

THE FADING KNOWLEDGE OF TRADITIONAL FOLKLORE AMONG MUNA ETHNIC CHILDREN IN ANDUONUHU VILLAGE, KENDARI CITY

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Abstract

The phenomenon of diminishing knowledge of traditional folklore among children is becoming increasingly widespread. This study aims to reveal the fading knowledge of traditional folklore among Muna ethnic children in Anduonohu Subdistrict, Kendari City. This research employs a qualitative method with data collection techniques through observation and interviews with 16 Muna ethnic children residing in Anduonohu Subdistrict, Kambu District, Kendari City, as well as interviews with their parents for additional information. The results of this study indicate that 15 out of 16 children observed and interviewed are no longer familiar with the traditional stories passed down through generations in Muna ethnic communities. Compared to traditional folklore, these children are more familiar with stories from animated works broadcasted on television or YouTube podcasts. According to the parents, the diminishing knowledge of traditional folklore is partly due to their busy schedules, which limit opportunities for storytelling, a lack of awareness regarding the benefits of traditional folklore, and the limited availability of alternative media. The impacts include the loss of traditional folklore knowledge, the erosion of cultural values, and an identity crisis.

Keywords: children's literature, folklore, oral literature, identity crisis, Muna ethnic group

1. Introduction

Folklore is a narrative passed down orally, either from parents to their descendants or the next generation, or from storytellers (who understand the narrative) to anyone (adults or children) (Dailami et al., 2024). In the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (2022), folklore is defined as stories from ancient times that live among the people and are passed down orally. Meanwhile, Rafiq (2021: 5) defines folklore as traditional knowledge originating from a particular culture. From these three definitions, it can be understood that folklore is a traditional narrative orally transmitted from generation to generation, containing knowledge and cultural values from a society, and living and evolving among the people as part of cultural heritage.

Danandjaja (1986) states that traditional folklore is a part of oral literature. Folklore is spread orally and contains moral messages. It grows and develops among the communities that own it, transmitted orally from parents to children, from children to their peers, or from older generations to younger generations or their contemporaries. Forms of oral literature

include myths, legends, and folktales. As part of oral literature, folklore serves not only as entertainment but also as a medium for learning cultural values, social norms, and local wisdom. This oral tradition enables communities to preserve their cultural identity. Therefore, folklore plays a crucial role in maintaining the continuity of traditions and cultural identity through collective knowledge in narrative form.

Sugiarti et al. (2020) state that folklore is a manifestation of a community's knowledge and local wisdom, containing values believed by that society. Therefore, folklore has long functioned as an effective educational medium in traditional societies. As it is passed down from generation to generation, folklore is used by older generations as a means to convey teachings, advice, and knowledge to children and younger generations. Through engaging and imaginative narratives, these stories not only entertain but also convey essential moral and ethical values. For example, tales of kindness, honesty, and courage are often embedded in storylines, allowing children to learn about expected behaviors in daily life. In this way, folklore serves as an educational tool that connects older and younger generations, ensuring that cultural heritage and collective knowledge remain alive and relevant within society.

However, the trend observed by the author indicates that folklore is becoming less popular among the public. The shift in reading and entertainment preferences in modern society has displaced the position of oral literature, such as myths, legends, and folktales. In the past, these folk stories served as entertainment for children before bedtime or during family gatherings. However, with the advancement of technology and the emergence of various forms of digital entertainment, children's interest in oral literature has declined. They are more attracted to stories presented in visual and interactive formats, such as animated films, video games, or other online content.

The declining interest in oral literature can be observed in various community groups. Initial observations conducted by the author on the Muna ethnic community in Kendari City, for instance, indicate that Muna ethnic children living around Anduonohu Subdistrict in Kendari City are now largely unfamiliar with the traditional folklore that was once well known among the Muna people.

The Muna ethnic group originates from Muna Island and its surrounding smaller islands, as well as a significant portion of Buton Island. On Buton Island, the Muna ethnic community primarily resides in the northern, northeastern, southern, and southwestern regions. On other islands, the Muna people also inhabit Siompu Island, Kadatua Island, and Talaga Island. Additionally, many Muna people have settled in Kendari City. The Muna ethnic group possesses a rich cultural heritage and a strong oral tradition. However, differences in lifestyle, as well as the complex social, economic, and cultural dynamics in Kendari City due to urbanization and its multicultural society, have influenced changes in the way of life of the Muna people residing in Kendari City. Parents who once frequently told legends or folktales to their children are now less likely to do so. This has led to a decline in the transmission and inheritance of legends and folktales from the older to the younger generation, with the potential for this tradition to cease entirely. As a result, fewer young Muna ethnic children in Anduonohu Subdistrict, Kendari City, possess knowledge of traditional folklore, such as myths, legends, or folktales, which should have been passed down to them.

This study was conducted to explore the causes and impacts of the diminishing knowledge of traditional folklore among Muna ethnic children in Anduonohu Subdistrict, Kendari City. Therefore, the author narrows the scope of the research with two main questions:

1. What are the causes of the diminishing knowledge of traditional folklore among Muna ethnic children in Anduonohu Subdistrict?
2. What are the impacts of the diminishing knowledge of traditional folklore on Muna ethnic children?

The findings of this study are expected to provide information on the factors contributing to the decline in traditional folklore knowledge among children. Additionally, the results are anticipated to serve as a reference for future research related to the preservation of traditional folklore. Practically, this research is expected to encourage stakeholders and local policymakers to develop effective and engaging policies or learning methods to support the preservation of traditional folklore.

As the foundation of this study, the author reviewed several relevant publications. First, a publication by Fakhrurozi et al. (2021) discusses a community service initiative focused on preserving Lampung oral literature, which is increasingly marginalized. This initiative addresses the challenges of preserving Lampung oral literature by integrating oral traditions with digital technology. Through a participatory approach, the project aims to document and publish the works of oral literature practitioners. By producing various digital products such as documentary videos, translations, and a dedicated website, this initiative has successfully expanded public access to Lampung's cultural heritage and made a significant contribution to the preservation of oral literature in the digital era.

Next is the study by Nugraheni & Haryadi (2021), which examines the character values contained in folklore from Pati, Central Java. This research aims to identify the character values embedded in folklore from Pati, Central Java. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the study describes the character values in Pati folklore. Data were collected through interviews, documentation, and literature studies. The analysis of three folktales – *Masjid Gambiran*, *Sendang Sani*, and *Mbah Dwipakerti* – reveals several character values relevant to children's education, such as religiosity, perseverance, and creativity. This study concludes that folklore plays an essential role in shaping children's character from an early age.

The next publication is an article by Nugraha et al. (2023), which presents the results of a community service project aimed at preserving traditional folklore knowledge among elementary school students. This initiative utilizes animated films as a medium for delivering folklore in an engaging way for young students. The project results indicate a strong interest among elementary school students when watching animated films adapted from traditional folklore. This suggests that the use of animated films could enhance children's interest in traditional folklore, which is gradually being forgotten.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative research method. According to Anggito & Setiawan (2018), qualitative research involves data collection in a natural setting with the objective of

interpreting observed phenomena. In this approach, the researcher serves as the primary instrument, and data analysis is conducted inductively. Qualitative research seeks to comprehensively understand the experiences of research subjects by examining behaviors, thought processes, perspectives, and actions in a holistic manner. Given its naturalistic characteristics, the qualitative method is deemed appropriate for addressing the research questions and investigating the phenomenon under study.

Data collection techniques employed in this study include observation, semi-structured interviews, note-taking, and document analysis. Primary data are obtained through direct observation and interviews, while secondary data are collected through document analysis. The primary sources of data comprise children of the Muna ethnic community aged 7–15 years and their parents, all of whom reside in Anduonohu Subdistrict.

The study investigates the extent to which these children are familiar with traditional folklore. Interviews with both children and their parents are conducted to enable data triangulation and ensure the validity of findings. Additionally, the study examines the number of folktales known by the participants. In cases where no knowledge of folklore is observed, further investigation is conducted to identify the factors contributing to this phenomenon.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Factors Contributing to the Decline of Traditional Folklore Knowledge

Based on observations conducted at the research site, the researcher identified 16 children as informants. A summary of the observations and interviews with these child informants is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1
Identification of Traditional Folklore Knowledge Among Muna Ethnic Children in Anduonohu Subdistrict, Kendari City

No. Informant Code	Age	Traditional Folklore Known	Commonly Watched/Read Content
1 DE	11	None	<i>Upin & Ipin</i> series
2 AI	9	None	YouTube podcasts on the lives of prophets and messengers
3 NY	12	None	TikTok media
4 ZA	8	None	<i>Naruto</i> animated series
5 RI	14	"The Turtle and the Monkey" folktale	<i>Sofia the First</i> , <i>Barbie</i> , and <i>Masha and the Bear</i> animated series
6 AD	10	None	<i>Boboiboy</i> and <i>Naruto</i> animated series
7 IM	11	None	<i>Upin & Ipin</i> animated series on television
8 SA	15	None	<i>Naruto</i> animated series and TikTok media
9 IR	9	None	<i>Upin & Ipin</i> animated series
10 NU	10	None	<i>Masha and the Bear</i> animated series

11	TI	8	None	<i>Sofia the First</i> and <i>Rainbow Ruby</i> animated series
12	AN	13	None	<i>Masha and the Bear</i> animated series
13	NA	14	None	TikTok media
14	SI	12	None	<i>Barbie</i> and <i>Rainbow Ruby</i> animated series
15	NN	8	None	<i>Masha and the Bear</i> animated series
16	IA	15	None	Video games and YouTube podcasts

Based on the data presented in Table 1, it is evident that the majority of the child informants no longer possess knowledge of the traditional folklore from their own ethnic group. Instead, they are more familiar with stories from contemporary animated series such as *Upin & Ipin*, *Masha and the Bear*, *Cocomelon*, *Sofia the First*, and other modern animations. This trend suggests that Muna ethnic children in Anduonohu Subdistrict, Kendari City, prefer contemporary animated series over listening to or reading traditional folklore.

Furthermore, interviews conducted with the parents of the informants provided insights into the factors influencing the shift in children's knowledge and interest in their traditional folklore.

3.1.1 Parents Lack Time to Tell Stories

The first factor considered to contribute to this shift is the lack or absence of time that parents allocate to narrate traditional folk tales to their children. Most of the parent informants are busy with work or domestic tasks, making it difficult for them to find time to introduce folk tales to their children. The following information was obtained from one of the parent informants:

“The reason is that I, as a parent, am also busy with my own work, so I do not have the opportunity to tell traditional folk tales to my children.”
 (MI/24-10-2024)

The role of parents in introducing folk tales to their children is very influential because, fundamentally, folk tales can only be known if there is someone to tell them. Ideally, this should serve as a motivating factor for parents to help their children recognize folk tales from their heritage and indirectly contribute to the dissemination of these stories. However, currently, busyness is cited as the main reason this does not happen, and it can also be said that this is a reason why children do not know the folk tales from their region, due to parents not narrating these stories to them.

3.1.2 Unengaging Presentation Models

Traditional folk tales are a form of oral tradition, so their dissemination relies on oral media, which requires presentation in the form of being directly heard from someone else's narration. In addition to being oral, traditional folk tales are also sometimes documented and retold in written form, such as in storybooks. However, not all children enjoy the

methods of oral storytelling or reading. This is exemplified by one of the following informants.

"I don't really like reading or listening because there is no shape to it, and it's always just about imagining things, so I prefer watching because there are colors and movement." (IR/24-10-2024)

The information provided by the informant shows that not all children are interested in reading. Children prefer contemporary animated shows because they use visual media with character designs and vibrant colors that are more engaging. This phenomenon can be interpreted as a shift in children's entertainment orientation in the present day. Children prefer to enjoy the imagination presented by animators rather than generating their own imagination from reading or listening to stories.

The author believes that the shift in entertainment orientation is an inevitable phenomenon; however, it should be seen as an opportunity to be utilized. Traditional folk tales should be preserved by adapting to this shift in entertainment preferences, while also taking advantage of the technological advancements that are increasingly accessible. In other words, while the traditional methods of oral transmission and inheritance of folklore should be maintained, there needs to be a more serious effort to adapt these stories into other forms, such as animated films, or even new media like video games. Thus, the challenge lies in the fact that many traditional folk tales of Muna have not yet adapted to contemporary storytelling media, such as animated films. Children who are less interested in reading are becoming even less engaged with traditional folk tales.

3.1.3 Lack of Awareness about the Importance of Traditional Folk Tales as a Medium for Character Education

In addition to the busy schedules of parents, the lack of awareness about the importance of traditional folk tales as a medium for character education for children is one of the factors contributing to the decline of knowledge about traditional folk tales among children in the Muna ethnic group. In the past, traditional folk tales were not only used as a form of entertainment, but also as a means of conveying lessons, life norms, and advice. The collective knowledge held by older generations was passed down to younger generations to help them face life better and improve the quality of life. The enhancement of life quality could contribute to the progress of culture and civilization within that collective society.

Many studies have revealed the fact that folk tales play a role in moral education, social norms, and as a medium for passing down advice. One such study by Efendi et al. (2019), which analyzed the folk tale "Miaduka" from Sintang, West Kalimantan, revealed that the folk tale provides education to children about moral values, social education, and skill education, as portrayed through the characters in the story. This serves as evidence that folk tales contain character-building values that can be used as educational media for children. However, the lack of awareness of the importance and moral values embedded in

traditional folk tales is what leads parents to choose other media as character education tools for their children.

3.2 The Impact of the Decline in Knowledge of Traditional Folk Tales

Essentially, every traditional folk tale of any ethnic community is a manifestation of the social and cultural conditions of its society. In a folk tale, there are values, norms, cultures, and traditions that are practiced by the members of that ethnic community. Since ancient times, traditional folk tales have been used by the Muna ethnic community as a medium for entertainment and character education for their children, which then became a habit passed down through generations. However, as described in section 3.1, this practice has become increasingly rare. This, of course, has a significant impact on the community. This section will outline these impacts.

3.2.1 The Loss of Knowledge about Traditional Folk Tales

The decline in knowledge of traditional folk tales among Muna ethnic children can lead to the loss of collective knowledge about these tales. Children are crucial agents in the preservation of culture within a society. Traditional folk tales, as an oral tradition, heavily rely on the spread and inheritance through traditional oral media. If this practice stops, the transmission and inheritance of knowledge about traditional folk tales will be severed in one generation, causing subsequent generations to lose this knowledge.

3.2.2 The Decline of Cultural Values in Society

A folk tale contains values regarding the way of life and social practices of an ethnic group. This is also true for the traditional folk tales of the Muna ethnic group. The research by Mada & Syukur (2017) on the moral values in the traditional Muna folk tale "Wa Ode Kaengu dan La Sirimbone" shows that this folk tale contains individual moral values as well as social moral values.

This serves as an example that every traditional folk tale carries educational values that reflect the identity of the ethnic group. If traditional folk tales have faded from the Muna ethnic community, then the distinctive features of their culture will no longer reflect the social conditions of the Muna community as a whole.

3.2.3 Identity Crisis

Kartika & Soraya (2021) state that oral traditions such as folktales, legends, and mythology are sources of identity and a part of the cultural wealth of a nation. Thus, preserving oral traditions is one way to maintain national identity. If traditional folk tales are considered an associative element of an ethnic group's identity, then preserving traditional folk tales should be seen as an effort to maintain the ethnic characteristics of a community.

Essentially, traditional folk tales, including those of the Muna ethnic group, depict how that society lives and interacts with its ethnic and cultural traits. When the knowledge of oral traditions within a certain ethnic community fades or disappears, it can be said that the community will experience an identity crisis because they no longer recognize their own culture. The decline in knowledge of traditional folk tales can signal an identity crisis among

children of certain ethnic groups because folk tales function as one of the main pillars in the formation of cultural identity. Folk tales not only convey moral values and local wisdom but also reflect the history and collective experiences of a community. When children no longer hear or participate in the tradition of storytelling, they lose access to the cultural heritage that shapes their worldview and behavior in society.

The case of the decline in knowledge of traditional folk tales among Muna ethnic children, as outlined above, shows that a lack of knowledge about folk tales can lead them to feel alienated from their culture, reducing their pride and attachment to their ethnic identity. This can be exacerbated by the influence of foreign and contemporary cultures, which increasingly dominate through modern media, often neglecting local values. Without a strong understanding of folk tales, children are unable to internalize the values that should guide their lives, ultimately leading to a loss of self-identity and an identity crisis in future generations. In this context, it is crucial to make efforts to preserve and revitalize folk tales as part of education to help children understand and appreciate their cultural heritage.

4. Conclusion

Based on the research findings and analysis presented in the previous sections, a general conclusion can be drawn that 15 out of 16 Muna ethnic children in Andonuhu Village no longer know the traditional folk tales of their own region. Instead of traditional folk tales, these children are more familiar with cartoons such as Naruto, Upin and Ipin, TikTok, and video games.

The decline in knowledge of traditional folk tales is caused by several factors, namely, parents being too busy to tell traditional folk tales to their children, a lack of awareness about utilizing traditional folk tales as a medium for character education, and the fact that traditional folk tales are only available in written and oral forms. This leads children, who are not fond of reading and prefer to watch moving visual media, to gravitate toward animated films. The phenomenon of the decline in knowledge of traditional folk tales among Muna ethnic children has impacts such as the loss of traditional folk tales in society, the fading of cultural values, and an identity crisis.

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