

Narrative Frameworks and Moral Pedagogy in Yoruba Folktale Performances During the Olojo Festival: Discourse Patterns in Intergenerational Storytelling

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ABSTRACT: This article examined Yoruba folktale performance as a discourse-based system of moral pedagogy within the ritual and cultural atmosphere of the Olojo Festival in Ile-Ife, Nigeria. While studies of Yoruba oral literature have often emphasized the educational significance of folktales, riddles, lullabies, songs, and other children's verbal arts, and while studies of Olojo have foregrounded its sacred, royal, and socio-religious importance, less attention has been given to the discourse patterns through which festival storytelling converts communal memory into intergenerational ethical instruction. Drawing on performance theory, social semiotics, and scholarship on African oral literature, the article argues that Yoruba folktale performances operate not merely as entertainment but as structured pedagogical events in which elders, children, families, and community audiences co-produce moral meaning. The study adopts a qualitative interpretive design based on critical synthesis of scholarly literature and discourse-analytic modelling of Yoruba storytelling conventions. It identifies five recurrent discourse patterns: ritualized opening and attention management, narrative sequencing of transgression and consequence, call-and-response participation, proverbial and musical moral condensation, and dialogic evaluation between elders and younger listeners. The article further shows that the Olojo Festival's symbolic emphasis on origin, authority, renewal, Ogun, Oduduwa, and communal continuity intensifies the moral force of folktale performance. It concludes that Yoruba folktales in festival contexts should be understood as performative classrooms where cultural heritage, ethical reasoning, language aesthetics, and communal identity are transmitted across generations. The article recommends systematic audiovisual documentation, corpus-based discourse analysis, and the incorporation of festival-based storytelling into indigenous education and cultural-preservation programmes

KEYWORDS: Yoruba folktales; Olojo Festival; moral pedagogy; intergenerational storytelling; oral performance; discourse analysis; Ile-Ife; indigenous education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Yoruba folktales occupy a central position in the moral, aesthetic, and pedagogical life of Yoruba-speaking communities. Known generally as *àlò*, folktales are not simply stories narrated for leisure; they are culturally patterned acts of verbal art through which elders dramatize the consequences of virtue and vice, invite children into communal reflection, and sustain a moral vocabulary grounded in everyday social relations. In traditional Yoruba settings, storytelling often occurs after the day's work, in compounds, family spaces, and communal gatherings where children and adults share a performative arena. Akanbi describes Yoruba moonlight tales as a domestic and communal practice in which children form a large part of the audience, elderly narrators guide the session, and neighbours may also participate (Akanbi). This setting already indicates that the folktale is not a private literary text but a public pedagogical event.

The Olojo Festival provides a particularly important cultural frame for examining such storytelling. Celebrated in Ile-Ife, the city widely represented in Yoruba cosmology as a place of origin, Olojo is associated with Ogun, Oduduwa, sacred kingship, ancestral remembrance, and the renewal of communal identity. Oladosu identifies Olojo as a communal festival attached to the worship of Ogun in Ile-Ife and emphasizes that Yoruba festivals combine oral expression, drumming, dance, invocation, and ritual action (45–48). Adedayo, Folorunso, Bashiru, and Falabi similarly present Olojo as a festival rooted in Yoruba mythology, connected to the descent of Oduduwa, the creation of the earth, the authority of the Ooni, and the cultural memory of the Yoruba people (40–42). In such a context, storytelling is not incidental. It belongs to the broader ecology of oral performance through which a community remembers its origins, interprets its values, and projects its moral future.

This article responds to a gap in existing scholarship. Studies of Yoruba oral literature have established the educational value of children's verbal arts, including riddles, songs, game poetry, and folktales (Akinyemi 161–79). Studies of African folktales have also shown their role in moral instruction, character formation, cultural continuity, and social order (Olugbemi-Gabriel and Ukpi;

Narrative Frameworks and Moral Pedagogy in Yoruba Folktale Performances During the Olojo Festival: Discourse Patterns in Intergenerational Storytelling

Wiyahnyuy and Valentine). Studies of Olojo have examined the festival's ritual, symbolic, political, musical, and tourism-related dimensions (Oladosu 45–59; Adedayo et al. 40–43). However, the precise **discourse patterns** by which Yoruba folktale performances in festival contexts enact moral pedagogy remain under-theorized. This article therefore asks: how do narrative frameworks and performance conventions in Yoruba folktales structure moral instruction during a festival such as Olojo? What forms of interaction organize intergenerational storytelling? How do opening formulae, repetition, songs, proverbs, call-and-response, and elder-child evaluation transform narrative entertainment into ethical learning?

The central argument is that Yoruba folktale performance functions as **discursive moral pedagogy**. Its pedagogical power lies not only in the moral stated at the end of the tale but also in the pattern of participation through which listeners are trained to attend, respond, evaluate, remember, and apply communal norms. Within the Olojo Festival, this process is intensified by sacred time, public memory, royal symbolism, ritual movement, and the presence of multiple generations in the same cultural space. The festival makes the past publicly present, while the folktale converts that remembered past into practical moral instruction.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Yoruba Oral Literature and Indigenous Education

Scholarship on Yoruba oral literature has consistently argued that oral genres are central to indigenous education. Akinyemi's study of Yoruba oral literature as a source of indigenous education for children is especially relevant because it locates education in multiple verbal forms, including tongue twisters, lullabies, riddles, puzzles, songs, game poetry, and folktales (161–79). Akinyemi's argument is important for two reasons. First, it challenges the marginalization of so-called minor genres by showing that children's verbal arts possess artistic and educational power. Second, it indicates that Yoruba education historically extended beyond formal schooling and was embedded in domestic, communal, and performative life.

Akanbi's work on the moral value of Yoruba moonlight tales deepens this perspective by describing the internal structure and social setting of **àlò**. He notes that moonlight tales often begin with riddles, known as **àlò-àpamò**, before proceeding to full folktales, known as **àlò-àpagbè**. The riddling phase awakens intelligence, sustains attention, and prepares the audience for narrative instruction (Akanbi). Akanbi also records the attention-securing exchange in which the narrator calls "Ààààlò oooo" and the audience responds "Ààààlò," demonstrating that the performance is dialogic from its opening moment. This structure is pedagogically significant because the child-listener is not positioned as a silent recipient but as an active participant in the construction of meaning.

The communal nature of Yoruba folktales is reinforced by Barber's observation, quoted by Akanbi, that **àlò** are among the most communal, domestic, and democratic Yoruba verbal art forms. The performance takes place in the compound after work; all household members may participate; even the youngest may tell a tale; and the audience supports performance through choruses and responses (qtd. in Akanbi). This description is crucial for discourse analysis because it identifies storytelling as a participatory system governed by turn-taking, shared memory, audience co-performance, and collective evaluation.

2.2 Folktales, Character Formation, and Moral Pedagogy

African folktales have long been understood as instruments of moral instruction. Bascom's classic theory of folklore functions identifies amusement, cultural validation, education, and the maintenance of accepted behavioural patterns as major functions of folklore (333–49). Although Bascom wrote in a broad comparative framework, the educational and normative functions he identified are strongly visible in Yoruba folktale performance. The trickster tale, for instance, often dramatizes greed, deception, impatience, envy, or laziness, only to bring the offender to ridicule, loss, or correction. Conversely, tales may reward diligence, wisdom, generosity, hospitality, patience, and loyalty.

Recent scholarship confirms this pedagogical function. Olugbemi-Gabriel and Ukpi argue that folktales in African societies guide children's moral decisions, reflect human life, and influence character through embedded values. Their study of Tiv and Yoruba folktales emphasizes that storytelling is not merely ornamental but is bound to the formation of morally grounded persons in society (Olugbemi-Gabriel and Ukpi). Wiyahnyuy and Valentine similarly show that folktales serve as indigenous pedagogic tools capable of stimulating cognitive skills, enhancing moral development, fostering creativity, building linguistic competence, and bridging the divide between home pedagogy and formal schooling. Their study is not Yoruba-specific, but its conclusions are applicable to African oral-pedagogical traditions more generally because it foregrounds the participatory and adaptive nature of folktale performance.

The pedagogical effectiveness of folktales derives from indirection. Instead of issuing abstract commands, the narrator dramatizes a world in which action produces consequence. Children learn by following the plot, identifying patterns, anticipating outcomes, and discussing the moral implications of character behaviour. This is why folktales can produce what Wiyahnyuy and Valentine describe, through their review of African storytelling scholarship, as "didacticism without sermonization." The tale teaches precisely because it entertains, suspends disbelief, and allows moral judgment to emerge through narrative experience rather than direct scolding.

2.3 Olojo Festival as Performance Context

The Olojo Festival is a major Yoruba cultural and religious event that provides a dense symbolic context for oral performance. Oladosu explains that Olojo is connected to Ogun, the Yoruba deity of iron and war, and to Oranmiyan, a figure associated with Ogun and Oduduwa in Ile-Ife traditions (46–48). Ogun’s role as pathfinder, warrior, and opener of the way gives the festival a moral grammar of courage, truth, labour, sacrifice, and communal survival. In Oladosu’s account, Olojo is not only a festival of celebration but also a performance of sacred kingship in which drums, symbols, movements, and ritual acts sustain the authority of the Ooni and the socio-religious order of Ile-Ife (45–59).

Adedayo and colleagues frame Olojo as an intangible cultural heritage event associated with music, dance, ritual, belief systems, spiritualism, traditional knowledge, domestic tourism, and cultural identity (40–43). They also emphasize the festival’s role in fostering pride, unity, cultural exchange, and heritage preservation among Yoruba people. These dimensions matter for folktale performance because festivals gather multiple generations, activate ancestral memory, and create a socially legitimate atmosphere for cultural teaching. In such moments, storytelling can operate as a minor performance within a larger ritual performance, translating the festival’s macro-symbols into micro-narratives accessible to children and younger participants.

The festival context also alters the moral resonance of tales. A story about greed, disrespect, laziness, deception, or broken promises may be told in any household setting; however, when narrated during or around Olojo, such a story is heard within a broader moral field shaped by sacred origin, royal authority, communal obligation, and ancestral continuity. The tale’s lesson is therefore not only personal but civilizational. It teaches the child how to inhabit Yoruba moral community.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This article integrates three theoretical perspectives: performance theory, social semiotics, and moral pedagogy. Together, these perspectives allow Yoruba folktale performance to be analysed not as a fixed text but as an event in which language, gesture, music, audience response, context, and moral evaluation operate together.

Performance theory is necessary because African oral literature depends on enactment. Finnegan argues that oral literature is actualized through performance and that the performer’s voice, gesture, facial expression, pauses, rhythm, musical resources, and audience interaction are integral to the work rather than external embellishments (Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa*). Her point is essential for Yoruba folktales because the meaning of **àlò** is not exhausted by plot summary. The narrator’s voice, timing, mimicry, humour, song-leading, and management of audience responses are part of the narrative’s moral force. Bauman’s concept of verbal art as performance also supports this approach by treating oral narration as a communicative event marked by heightened responsibility, display, and audience evaluation (Bauman 11–45).

Social semiotics is equally important because Olojo is a sign-rich festival. Halliday’s notion of language as social semiotic emphasizes that meaning arises in contexts of situation and culture, not in isolated words (Halliday 1–20). Oladosu’s study of Olojo explicitly draws on Hallidayan semiotics to interpret drums and ritual signs within Yoruba worldview (47–48). Applying this insight to folktales means that the tale’s moral meaning is shaped by where it is told, who tells it, who listens, what ritual moment surrounds it, what songs accompany it, and what culturally shared symbols the audience recognizes. A tortoise tale about deception, for example, does not simply mean “do not deceive.” In a Yoruba festival setting, it can also signify the dangers of social disorder, the need for accountability, and the value of communal harmony.

Moral pedagogy provides the third theoretical layer. Pedagogy here refers not only to institutional teaching but to the community’s organized transmission of values, conduct, memory, and judgment. Yoruba folktales do not merely state moral rules; they train moral perception. They help listeners recognize character types, interpret motives, evaluate consequences, and distinguish cleverness from wisdom. This distinction is especially important in trickster tales, where intelligence without communal responsibility is often exposed as destructive.

Theoretical Lens	Core Assumption	Relevance to Yoruba Folktale Performance During Olojo
Performance theory	Oral literature exists fully through embodied performance, audience, occasion, and delivery.	It explains why voice, gesture, song, repetition, and audience response are central to the tale’s moral effect.
Social semiotics	Meaning arises from context of situation and context of culture.	It explains how Olojo’s symbols of origin, Ogun, Oduduwa, kingship, and renewal shape the interpretation of folktales.

Narrative Frameworks and Moral Pedagogy in Yoruba Folktale Performances During the Olojo Festival: Discourse Patterns in Intergenerational Storytelling

Theoretical Lens	Core Assumption	Relevance to Yoruba Folktale Performance During Olojo
Moral pedagogy	Communities transmit ethical knowledge through structured practices of instruction, imitation, correction, and reflection.	It explains how storytelling teaches children communal virtues without reducing the tale to direct moral preaching.

4. METHODOLOGY

This article used a qualitative interpretive methodology. It did not claim to report newly collected field interviews, festival recordings, or participant observation. Instead, it developed a discourse-analytic model through critical synthesis of existing scholarship on Yoruba oral literature, African folktale pedagogy, oral performance theory, and Olojo Festival studies. This design was appropriate because the objective was conceptual and analytical: to clarify how narrative frameworks and discourse patterns make Yoruba folktale performance pedagogically effective in a festival context.

The literature corpus included studies of Yoruba oral literature and children's indigenous education, particularly Akinyemi's work on Yoruba oral literature and Akanbi's work on Yoruba moonlight tales. It also included recent scholarship on African folktales as moral instruction, especially Olugbemi-Gabriel and Ukpi, as well as Wiysahnyuy and Valentine. For festival context, the study drew on Oladosu's socio-religious analysis of indigenous drums in Olojo and Adedayo and colleagues' study of Olojo's heritage, tourism, and socio-cultural significance. For theoretical grounding, the article used Bascom's functions of folklore, Finnegan's performance-centred account of African oral literature, Halliday's social semiotics, and Bauman's verbal-art theory.

The analysis proceeded in three stages. First, the article identified recurrent features of Yoruba storytelling described in the literature, including attention calls, riddling, formulaic openings, songs, audience choruses, proverbs, repetition, and moral closure. Second, it interpreted these features as discourse patterns rather than decorative devices. Third, it located those patterns within Olojo's festival environment, asking how sacred time, public ritual, royal authority, and intergenerational gathering intensify the moral work of storytelling.

The study's limitation is that it does not replace ethnographic fieldwork. Future research should record actual Olojo storytelling sessions, transcribe them in Yoruba and English, and analyse turn-taking, gesture, intonation, participant alignment, and moral commentary. Nevertheless, conceptual modelling remains valuable because it provides a framework for such future corpus-based and ethnographic studies.

5. NARRATIVE FRAMEWORKS IN YORUBA FOLKTALE PERFORMANCE

Yoruba folktales generally move through recognizable narrative stages: attention, invitation, orientation, complication, transgression, consequence, evaluation, and closure. These stages may vary by narrator, region, tale type, and audience, but their recurrence suggests that folktale performance possesses a stable pedagogical grammar. The tale begins by calling the audience into a shared frame. It then creates a fictional or mythic world in which animals, humans, spirits, and objects may interact. The narrative introduces a moral tension, often through greed, disobedience, arrogance, dishonesty, betrayal, laziness, impatience, or disrespect. The plot then tests the character, dramatizes consequences, and closes with a moral insight expressed through commentary, song, proverb, laughter, warning, or audience discussion.

Akanbi's description of the opening protocol is especially instructive. The narrator's call and the audience's response establish participation before the story proper begins. This means that the moral lesson is not imposed after the tale but emerges within a discourse contract. The audience agrees to listen, respond, and enter the imaginative space. This agreement has pedagogical significance because moral learning requires attention and emotional involvement. The opening also distinguishes storytelling time from ordinary speech. It creates what may be called **pedagogical liminality**, a temporary space in which children can confront danger, foolishness, temptation, and punishment at a safe imaginative distance.

The narrative world of Yoruba folktales is often deliberately flexible. Olugbemi-Gabriel and Ukpi note that the formula "Once upon a time" traps time in a kind of timelessness and enables listeners to associate the tale world with both fantasy and lived experience. This temporal elasticity is crucial to moral pedagogy. If the story were too historically specific, the child might treat it as someone else's event. If it were too abstract, the child might fail to imagine it. Folktales solve this problem by creating a world that is distant enough to entertain and near enough to instruct.

The internal structure of the tale also supports ethical reasoning. The trickster, such as tortoise, often embodies intelligence without restraint. He is clever, eloquent, strategic, and socially observant, but he becomes morally defective when cleverness serves greed or betrayal. This structure teaches a sophisticated lesson: intelligence is not enough; wisdom requires responsibility to the group. Olugbemi-Gabriel and Ukpi's discussion of the tortoise tale in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* illustrates this point. Tortoise's greed and subterfuge lead to punishment, and the child-listener learns contentment, honesty, and the need to place group interest above selfish advantage.

Narrative Frameworks and Moral Pedagogy in Yoruba Folktale Performances During the Olojo Festival: Discourse Patterns in Intergenerational Storytelling

Narrative Stage	Typical Discourse Feature	Pedagogical Function
Attention	Opening call, audience response, riddling, humour	Establishes readiness, shared attention, and performer-audience contract.
Orientation	Formulaic time, place, character introduction	Creates imaginative distance while preserving relevance to daily life.
Complication	Desire, prohibition, conflict, temptation	Introduces moral tension and invites prediction.
Transgression	Greed, deceit, laziness, disobedience, arrogance	Makes vice visible through action rather than abstract definition.
Consequence	Loss, shame, punishment, ridicule, reversal	Demonstrates moral causality and communal accountability.
Evaluation	Elder commentary, audience laughter, questions, proverb	Converts narrative experience into ethical reflection.
Closure	Song, proverb, explicit lesson, transition to next tale	Condenses the moral lesson into memorable verbal form.

6. DISCOURSE PATTERNS IN INTERGENERATIONAL STORYTELLING

6.1 Ritualized Opening and Attention Management

The first discourse pattern is the ritualized opening. In Yoruba storytelling, the opening call is not a mere introduction; it is a performative act that organizes the audience. By calling “Ààààlò,” the narrator marks a shift from ordinary conversation to narrative performance. The audience response confirms participation and attention. In a festival context such as Olojo, this pattern resonates with broader ritual calls, drum signals, praise names, invocations, and processional cues. The storyteller’s opening therefore participates in a wider festival semiotics of summons and response.

Attention management is central to pedagogy. Children do not merely receive information; they are trained to listen, wait, respond, and interpret. The opening formula teaches discipline without coercion. It also creates a collective listening body in which children learn from one another’s responses. This is particularly significant in intergenerational storytelling because it positions elders as custodians of memory while allowing children to become visible participants in cultural reproduction.

6.2 Repetition, Parallelism, and Memory

The second discourse pattern is repetition. Yoruba folktale performance frequently uses repeated phrases, repeated actions, repeated songs, and repeated warnings. Repetition helps children anticipate the plot and remember the lesson. It also creates rhythm, pleasure, and participation. In performance theory, repetition is not redundancy; it is a mnemonic and aesthetic device. Finnegan’s emphasis on rhythm, delivery, and audience receptivity helps explain why repeated verbal patterns are essential to oral literary impact rather than signs of simplicity (Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa*).

During Olojo, repetition has additional significance. Festivals themselves are repeated annually. Their recurrence teaches that communal identity depends on remembering and reenacting foundational meanings. When folktales are told within or around such a festival, their repeated formulae mirror the festival’s cyclical structure. The child learns that morality, like festival memory, must be renewed across generations.

6.3 Call-and-Response and Co-Performance

The third discourse pattern is call-and-response. Songs within folktales often require the narrator to lead while the audience supplies a refrain. Akanbi notes that songs may awaken the audience, add aesthetic value, and drive home the storyteller’s point. This structure transforms listeners into co-performers. A child who repeats the chorus is not simply entertained; the child rehearses the moral-emotional rhythm of the story.

Call-and-response also democratizes moral pedagogy. The elder may control the narrative, but the audience sustains it. This shared responsibility reflects Yoruba communal values, in which knowledge circulates through relational participation. In Olojo

Narrative Frameworks and Moral Pedagogy in Yoruba Folktale Performances During the Olojo Festival: Discourse Patterns in Intergenerational Storytelling

contexts, call-and-response corresponds to other festival forms, including drumming, praise, dance, and communal chants. The folktale thus belongs to a larger participatory soundscape.

6.4 Proverbs, Songs, and Moral Condensation

The fourth discourse pattern is moral condensation through proverbs and songs. Proverbs in Yoruba culture often compress complex social knowledge into memorable verbal forms. When a folktale ends with a proverb, the narrative experience is transformed into portable wisdom. The child may forget plot details but retain the proverb or song. This condensed form can later be recalled in moments of ethical decision.

Songs perform a similar function. They may summarize the conflict, name the offender, repeat the warning, or dramatize the consequence. Because songs are memorable, they extend the life of the tale beyond the performance event. A song learned during a story can be repeated in play, work, or later storytelling. In this way, moral pedagogy migrates from the performance space into everyday life.

6.5 Dialogic Evaluation and Elder-Child Interpretation

The fifth discourse pattern is dialogic evaluation. After or during the tale, elders may ask children what the character did wrong, what should have been done, or what lesson should be learned. Even when the moral is explicit, the audience’s interpretation matters. This dialogic process distinguishes moral pedagogy from moral indoctrination. The child is guided to reason through the story rather than merely memorize a command.

In Olojo settings, dialogic evaluation may connect the tale’s moral to festival values. A story about truthfulness may be linked to Ogun’s association with truth and iron. A tale about respect may be linked to royal authority and elderhood. A tale about communal generosity may be linked to the festival’s gathering of families, lineages, visitors, chiefs, devotees, and performers. Thus, the elder does not only explain the tale; the elder situates it within Yoruba cosmology and social life.

7. MORAL PEDAGOGY DURING OLOJO: FROM FESTIVAL MEMORY TO ETHICAL FORMATION

The Olojo Festival transforms storytelling because it situates moral instruction within a public renewal of Yoruba identity. Olojo’s association with Ogun, Oduduwa, Oranmiyan, the Ooni, sacred crowns, drums, processions, and ancestral memory creates an atmosphere in which values are not abstract ideals but embodied communal commitments. Oladosu’s account of the *òsírìgì* and other indigenous drums shows that festival sound itself can carry historical, symbolic, and political meaning (48–55). Drums announce, warn, bless, praise, and authorize. Folktales perform a related function in verbal form: they announce moral danger, warn against misconduct, bless communal virtues, praise wisdom, and authorize inherited values.

This relationship between festival and folktale may be understood as a movement from **macro-narrative** to **micro-narrative**. The macro-narrative of Olojo concerns creation, descent, sacred authority, origin, and communal continuity. The micro-narratives of folktales concern everyday moral choices: whether to share food, obey elders, keep promises, work diligently, tell the truth, control greed, or respect neighbours. The festival gives cosmic seriousness to everyday morality, while the folktale makes cosmic values understandable at the level of childhood experience.

Olojo Festival Symbolism	Folktale Pedagogical Equivalent	Moral Meaning for Younger Audiences
Ogun as pathfinder and deity of iron	Heroic or cautionary narratives about labour, courage, truth, and consequence	Moral life requires discipline, courage, and accountability.
Oduduwa and origin memory	Actiological tales and ancestral references	Identity is inherited and must be preserved through conduct.
Ooni and sacred authority	Elder narrator as custodian of wisdom	Respect for authority is tied to responsibility, not fear alone.
Drumming, song, and procession	Folktale songs, rhythm, and call-and-response	Knowledge is embodied, musical, communal, and memorable.
Annual renewal	Repeated tales and recurring moral lessons	Ethical values must be retaught and renewed across generations.

The moral pedagogy of folktales also extends beyond children. Akanbi observes that moonlight tales have moral value for both youth and adults. This is important because festival storytelling is intergenerational, not child-exclusive. Adults listening to a tale may publicly affirm values they are also expected to practice. The presence of children may intensify adult accountability, since

Narrative Frameworks and Moral Pedagogy in Yoruba Folktale Performances During the Olojo Festival: Discourse Patterns in Intergenerational Storytelling

elders who narrate honesty, generosity, and self-restraint implicitly present themselves as custodians of those virtues. Thus, folktale performance creates a moral community in which both instruction and self-examination occur.

8. DISCUSSION

The analysis demonstrates that Yoruba folktale performance during Olojo should be understood as a layered communicative event. At one level, it entertains through humour, suspense, animal characters, songs, and imaginative situations. At another level, it teaches through narrative consequence. At a deeper level, it reproduces Yoruba moral community by placing younger listeners inside patterns of speech, response, memory, and evaluation. The child learns not only what the story means but how to participate in Yoruba discourse.

This finding complicates narrow definitions of pedagogy. If pedagogy is restricted to schools, textbooks, and formal classrooms, the educational significance of festivals and oral performance becomes invisible. Yet African indigenous education has historically operated through domestic, communal, artistic, and ritual forms. Wiysahnyuy and Valentine's study of folktales as indigenous pedagogic tools supports this broader understanding by showing that storytelling can support moral development, cognitive stimulation, language acquisition, creativity, and school-community continuity. Akinyemi's argument for including Yoruba children's oral arts in curricula similarly suggests that formal education should not replace indigenous pedagogy but learn from it (161–79).

The study also shows that discourse patterns matter. Moral content alone does not explain the power of the folktale. A printed summary stating "greed is bad" cannot reproduce the pedagogical force of a performed tale in which the narrator calls, the children respond, a song returns, laughter erupts, suspense builds, a proverb closes the event, and an elder asks what lesson has been learned. Performance converts moral information into shared experience. This is why Finnegan's insistence on the centrality of performance is indispensable to any serious study of African oral literature.

In the specific case of Olojo, the festival's sacred and communal frame intensifies discourse. The tale is heard in a setting already saturated with signs of origin, authority, obligation, and renewal. Halliday's social semiotic theory helps clarify this point: meaning depends on context. A folktale narrated at Olojo is not detached from the festival's semiotic environment. Its moral lesson is shaped by drums, crowds, kinship gatherings, royal symbolism, ritual gestures, praise names, market activity, tourism, and ancestral narratives. The festival becomes a living text within which the folktale is interpreted.

9. IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIGENOUS EDUCATION AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION

The first implication concerns curriculum design. Yoruba folktales should be incorporated into language, literature, civic education, religious studies, cultural studies, and moral education curricula. Such inclusion should not reduce folktales to written comprehension passages. Rather, schools should teach them as performance: students should learn opening formulae, songs, proverbs, turn-taking, translation, dramatization, and moral debate. Akinyemi's call for the inclusion of Yoruba children's oral literature in school curricula remains highly relevant (161–79).

The second implication concerns festival programming. Olojo organizers, cultural institutions, schools, and local media could create structured storytelling sessions during festival periods. Elders, griots, teachers, parents, and youth performers could collaborate to stage folktales linked to festival themes such as truth, courage, origin, respect, communal responsibility, and service. Such programming would help younger generations experience Olojo not only as spectacle but as ethical education.

The third implication concerns documentation. Because globalization, urbanization, migration, and digital media have weakened many communal storytelling contexts, systematic documentation is urgent. Olugbemi-Gabriel and Ukpi warn that communal folktale sessions are threatened by globalizing forces and new media displacements. Documentation should include high-quality audiovisual recordings, Yoruba transcription, English translation, performance notes, participant interviews, and metadata about time, place, audience, and festival context.

The fourth implication concerns research. Future studies should build a corpus of actual Olojo storytelling performances and examine discourse features empirically. Researchers could analyse opening sequences, adjacency pairs, audience responses, song structure, proverb placement, gesture, laughter, code-switching, age roles, gender roles, and moral evaluation. Such work would strengthen Yoruba discourse studies, folklore studies, performance studies, and indigenous education research.

10. CONCLUSION

This article has argued that Yoruba folktale performances during the Olojo Festival constitute a powerful form of **intergenerational moral pedagogy**. Their pedagogical force emerges from narrative structure, performance aesthetics, audience participation, social context, and festival symbolism. The tale teaches not merely because it contains a moral lesson but because it organizes listeners into a participatory moral community. Through opening calls, riddles, repetition, songs, proverbs, call-and-response, embodied narration, and elder-child evaluation, Yoruba folktales train children to listen, remember, judge, and belong.

Narrative Frameworks and Moral Pedagogy in Yoruba Folktale Performances During the Olojo Festival: Discourse Patterns in Intergenerational Storytelling

The Olojo Festival provides a particularly rich environment for this process because it renews Yoruba memory of origin, sacred authority, Ogun's pathfinding force, Oduduwa's ancestral significance, and the communal identity of Ile-Ife. Within this environment, folktales translate the festival's large symbolic universe into everyday ethical reasoning. They connect cosmology to conduct, heritage to habit, and performance to pedagogy.

The article therefore contributes to scholarship by bringing together Yoruba oral literature, Olojo Festival studies, discourse analysis, and moral pedagogy. It also offers a framework for future field-based research. If Yoruba folktales are to remain living instruments of moral formation rather than archival fragments, they must be performed, documented, taught, and renewed in the very communal settings that give them meaning. Olojo, as a festival of origin and renewal, offers one of the most significant spaces for that work.

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