and play songs with peers, children socialize themselves into acceptable interpersonal relationships. These include the child’s ability to; give and receive help from peers, keep friends and playmates, manage conflict, learn future gender roles, manage success and failure, live and work together with others, participate in community tasks, celebrate with others and feel for others in times of worry and distress.

Folklore as a Strategy for Facilitating Moral and Interpersonal Skills in Children

One of the cultural tools that is used by parents, older siblings and elders to socialize the African child into intellectual behaviors is folklore. The role of language in intellectual development has been highlighted by Vygotsky. Words, according to Vygotsky (1978), are part of the scaffold. First, internal dialogue, or private speech, helps people to develop new ideas. Young children usually utter private speech aloud. They review what they know, explain events to themselves, and decide what comes next. Second, language promotes thought as the mediator of the social interaction that is vital to learning. The social mediation function of speech happens during both explicit instruction and during casual conversation. Language permits a person to enter and cross the zone of proximal development. Words bridge the child’s current understanding and what is almost understood.

According to Gyekye (1995), stories (folktales) and proverbs are primary ways through which a great deal of African philosophical thought, knowledge and wisdom has been taught. Pre-literate African culture was characterized by an oral tradition that found expression in stories, folktales, anecdotes, proverbs, and parables that provoked a great deal of reflection. Most of the African knowledge, myths, philosophies, liturgies, songs, and sayings have been handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. Through these oral media preserved, more or less accurately, children are educated on the people’s conduct and moral values.

Folktale has been given many definitions by many scholars of different orientations. Its definition depends on its functions in a society and the way the narrator and the audience think of it at the time of performance. For instance, according to Akporobaro (2001) folktale is an imaginative narrative (story) in prose form. The story that constitutes a folktale may have a basis in real life, but generally the story is an imaginative recreation of a memorable experience that is intended essentially to entertain rather than to record history or social experience. A folktale may be

believed. Generally, however, they are considered to be untrue stories, and hence not objects of serious belief. Also, Hagan (1988) provides a comprehensive and critical list of the technical features of a folktale: It has a literary convention expressed in the scheme of formal features: the introductory statements; the body of the tale interspersed with songs; the moral or etiological conclusion; the narrator-audience interaction; the use of language characterised chiefly by repetition and resort to ideophones; the role of songs to punctuate sections of the story and to advance the plot in some cases.

Apart from folktales, proverb is another significant medium of indigenous communication in African society. It occurs informally in day to day verbal communication or conversation (Olatunji, 1984). In fact, according to Ikenga-Metuh (1992), proverbs spring spontaneously from the people. They are voxpopuli... in profound sense and consequently, should be accepted as a true index of what a people regard as true and are interpretative of the principles of life and conduct. Proverbs are therefore, trustworthy witness of the social, political, ethical and religious ideals of the people among whom they originate. In the words of Olatunji, proverbs serve as social characters to praise what the society considers to be virtues such as tolerance, responsibility, dedication, love, discipline, justice etc. (Olatunji, 1984). In the same way, proverbs are used to condemn what the society considered injustice, intolerance, destruction, jealousy, envy, hatred, sexual immorality among others (Ajibola, 1947). For example, hard work is praised and laziness condemned in the samples of Yoruba proverbs. Atelewo eni kii tannije. meaning One's own palm does not deceive one. That is, every man must work for his material success for if neighbours are not ready to help one hand does through hard work. This proverb extols the virtue of industry or hard work. On laziness, a Yoruba proverb says: Iponri ole kii ni laari Ojoojumo lakitiyan nba. The lazy man's destiny does not prosper, it is daily that trouble besets it. This indicates that a lazy man always gets into trouble. From this point, we can argue that while proverb communicates ethical values of society, a person who speaks it becomes an agent of articulating ethical values of society in an informal manner.

Folktales and proverbs can be understood as metaphors to guide moral choice and self-examination because, when reflected upon, they act as mirrors for seeing things in a particular way. More than any theoretical discussion or philosophical writing, they throw light on the concrete reality of lived experience; they serve as important pedagogical devices because they provide experiential case material on which pedagogical reflection is possible (Manen, 1990). As learners break into (analyze) the proverbs or stories they are able to reflect on the meanings and implications embedded in the experiences.

Theoretical Framework

In this section, two theories relevant to the study are reviewed. These include Sternberg's Triarchic Theory of Human Intelligence and Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory of Cognitive Development.

Sternberg's Triarchic Theory of Human Intelligence

Sternberg (1985) is one of the first psychologists to posit a different view of intelligence that is contrary to the unidirectional conception of intelligence as based on academic success measured by traditional IQ tests. According to Sternberg, intelligence is multidirectional and it is composed of three components.

His triarchic theory includes three facets.

Analytical Intelligence: This is similar to the standard psychometric definition of intelligence, for instance, as measured by Academic problem solving: analogies and puzzles, and corresponds to his earlier componential intelligence. According to Sternberg, the componential facet of intelligence reflects how an individual relates to his internal world. Furthermore, Analytical Intelligence (Academic problem-solving skills) is based on the joint operations of metacomponents and performance components and knowledge acquisition components of intelligence.

Creative Intelligence: This involves insights, synthesis and the ability to react to novel situations and stimuli. Sternberg considers this as the experiential aspect of intelligence and reflects how an individual connects the internal world to external reality. Sternberg considers the Creative facet to consist of the ability which allows people to think creatively and that which allows people to adjust creatively and effectively to new situations. Sternberg believes that more intelligent individuals will also move from consciously learning in a novel situation to automating the new learning so that they can attend to other tasks.

Practical Intelligence: This involves the ability to grasp, understand and deal with everyday tasks. This is the Contextual aspect of intelligence and reflects how the individual relates to the external world about him or her. Sternberg states that Practical Intelligence is purposive adaptation to, shaping of, and selection of real-world environments relevant to one's life. Purposive means that practical intelligence is directed towards goals, however vague or subconscious they may be. This means that practical intelligence is indicated by one's attempts to adapt to one's environment. Practical Intelligence can be said to be intelligence that operates in the real world.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Cognitive Development

One of the first attempts to consider intellectual or cognitive development as a construct of socialization was made by the Russian psychologist Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky. According to Vygotsky (1978), individual intellectual development cannot be understood without reference to the social milieu in which the child is embedded. For Vygotsky, children's cognitive development must be understood not only as taking place with social support interaction with others, but also as involving the development of skill with socio-historical development tools that mediate intellectual activity. Hence, where Piaget looked at developing children and saw junior scientists, working by themselves to develop an independent understanding of the world, Vygotsky saw cognitive apprentices, learning from master teachers the skills that are important in the child's culture (Feldman, 2003).

Vygotsky argued that children's efforts to understand their world are embedded in a social context. They strive to understand their universe by asking questions. For instance, "How do machines work?" "Why is the sky blue?" "Why does the weather change?" In answering such questions, adults guide a child's growth in important ways. They not only provide instruction but also foster the child's motivation and interest. Adults present challenges for new learning. Thus, in many respects, the young child is an *apprentice in thinking*. Parents, child-care workers, and older siblings act as mentors stimulating intellectual growth. Children learn to think through *guided participation* in social experiences that explore their world. Vygotsky argued that what children can do with the help of others may be more indicative of their mental development than what they can do alone (Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygotsky maintained that for each developing individual there is a *zone of proximal development*, a range of skills that the child can perform with assistance but not quite independently. How and when children master important skills is partly linked to the willingness of others to provide *scaffolding*, or sensitive structuring of children's learning encounters.

METHODOLOGY

The concurrent-nested research design was used in conducting this study. In this light, both quantitative and qualitative research paradigms were adopted in the study. The qualitative data was nested and used to further explain the findings from the quantitative data. Data was collected using a validated and reliable questionnaire as well as an interview guide. The study was carried out in Nso is located in Bui Division in the North-West Region of Cameroon. The target population of this study included the parents and children living in their various house hold. In this regard 33 children and 35 parents were chosen for the study. A purposive sampling technique was adopted first to choose the various settlements and the participants of the study. Quantitative data was analysed using multiple response set and percentages. Qualitative data was analysed using thematic content analysis. The findings were presented using tables, charts and conceptual maps. In relation to ethical considerations anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study.

FINDINGS

A) Some Common Proverbs That Children Know and Their Lessons

Table 1: Proverbs, English Translations and Moral Lessons

Proverb	grounding	English translation	Moral lesson
Mbe yo yii kuy shaa kitu	15	The shoulder never grows higher than the head	You have to respect and obey your elders because they are older than you.
Kiwo ki loo yo kibiy, kibiy ki waa yo kiwo	8	When the hand is rubbing the thigh, the thigh should be rubbing the hand	The good done to someone should be reciprocated. One good turn deserves another
A yo yii yo fon, a sor wo e nsay	5	One never feeds the Fon and wipes his hands on the ground	When one does a good thing he expects rewards
Aa soosi nwa ji melaa, a yen melaa	4	If you provoke bees in a hive you will receive their reactions	If you invite trouble to yourself, it will affect you
Bvey nji yi shem wuna bvey long badze ye bver vikuhu	6	If a sheep enters friendship with a goat then it can eat coco yams	If a good person joins bad company he will be influence by the bad company, thus guard against bad company
Wir bung kitem, la wu yo tse ndev	9	When you lack a calabash don't dirty the water.	It is selfish to lack a thing and not like another.

B) Some Common Folktales that Children Know and Moral Lessons

Table 2: Folktales and Moral Lessons

Folktales	Grounding	Lesson
The story of Kushu and kongnyuy. The brother and sister who went to harvest flowers.	25	The story teaches us not to be jealous of others. I should not be jealous of my friends who can do some things that I cannot do
The story of the raise between hair and chameleon	4	I should not minimize any body. I should be humble and I should not insult others because I think I am better than them
The story of the dog and cat and how they had a catch of a giant rat	5	That dishonesty to a friend brings long lasting rivalry and antagonism
The story of the two daughters who wanted to get married	24	Respect, compassionate, patience, perseverance, unselfishness, kindness.
The story of the tortoise and the pig	24	It is not good to be angry with a friend

C) Folktales/Proverbs and the Development of Moral Judgements in Children

Children's ability to make moral judgements was examined using three indicators, which included respect for elders, sense of sharing and sense of honesty.

Respect for elders:

Three indicators were used to examine respect for elders. These included the Nso' child's ability to address elders correctly, seating position in the midst of elders and reception of gifts from elders.

Table 3: Address of Elders

English name	Native appellation	Grounding
Father	Ba-ah	33
Mother	Mami	33
Grand father	Ta-ah	31
Grand mother	Ya-ah	31
Aunt	Wan jemir	1
uncle	Wan jemir	1
Traditional ruler	Shey, fai, shufai, fon	29

All 33 children indicated that their parents were not to be addressed by their names. They supplied the native appellation for parents and grandparents. Nineteen children knew how to address some traditional title holders while only one child was able to articulate the native appellation for uncles and aunts. All the children (100%) knew at least one of the polite ways of addressing the elders.

Table 4: Seating Position in the Midst of Elders

Seating position	grounding	Sample Quotations
Seating position that shows respect	10	<i>“I will seat behind the elders”. “I will just seat and watch them from a distance”. “I will seat and place my hands on my knees”.</i>
Seating position that shows lack of respect	0	

Number of children without any response to seating position: 23. Only 10 children answered the question and all 10 (100%) demonstrated positions that show respect for elders. The rest of the 23 children indicated that they would rather offer their seats to elders and for most of the time go out of the sitting room unless their parents ask them to stay. This however still showed a sign of respect for elders.

Table 5: Reception of Gifts from Elders

Modes of reception	Grounding
Two hands	33
One hand	0

All 33 (100%) children indicated the right mode of reception of gifts from elders, which is to receive with two hands. In general the data showed that all children (100%) responded positively to the indicators that measured respect for elders.

Sense of Sharing

Table 6: Children’s Modes of Sharing with Others

Modes of sharing	Grounding	Sample quotations
Equality	9	<i>“I will give him one and then share another one with him to make equal”</i>
Cares for others than self	8	<i>“I will give him three and have one”. “I will give him two oranges”.</i>
Concern for others	9	<i>“I will give him another orange”</i>
Conditional concern	5	<i>“I will give him/her another if he/she needs one”. “I will give another one on the condition that he/she asks”. “I will give I he is also ready to share with me next time”.</i>
No concern for others	2	<i>“I will not need to give him since he already has two fruits”. “It is my turn to have more than friends so I cannot give him”.</i>

Thirty-one of the 33 children were willing to share their fruits with peers but this was in different degrees of magnitude. Nine children were ready for an equal division of the fruits. 8 children preferred their peers to have more fruits than they have. 9 children would share with their peers but would prefer to have more fruits than their peers. Five children were ready to share but with conditions. Despite the different ways of sharing it can be concluded that 93.93% of the children were willing to share with friends while 2 (6.06%) children were not willing to share.

Sense of Honesty**Table 7: Children's Sense of Honesty**

Behavior	Grounding	Sample Quotations
Honest	20	<i>"I explained to my father what happened. I told my mother that I was the one". "I immediately report myself to my parents". "I tried to repair the item but I later told my parents".</i>
Dishonest	13	<i>"I did not tell them anything"</i>

From the data 20 (60.60%) children were honest to their parents while 13 (39.39%) children were dishonest. As far as moral judgements are concerned the summary findings indicate that an average of 28 of the children, that is 84.84% were good in all three indicators of moral judgements while an average of 5 of the children, that is 15.15% were not good in all three indicators of moral judgements since 2 showed no sense of sharing and 13 children showed signs of dishonesty. Nevertheless these children who failed in sharing skills and honesty were good in respect for elders which shows that all children (100%) had a good moral judgements in at least one of the three indicators of moral judgements.

The data of parents' evaluation of children revealed that 78.85% of parents agreed that their children had a good sense of moral judgements while 21.14% disagreed. In general all parents (100%) agreed that their children were good in at least one of the indicators of moral judgement (see appendix 6 (d) for table of statistics).

D) Folktales/Proverbs and the Development of Interpersonal Skills in Children

The development of interpersonal skills was examined with the use of five indicators. These include a sense of greetings, cautious behavior towards strangers, ability to sustain friends, attitude towards defeat and a sense of conflict resolution.

Sense of Greetings**Table 8: Children's Sense of Greetings**

Behaviour	Grounding	Sample quotations
Greeting	33	<i>"The first thing I do when I see a person I have not seen since morning is that I always greet the person".</i>
No greeting	0	

All 33 children (100%) showed a high sense of greeting by testifying that they would greet anyone they meet for the first time in the day.

Cautious Behavior towards Strangers**Table 9: Cautious Behavior towards Strangers**

Behaviour	Grounding	Sample Quotations
Cautious	33	<i>"I will thank the person and then show the gift to my parents". "I will show my parents and tell them who gave me the gift and then ask them what to do with the gift".</i>
incautious	0	

All 33 children (100%) demonstrated a high sense of caution as they all stated that if they receive a gift from a stranger they will thank the person and first show their parents.

Ability to Sustain Friends

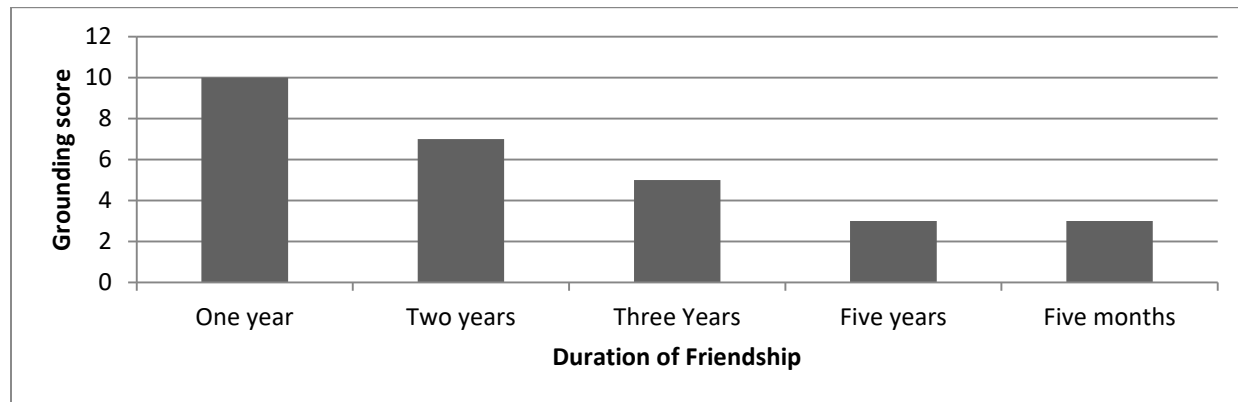


Figure 1: Duration of Friendship (Playmates)

Children showed that they had been in friendship ranging from a period of five months to five years, with one year and two years registering the highest grounding scores of 8 and 5 respectively. Thus 30 children (90.90%) were seen to have sustained the same friends for at least a year while 3 children (9.09%) are in friendship for five months. Hence all children (100%) were able to sustain their relationships for at least some period of time.

Attitude towards Defeat

Table 10: Children’s Attitude towards Defeat

Attitude	Grounding	Sample quotations
Acceptance	17	<i>“I will hope to that I will win next time”. “I will accept my defeat and promise to win next time”.</i>
Denial	16	<i>“I usually feel very bad and refuse to play again”. “At times I am very angry and go quietly”. “I usually feel bad and disappointed. At times I stop playing”.</i>

From the data, 17 children (51.51%) conceived defeat in good faith hoping to do well next time while 16 children (48.48%) were resentful to defeat.

Conflict Resolution**Table 11: Methods of Conflict Resolution**

Methods of conflict resolution	grounding	Sample Quotations
Aggressive	11	<i>“I will do everything to prove to them that I am correct, if not the game ends”. “At times we fight but after we will start to play again”. “At times we normally quarrel but after we begin to play again”.</i>
Peaceful	10	<i>“I will say that the game should be counsel and restarted”. “We normally ask an elderly person to solve the problem”.</i>
Avoidance	12	<i>“I will be calm and allow them to do what they want. I did not do anything”. “I will leave and go home”. “I will allow the game and go home”. “I usually stop playing with them and to our house”. “I will end the argument but deep within me I know I am correct”.</i>

Three methods of conflict resolution were found in children. These include aggressiveness, peaceful and avoidance, with grounding scores of 11, 10 and 12 respectively. If peaceful and avoidance methods are considered as proper and acceptable ways of conflict resolution and aggressive methods are considered to be improper and unacceptable then 22 children (66.66%) had the ability to manage conflicts well while 11 (33.33%) had poor attitudes towards conflict resolution.

In general 83.63% of the children were good in all five indicators of interpersonal skills while 16.36% were not good in all the indicators due to the 16 children and 11 children who had poor attitudes towards defeat in games and conflict resolution. Nevertheless all children (100%) were found to have at least two or more interpersonal skills.

In relation to parents' evaluation of children's interpersonal skills 77.14% agreed that their children possessed all the skills while 22.85% disagreed. Nonetheless all parents (100%) agreed that their children possess at least one of the indicators of interpersonal skills

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**Discussions**

It was found that Nso native folktales that children knew were both human stories and those that personified animal characters. While these stories like Wanyeto and Nkuyam portrayed the character trait of each animal they equally sound some moral lessons for children. This falls in line with findings recorded by Yatta (2007) amongst the Mende people of Sierra Leone. According to Yatta, stories that personified animal characters were often told, and these stories, while explaining the peculiar trait of each animal, also transmitted the virtues valued by the society. For example, stories about kasiloi (the spider), always taught youngsters about the unwanted consequences of traits such as greed, egotism, disobedience, or cunning.

From Nso' native proverbs Nso' children learn to practice moral virtues like respect for elders, humility, compassion, kindness, patience and guard against vices like greed, trouble making, bad

company, selfishness, jealousy, dishonesty and anger. Olatunji (1985) buttresses this point when he says that proverbs serve as social characters to praise what the society considers to be virtues such as tolerance, responsibility, dedication, love, discipline, justice etc. In the same way, proverbs are used to condemn what the society considered injustice, intolerance, destruction, jealousy, envy, hatred and sexual immorality among others (Ajibola, 1947).

From the findings, the teaching of proverbs and folktales was not only done by parents but generally by adult population of the society like grandparents, older siblings, uncles and aunts. Yatta (2007) confirms this amongst the Mende of Sierra Leone that adults would gather youngsters around a fire at night and tell them great stories and legends about the past that helped the youngsters to grasp the prevailing ethical standards of their community.

From engaging in proverbs and folktales the findings revealed that Nso children were able to learn interpersonal skills such as conflict resolution through self examination, sustenance of friendship through honesty in play, honesty and acceptance of defeat, responsibility and compassion towards one another, performance of future roles like cooking and care for younger ones, cooperation and interaction with friends. They can also learn to keep friends and playmates. They can learn to manage and deal with those playmates who are not always understanding and self-sacrificing, for instance one who is always quick to denounce friendship, “Hausi shamwari yangu futi” (You are after all not my friend). These skills have consequences that teach the children about social interaction from youth to their adult years.

Conclusion

The study revealed that children had knowledge and intelligent behavior in various aspect of daily life though in some instances they were not taught these skills at family level. We can then conclude from this study that the education a child does not only depend on parents but equally on the general social context (society) or environment in which the child is placed. Hence starting with the family, children quickly become part of an expanding social network; soon they must relate to relatives, the neighbourhood and institutions such as the school and church and increasingly become functional members of the community, state and country. Each social context – from the immediate family through the human community and ecoculture at large – plays a key role in child development (Nsamenang 2005).

Recommendation

Educational programmes should inculcate the teaching and evaluation of native proverbs and folktales. Novels that embody these proverbs and folktales should be taught in schools as a means of preserving ethical values and development of other cognitive skills in child.

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