



A Cognitive View on the Impact of Folktales on Children's Thinking

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Abstract

Folklore has been a vital aspect of human culture, passing wisdom, morals, and values through generations. Folktales, blending reality and fantasy, shape children's cognitive and emotional development by imparting moral values, fostering empathy, and enhancing creativity. Stories like *Cinderella* and *Snow White* teach resilience, while tales such as *The Tortoise and the Hare* emphasize perseverance. Folktales also address fears, enabling children to process emotions healthily. However, some stories risk transmitting outdated stereotypes or frightening elements, necessitating parental guidance to interpret and adapt content appropriately. Dialogue between parents and children further enriches understanding and critical thinking. Folktales balance historical depth and modern relevance, connecting children to cultural heritage while encouraging contemporary problem-solving. Their vivid language, rich symbolism, and moral lessons serve as tools for emotional stability and social intelligence, but careful selection is essential to mitigate potential negative influences.

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Introduction

Folklore has been an essential and practical part of human culture for centuries, passed down through generations through myths, stories, and legends. Although folklore is sometimes regarded as a form of entertainment, its impact on the cognitive side of children is profound and far-reaching. The current article explores the influence of folklore on the development of children cognitively and how these stories shape their thinking about the world around them. For thousands of years, folktales have been part of societies' cultural and human identity. Therefore, they are not a means of entertainment but often constitute a path to ancient wisdom crossing from generation to generation. Being immersed in these tales rich in symbolism, children begin to acquire the features of understanding the world and absorb specific fundamental values such as courage, honesty, teamwork and others. But folk tales are not only about good and evil; they are more complex, as their meanings seep into the subconscious, gradually shaping the child's vision of moral values and life

What Are Folktales?

Folktales are not just a simple narration of events; they represent the essence of an accumulated human experience, carrying lessons, morals and judgments drawn from daily life and ancient myths. These stories are a balanced blend of reality and fantasy, where symbolic characters and strange events are used to convey society's values and educate new generations, as human values were only taught through them. Children, who are distinguished by their broad imagination, find in this oral heritage a haven for creativity and thinking. Although some may see folk tales as simple or old-fashioned, they actually contain multiple and complex levels of meaning, as they represent another side of reality, where behind the apparent events hide educational lessons that aim to teach children the moral values and social skills of that society.

The cognitive and psychological effects of folktales

Folktales are not just easy tools for entertainment, but they carry a psychological power capable of profoundly influencing

children's thinking and shaping their emotional responses. Such tales become an effective mechanism of enhancing children's emotional awareness and social intelligence by embodying various emotions such as joy, sadness, fear, and hope. For example, The stories of "Cinderella" and "Snow White," represent a symbol of men's ability to overcome challenges despite obstacles, and they convey an unmistakable message that suffering, no matter how difficult, can lead to positive results if we face it with courage and patience.

Additionally, by listening to stories relating to monsters or ghosts, which primarily reflect children's internal fears, children can realize that their fears can be overcome. Thus, those tales provide a safe framework through which they can absorb their feelings, deal with them healthily, and acquire constructive societal values.

Moreover, the psychological aspects of folktales do not include fear only; children also learn from heroic characters how to express self-confidence and courage. They know that fears are not the end of the road but rather the beginning of challenges and the search for solutions.

On the other hand, folk tales contribute to developing children's emotional intelligence by arousing feelings of empathy with characters. For example, when a child sees a hero suffering or a character being wronged, a sense of empathy and emotional participation is generated within him, which enhances his ability to understand the feelings of others and appreciate the challenges they face. In this way, folk tales are a powerful psychological means that enables children to build their emotional world healthily, encouraging them to deal with fears, maintain hope, and appreciate the feelings of others. It also develops their ability to think positively, which enhances their psychological health and emotional stability.

Moral values and behaviors acquired from folktales

The narration of folktales comprises profound educational lessons that strongly contribute to the formation of morals and values of children, as it teaches them that good heroes and ideas always triumph and that challenges and difficulties can be overcome with discipline, patience and perseverance. In the story "Laila and the Wolf", for example, children learn to beware of strangers, whereas the story "The Tortoise and the Hare" gives them the idea that perseverance is more necessary than speed to get success. "Shah Jahan and Mumtaz" provides us with the idea that real love is unforgettable. This story remains a symbol of eternal love.

The values included within those stories accumulate over time to become a practical part of the child's daily deeds and behaviors as children acquire their ability to make moral decisions and distinguish between good and evil from such stories.

Folktales are connected with grandmothers, characterized by their entertaining and exciting storytelling style. However, children found a means of joy and entertainment in these tales. Grandmothers depend on using proverbs and wisdom in their stories, which are intended to show principles and concepts based on morals and virtues, though some fictional tales negatively impact children's thinking. In their stories, some grandmothers focus on negative educational essence and highlight them without clarification, refinement or reform within the narrative format, which constitutes a negative factor in raising children, significantly since the information and events that make up the story may affect the

mental and moral formation of the recipient and his imagination and general behaviour.

The role of parents in selecting suitable folktales

Parents need to participate in this process, not only as storytellers but as guides and interpreters of what educational or instructive meanings the text may conceal. Parents play a crucial role in directing children towards stories promoting their positive values. Sometimes, parents' choice of the folktales may rely heavily on the age of their children due to the idea that such tales may contain elements that are inappropriate for young children.

After storytelling, dialogue is a significant part of the educational phase. When parents discuss the events of the story with their children, it enriches critical thinking and helps them understand values and concepts in a significant way. Through this dialogue, parents can discover whether the child has understood the valid message of the story or not. Dialogue enables parents to reinforce the virtual values their family wants to instill in the child and helps build a strong relationship based on understanding and trust. Though folk stories play an essential role in forming children's values, providing a balanced base between old and modern stories is important. Modern stories reflect contemporary issues and present new models that align with the present challenges, while folk stories provide historical and cultural depth that connects the child to his past and heritage.

Indeed, good parenting relies on diverse sources, and stories are one of these practical tools that help build a balanced mindset that combines ancient wisdom with modern-day visions.

Some properties of folktales

The style of folktales is characterized by using some beginnings like "was in the past" or "once upon a time in the past" and others. The folk tale also gives special similes to the girl, such as describing her as the moon, her black hair as the dark sky, her eyebrow like a crescent moon and her cheeks as apples or tomatoes. These similes deal directly with nature.

The language of the folk tale is pictorial, and the spirit interacts with it, in addition to simplicity, clarity and ease. Sometimes, some stories are written in the style of rhyme, in the whole story or in some of its parts; some other names and words have a fascinating power, especially if they are launched in a particular form or in poetic form, as in the tale of Ali Baba where the leading figure of the thieves roared (Open Semsem) to open the entry of the cave, as well as the tale of Shu Lam, Shu Lam, and in a story with the same title, where the owner of the house deceived the thieves, and made them believe that this ancient word meaning has a magical power to perform miracles.

As for the nature of dialogue in written folktales, its presence varies from one story to another, so we find that most of the tales that came from the tongue of animals of the stories of Kalila and Dimna and One Thousand Nights and A Night, they relied on dialogue as in the tale of The Deception.

On the other hand, many stories were recorded about women, portraying them in various ways: the caring mother, the treacherous, patient, loving woman, the witch, and the cruel stepmother. All of this was portrayed in the written folk tale. In the story of The Mother and the Disobedient Son, it is found that the mother hardly works worked to raise her only son\ daughter suffers from financial hardship. Obeying the

desires of his wife, who claimed to be sick and nothing would cure her except eating a piece of his mother's heart after she agreed with her lover to get rid of his mother. After he took her and slaughtered her, upon his return, he stumbled, and the heart said (May the name of God protect you). He was affected by this and discovered his wife's betrayal, so he killed her and himself. The tale was named after two contradictory images of women: the caring, patient, loving mother for her son who struggles and suffers, and the treacherous woman who does the impossible to achieve her goal, who is the son's wife. The stories that were written included their topics, in addition to women and craftsmen, as they "exploit the art of characterization," that is, drawing Human models that indicate a class, profession, or a specific type of behaviour, and the context of events, in turn, expresses a critical tendency.

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Challenges and potential negative impacts of some tales

Despite the benefits of folktales on children's thinking, some stories may include harmful or inappropriate moral messages for the present era. Sometimes, stories may comprise gender stereotypes or encourage brutal attitudes. Therefore, parents should be fully aware of the content of the folktales they narrate or introduce to their children and be ready to change any negative messages. Some stories may also contain frightening entities unsuitable for young children, such as monsters, ghosts or dead figures. Here, parents play a significant role in calming children's fears and clarifying the symbols present in the stories.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that folklore is a means of entertainment and an outstanding tool for children's cognitive development. The rich tapestry of tales, myths, and legends that constitute folklore can provide them with valuable insights into different cultures, traditions, and belief systems, ultimately enriching their cognitive growth and understanding of the world. Folktales may have good values taught to our children, or contain harmful or inappropriate thoughts that hurt children's behaviors. Thus, it is clear that parents must be fully aware of what to tell their children.

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