

Malaysia Journal of Invention and Innovation

<https://journal.academicapress.org/aps/index.php/mjii>

Research Article

BOUND BY STONE: FOLKTALES OF FILIAL PIETY ACROSS THE NUSANTARA

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Keywords:

Folktales

Filial Piety

Nusantara

Propp's Morphology

Moral Education

Abstract: This work investigates the Nusantara legends about filial piety, namely, Malin Kundang (Indonesia), Si Tanggang (Malaysia), and Nakhoda Manis (Brunei), which all communicate same old moral lessons of disobedience to parents and its consequences. The study, which is concerned with the decline of oral storytelling and the moral transmission among the younger generations, applies Propp's Morphology of the Folktale as a qualitative framework for the comparative textual analysis. The results show the recurrent Proppian functions like interdiction, violation, punishment, and transformation which strengthen the similar moral expectations across the region. The study claims that these folktales are still pedagogically valid and can be revived through digital storytelling and educational integration to keep the cultural and ethical values alive.



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1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the ages, folklore has been an essential part of human civilization, an indicator of the faiths, morals, and customs of the community. It consists not only of myths, legends, and folk tales but also songs, dances, proverbs, and rituals, which keep the memories of the past and the present alive at the same time. Among others, one of the reasons for the popularity of folklore is that it has a number of important functions in the society such as the maintenance of culture, education in morality and building of social unity. Furthermore, storytelling has functioned as a very powerful tool for intergenerational transmission of moral values, social norms and a sense of belonging to a community (Guo et al., 2025; Santosa et al., 2025).

Southeast Asia's multicultural setting, folklore demonstrates the country's ethnic variety and its peoples' different beliefs, but at the same time, it represents such values as bravery, honesty, and social responsibility that are accepted everywhere (Kijima, 2005; Masykuroh & Fatimah, 2019; McIver,

2018). In the Southeast Asian folklore, which is multicultural in nature, not only reflects the variety of ethnic groups in the region and their different uses of the supernatural, but also, at the same time, portrays universally accepted values like bravery, truthfulness, and taking care of others (Kijima, 2005; Masykuroh & Fatimah, 2019; McIver, 2018). The stories concerning filial piety, among them Malin Kundang (Indonesia), Si Tanggang (Malaysia), and Nakhoda Manis (Brunei), are the most persistent legends of the Nusantara area that emphasize obedience to parents and the repercussions of moral sin. Even though cultural setting and narrative details vary, these stories are still built on the same ethical foundation which promotes family loyalty and the peacefulness of society. In character education of the 21st century, such stories are considered to be the most natural and culturally rooted methods of teaching that can help kids acquire moral literacy.

Globalisation has emerged as the main factor behind the mixing and intersection of cultures and traditions in our time, and this has made the need for preserving unique cultural stories even more pressing. Traditional stories are one of the ways through which societies can continue being recognized as having their own cultures and also having passed through modernity. Besides, literary and cultural frameworks that are transformational rather than simply normative, like the ones suggested by global calls for more contextually and inclusively oriented character education, become an absolute necessity (Clover, 1997; Rokhman et al., 2014; Suwastini, 2023).

Modern-day society is worried more about the oral storytelling traditions disappearance and the moral values' decline through the children transmission. The fading of storytelling by word of mouth not only causes the ethical teachings of the folklore to be losing relevance in present-day education more but also heightening the risk that they might completely lose their relevance. Although earlier research has looked into folklore in terms of literary, anthropological or preservation viewpoints, a very small number of studies have so far scrutinized the building blocks of the moral values that are passed through the interrelated folktales in the Nusantara area in a systematic manner, especially by employing formal narrative frameworks.

Moreover, the extant literature has rarely related the structural folklore analysis with the possibilities of digital adaptation and educational integration. A comprehensive understanding of the narrative structure that transcends different cultural contexts and the possible modern teaching methods that can bring such structures to life is still lacking.

To fill this gap, the current research looks at filial piety folktales from three countries of ASEAN in order to point out the common ethical profiles and the variations that are specific to the cultures by the use of Propp's Morphology of the Folktale as an analytical framework. In this way, the research opens up a new area of discussion around the narratives as cultural heritage as well as pedagogically relevant resources with potential for digital storytelling and character education. Through the study of both structural consistency and narrative variation, the researchers claim their contribution to folklore studies, moral education and digital heritage discourse in the Southeast Asian context. Figure 1 shows Propp's Morphology of The Folktales

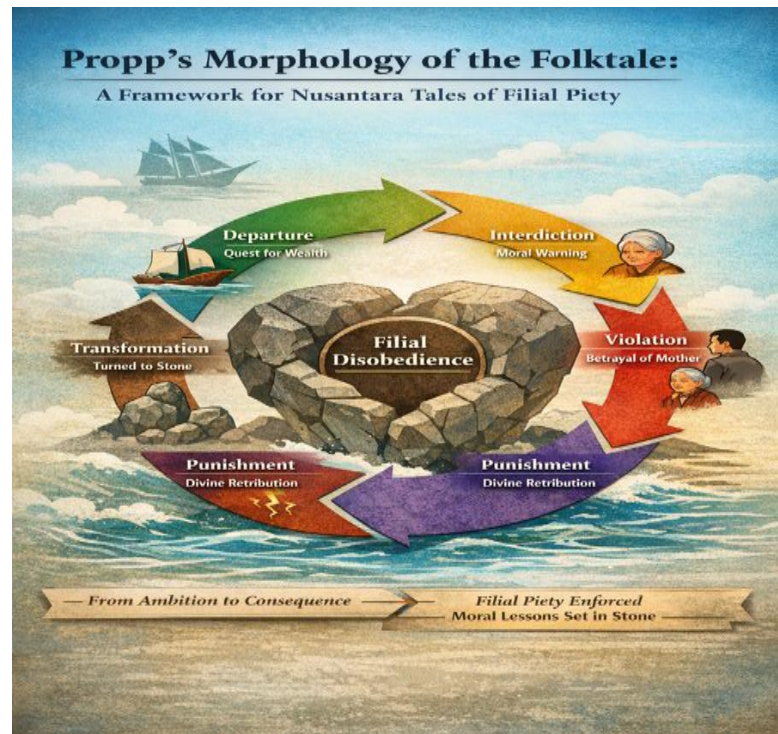


Figure 1 : Propp's Morphology

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Digital Story Telling (DST)

Digital storytelling has become a high-impact educational method that involves students in several aspects of learning (Smeda et al., 2014). The practice has been hailed as a way of letting students organize and communicate their understanding of the content through collaboration, and design of digital works that are innovative and creative (Castillo-Cuesta et al., 2021). Besides, the integration of DST has been credited for the upswing in student participation, the unleashing of critical thought along with creativity, which all are part of the characteristics of the 21st century's digital world (Azliza et al., 2019; Baehaki, 2023; Yuliani & Hartanto, 2021). The incorporation of folklore into digital storytelling is one of the recent areas of research with a great impact in terms of engagement, accessibility, and cultural relevance, especially in educational settings. Thus, DST is a performer in the field of education, changing the whole learning process for good by its outstanding coming-together of digital storytelling methods.

Digital storytelling has been acknowledged as a powerful instrument for the conservation of intangible cultural heritage as well as aiding the moral and character development of the students. However, there is still a lack of research diving into both structural folklore analysis and the educational impact of digital storytelling based on empirical evidence, especially when considering the Nusantara context.

Digital storytelling has emerged as an educational method with significant effects that keep students engaged in different areas of learning (Smeda et al., 2014). The method has gained the attention of the critics as the means through which students could freely express and even represent their comprehension of the subject matter in collaboration, and through the creation of digital works that are not only innovative but also creative (Castillo-Cuesta et al., 2021). Moreover, the adoption of DST has

been associated with the rise in student participation, the springing up of critical, as well as creative, thinking which are all attributes of the digital world of the 21st century (Azliza et al., 2019; Baehaki, 2023; Yuliani & Hartanto, 2021). One of the latest research areas where the fusion of folklore into digital storytelling comes in is the matter of engagement, accessibility, and cultural relevance, which are very crucial, especially in educational contexts. Consequently, DST is a major player in education, revolutionizing the whole learning process with its remarkable and innovative merging of digital storytelling techniques.

Digital storytelling has been recognized as a very effective tool for the preservation of the intangible cultural heritage and at the same time, a contributor to the moral and character formation of the students. However, to date, there has not been much research addressing the issue of folklore analysis from a structural perspective and the educational impact of digital storytelling based on empirical evidence, particularly in the case of the Nusantara region.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The academic debate on folklore has never ceased to emphasize its contribution to moral education and the continuity of culture. The analysis of narrative through the model of Propp's Morphology of the Folktale gives rise to the identification of functions that recast meaning and moral interpretation in turn. Earlier research that employed the Propp's model has indicated that the narrative of the folktales tends to be structured in a way that is predictable and, in the course of the unfolding story, the ethical lessons are reinforced. In the present study, Propp's Morphology of the Folktale is figured as the primary theoretical framework for analyzing the structural and moral bases of the Nusantara folktales of filial piety. Propp's theory claims that all folktales consist of a finite number of narrative functions that recur in a predetermined order, regardless of the culture or location (Propp, 1968). These narrative functions not only determine the flow of events but also bring out the moral meanings that are unwrapped in the storytelling. In addition to freeing characters to act autonomously through most of the sequence of incidents, the narrative functions in the construction of the meaning carried by the fictional incident.

Propp's structure is especially appropriate for this research as it facilitates a methodical analysis of morality being communicated through narrative patterns rather than through plot variations. In the case of filial piety fables, for instance, *Malin Kundang*, *Si Tanggang*, and *Nakhoda Manis*, Proppian functions like interdiction, violation, departure, punishment, and transformation take part in building the moral lessons. These functions together accentuate the results of children's disobedience to parents and the ethical requirement of respect to parents, which are the same for the cultures of the whole archipelago.

Besides structural analysis, this research places Propp's morphology within a more extensive view of folklore as a means of transmitting morals and culture. According to folklore experts, the classic tales act as texts of society that enshrine the common values, rules, and identity (Bascom, 1965; Dundes, 1980). Through the investigation of common narrative patterns in different areas, this research gives emphasis to the fact that fairy tales always serve as the moral guides imparting to the people the values of family loyalty, social cooperation, and cultural perpetuation.

In addition, the theoretical framework is significantly widened by taking into account the contemporary importance of folktales through the means of digital storytelling and education. Propp's theory is primarily concerned with the narrative structure, but its application in modern-day contexts helps the conversion of classic narratives into digital ones, retaining their moral values. Digital storytelling is compatible with the cultural heritage policies that support the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage through non-dominating and involving ways (UNESCO, 2003). Consequently,

Propp's morphology provides a solid narrative base for the development of digital adaptations for educational use.

The comparative study of folklore in Southeast Asia has shown that while the cultures of the Nusantara had different locations and characterization, they still shared the same moral and ethical foundations in their stories about filial piety. Nevertheless, textual interpretation has been the focus of a significant portion of the literature while the educational and digital facets of these narratives are seldom included in the discussion.

Moreover, the theoretical framework is broadened to include the present-day significance of folktales via digital storytelling and educational integration. Even though Propp's theory revolves around the narrative structure, its utilization in present-day situations aids the transition of classic narratives into digital formats with their moral values remaining intact. Digital storytelling fits in with cultural heritage policies that promote the protection of intangible cultural heritage through creative and participatory ways (UNESCO, 2003). Thus, Propp's morphology offers a strong narrative basis on which digital adaptations can be created for teaching purposes.

By integrating Propp's Morphology with perspectives from folklore studies and digital heritage, this theoretical framework enables a holistic analysis of Nusantara filial piety folktales. It supports the examination of both structural consistency and pedagogical relevance, allowing the study to demonstrate how these narratives remain ethically meaningful and educationally valuable across traditional and digital contexts.

In the Southeast Asian context, comparative folklore studies have shown that filial piety narratives across Nusantara cultures share similar moral structures despite differences in setting and characterisation. However, much of the existing literature focuses on textual interpretation without sufficiently addressing the pedagogical or digital potential of these narratives.

2.3 Conceptual Framework of the Study

The study is based on a conceptual framework derived from Propp's Morphology of the Folktale, which sees narrative structure as the primary means by which moral values are communicated. The framework proposes Nusantara folktales of filial piety as moral narratives with a structure marked by the repetition of Propp's functions. These functions of narration direct the moral lesson of the tales and support the societal rules regarding filial obedience.

Within this framework, classic fables (Malin Kundang, Si Tanggang, and Nakhoda Manis) are presented as primary narrative texts. These tales are analyzed through Propp's main functions, including the prohibition, the infraction, the exit, the punishment, and the change, all of which together constitute the moral consequence of disobedience to parents. The framework even ventures further into digital storytelling and incorporation in education, where classical stories are converted into digital versions. This transformation serves as a mediating layer that enhances access, interaction, and relevance of teaching strategies without altering the core narrative. The dynamic between the story structure and the digital adaptation raises questions about moral teaching, cultural survival, and the relevance of teaching strategies, thereby indicating that these tales are not merely for the purpose of cultural preservation. The Conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 2 shows the connection among Propp's Morphology of the Folktale, Nusantara's filial piety tales, digital storytelling integration and the educational outcomes.

The research is conducted through a conceptual framework that is an outcome of Propp's Morphology of the Folktale, which considers the narrative structure as the principal channel of moral values dissemination. The framework proposes Nusantara tales of filial obedience as moral stories having a composition characterized by the recurrence of Propp's functions. The functions of narration

in the folktales encircle the moral lesson and reinforce the conventional rules in the society concerning filial obedience.

The study of classic fables (Malin Kundang, Si Tanggang, and Nakhoda Manis) is based on the conceptual framework that has been derived from Propp's Morphology of the Folktale. The analysis includes Propp's main functions such as prohibition, infraction, exit, punishment, and change, all of which together form the moral consequence of disobedience to parents. The concept even carries the digital storytelling and its use in education where traditional stories are turned into digital ones. This transition acts as a mediating layer that elevates the accessibility, interaction, and relevance of teaching strategies to a great extent while keeping the core storyline intact. The interplay of tale structure and digital adaptation raises debates on morality teaching, cultural preservation, and the need for teaching methods, thus implying that these tales are not only meant for the sake of culture preservation. The conceptual framework depicted in Figure 2 indicates the connection between Propp's Morphology of the Folktale, Nusantara's filial piety tales, integration of digital storytelling, and educational outcomes.

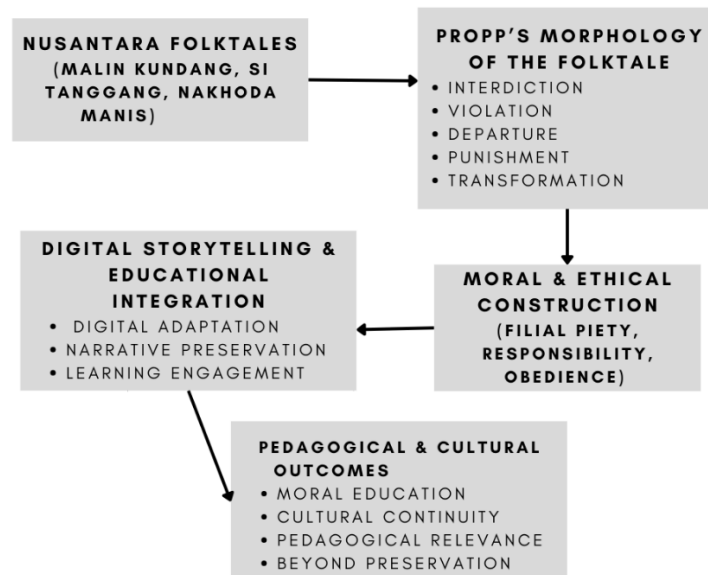


Figure 2 – Conceptual Framework

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study used a convergent mixed-methods research design was applied in this study that involved merging where the quantitative survey data were combined with two qualitative analyses in order to explore investigate the educational and cultural importance of Nusantara folktales. The mixed-methods technique was used approach was utilized to validate the results by bringing together integrating the different aspects of the research, the numerical trends, the narrative structures, and the participants' views, all in the viewpoints of the participants, all under a single analytical framework.

3.2 Data Sources

Three primary data sources were used:

- Folktale texts (Malin Kundang, Si Tanggang, and Nakhoda Manis), analysed qualitatively using Propp's Morphology of the Folktale;
- Quantitative survey responses measuring engagement, motivation, and learning-related perceptions; and
- Qualitative open-ended responses capturing participants' reflections on moral, cultural, and educational value.

3.3 Qualitative Analysis I: Structural Folktale Analysis (Propp's Morphology)

Using Propp's Morphology of the Folktale as an analytical framework, three Nusantara folktales were comparatively analyzed in terms of text. The three selected folktales, Malin Kundang, Si Tanggang, and Nakhoda Manis, all demonstrate the same thematic focus on the importance of filial piety and are prominent cultural representations in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei, respectively.

The analysis of the texts, which was conducted in a comparative manner, aimed at spotting the reoccurring Proppian functions in each tale, with the attention on the structural aspects like interdiction, violation, departure, punishment, and transformation. The functions were compared across the selected stories to uncover the common structural patterns that impart moral lessons regarding filial piety. This analysis represented the first qualitative strand, laying down the ethical and narrative bases of the tales.

By utilizing Propp's Morphology of the Folktale as an analytical tool, these three Nusantara folktales were subjected to a comparative text analysis. The folktales chosen, namely Malin Kundang, Si Tanggang and Nakhoda Manis, are united by the same thematic concern of the necessity of filial piety and are noted as the main cultural symbols of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei, respectively.

Aiming to spot the reoccurring Proppian functions in each tale the analysis of the texts was done in a comparative way with focus on the structural aspects like interdiction, violation, departure, punishment, and transformation. The functions were compared over the selected stories revealing the share of common structural patterns that would impart moral lessons regarding filial piety. This analysis made the first qualitative strand which established the ethical and narrative bases of the tales.

3.4 Qualitative Analysis II: Thematic Analysis of Participant Responses

Qualitative data obtained taken from the open-ended questionnaire items to from the participants were analyzed through thematic analysis according to processed thematically according to Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. The analysis focused elaborated on the perceptions of engagement the participants regarding digital folktales engagingness, moral values, cultural relevance, and educational potential of digital folktales among the participants. Thematic findings have been applied to provide the context for have been used to contextualize and to augment enhance the understanding comprehension of the insights derived from the that the structural analysis and the quantitative results provided.

3.5 Quantitative Component

For the quantitative component, a structured questionnaire was distributed to 34 participants, including students, teachers, and parents. Using a 5-point Likert scale, the questionnaire assessed

learner engagement, motivation, collaboration, moral value transmission, and support for digital preservation. Descriptive statistics were first computed to summarise response patterns, and correlation analysis was subsequently conducted to determine the relationships among the measured variables. To test reliability, Cronbach's alpha was computed, with a minimum of 0.70 being the threshold limit for acceptance (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The literature survey in digital storytelling was used to consider 2011). In the digital storytelling literature survey, the usability, cultural value, and learning outcomes resulting from of the digital adaptation of folktales were considered supporting previous digital storytelling studies.

3.6 Integration of Findings

Integration was done at the interpretation phase where the outcomes from the Proppian structural analysis, thematic analysis, and quantitative results were combined to give a clear picture of how Nusantara folktales not only serve to preserve culture but also to facilitate pedagogical and moral education.

Integration occurred at the stage of interpretation while the results of Proppian structural analysis, thematic analysis, and quantitative analysis were put together to provide a clear picture of the role of Nusantara folktales not only to preserve culture but also to impart moral and educational lessons.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical principles at all times. Participation was by choice, responses were confidential, and nothing that could identify the participants was gathered. The research constantly followed the ethical rules. The taking part was voluntary, the answers were kept secret, and no data that could trace back to the participants was collected. Consent was given by the participants who voluntarily filling in the questionnaire.

4. FINDINGS

The structural analysis disclosed quite a few commonalities among the three folk stories, which were made even more evident by the Proppian functions that reoccurred and stressed the moral consequences of disobedience to one's children. The main narrative motifs were the parent's caution (prohibition), the main character's cutting off the family (breaking the rules), the heavenly or magical punishment (penalty), and the physical metamorphosis, mostly into rock, which represented moral resolution in a symbolic way.

The structure of the three folktales showed the same points, which were even more pointed out by the Proppian functions that made clear the moral drawbacks of not obeying parents. The most crucial story elements were the parents' warning (prohibition), the protagonist's isolation from the family (breaking the rules), the divine or magical punishment (penalty), and the physical change, mostly into stone, which was a symbolic way of representing moral resolution.

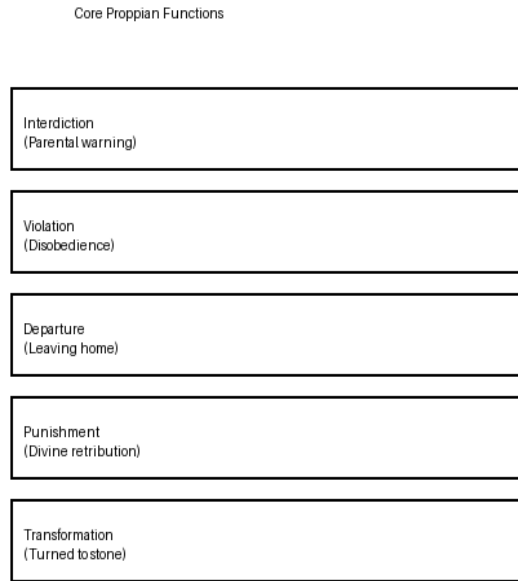


Figure 3 – Core Proppian’s Functions

Empirical research linked to digital storytelling strongly advocated for the educational and cultural significance of folktales. Descriptive Statistics of Educational and Cultural Impact of Digital Storytelling are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 - Descriptive Statistics of Educational and Cultural Impact of Digital Storytelling

Dimension	Measurement Indicator	Mean / Correlation
Moral Education	The efficacy of the moral messages communicated	4.5
Language & Narrative Quality	The degree to which the language and narrative structure suited the occasion	4.6
Cultural Preservation	The justification for the digital preservation of folk tales	4.8
Learner Engagement Motivation & Collaboration	Engagement and enjoyment in learning activities The rise in motivation and group learning	4.3 High*
Learner Autonomy	The connection of digital storytelling with learners getting more independent	r = .693

The findings of the research results provide a powerful empirical foundation for the recognition of digital storytelling as an important cultural and educational medium in the context of folktales. The moral value transmission received the maximum rating with M = 4.5, thus pointing out by indicating that the digital folktales are viewed as powerful means effective channels for the communication of ethical lessons, particularly the ones concerned with those related to social responsibility and moral conduct.

Likewise, the high mean score for language and narrative appropriateness ($M = 4.6$) is an indicator that the digital materials in terms of linguistic quality and storytelling structure were more than suitable for learners' comprehension and engagement.

The highest affirmation was given to digital preservation ($M = 4.8$) which mirrored the respondents' acknowledgment of digital storytelling as an effective means for the protection of folktales and the cultural heritage associated with them. Among the learning outcomes, the students indicated high rates of both engagement and enjoyment ($M \approx 4.3$) thus, confirming that storytelling through digital technology attracts the interest of and participates the students in the learning process. Moreover, the feeling of being motivated and the tendency to work together became more pronounced, thus inferring that storytelling with the help of digital tools helps in creating Interactivity and learner-centred learning environments.

The high positive correlation found between digital storytelling and learner autonomy ($r = .693$) is a clear indication of the strong association between participation in digital narratives and the students' capacity to assume more control over their own learning. In general, the results indicate that digital storytelling not only plays a role in preserving cultures but also acts as a method that is capable of bringing about the desired changes in the fields of ethics, involvement, and independence among students.

5. DISCUSSION

Generally, this research has proved that South-east Asian tales of filial piety are not merely culture-based relics, rather, they serve as moral narratives in the structured manner of the themes occurring in cultures. The Proppian functions, constantly taking place in Malin Kundang, Si Tanggang, and Nakhoda Manis, mainly interdiction, violation, punishment, and change, indicate a common psychological that brings to the fore the moral expectation of obedience to the parents. The general structural agreement supports Propp's (1968) claim that folktales in different cultures are ruled by narrative functions that signify the same ethical meaning, and it also agrees with the stream of folklore studies that regard traditional tales as a factor in the process of moral regulation and social continuity (Bascom, 1965; Dundes, 1980).

The results also support the literature that has already been published regarding the use of folklore in moral and character education as a most fruitful teaching method. Just like the earlier works have shown (Rokhman et al., 2014; Suwastini, 2023), the filial piety stories that were analyzed in the current research pass on moral teachings through consequence-driven narration rather than quite directly telling the learners, which leads them to become moral through the process of the story they have experienced.

Moreover, the empirical evidence emphasizes the need for the application of digital storytelling as a modern educational medium to a great extent. The high mean scores for moral value transmission, narrative appropriateness, and digital preservation correspond with the previous findings that digital storytelling facilitates engagement, understanding, and the creation of meaning through the interaction of different modes (Smeda et al., 2014; Castillo-Cuesta et al., 2021). Also, the strong approval of the preservation of digitization is in line with the UNESCO (2003) framework, which promotes preventing the loss of intangible cultural heritage by means of innovative and participatory approaches.

In addition, the documented rises in learner engagement, motivation, and collaboration strengthen previous conclusions that digital storytelling promotes learner-centred and interactive learning environments (Azliza et al., 2019; Baehaki, 2023). The very high positive correlation of digital storytelling with learner autonomy ($r = .693$) is an extension of prior research showing that narrative-based digital learning not only increases engagement but also encourages independent and self-directed learning behaviours. All of these findings together point out that the Nusantara folktales play

not only the role of preservation but also the role of being pedagogically significant resources that connect the traditional moral education with the modern digital learning practices

Theoretical Implications

In theory, this research expands the use of Propp's Morphology of the Folktale not just to textual and structural analysis but also to modern educational and digital settings by recognizing its application in these fields. The results indicate that Proppian narrative functions offer a reliable ethical structure that can be incorporated and transmitted through digital storytelling without the risk of losing its moral significance. This research by combining folklore theory with digital heritage and educational research adds up to the colossal volume of papers that feel to be the same. So, they are the ones who are making this whole thing possible, and on the top of that, they are really the ones who are producing these ideas. Moreover, this unity propels the theoretical argument whereby the narrative structure, moral teaching, and digital creation come together in place of culturally adaptive learning settings.

In principle, this study widens the application of Propp's Morphology of the Folktale to modern educational and digital contexts besides textual and structural analysis by acknowledging its use in these areas. The findings suggest that Proppian narrative functions provide an ethical framework that can safely be assimilated and conveyed through digital storytelling without the danger of its moral essence being eroded. This combination of folklore theory with digital heritage and educational research adds to the already huge number of papers that seem to be alike. Thus, they are the ones behind this entire phenomenon, and besides, they are the ones who are really generating these ideas. Besides, this unity enhances the theoretical argument where the narrative structure, moral imparting, and digital creation coalesce in culturally adaptive learning environments.

6. CONCLUSION

According to the authors of this paper, the Nusantara fables of piety, like Malin Kundang, Si Tanggang, and Nakhoda Manis, possess not only the same morals and similarities in structure but also the educational significance that still exists. By using Propp's Morphology, it is possible to show how these tales facilitate the moral development of children through the application of the identical narrative functions. The incorporation of digital storytelling, on the other hand, increases the teachers' resources and guarantees that ethical values are not merely inactive cultural artifacts but rather vibrant and powerful in the contemporary educational scenario. Ultimately, it can be argued that the legends of the Nusantara have been and are not only by and through stones but also by and through memories, meanings, and digital innovations.

Acknowledgments: Researchers express their appreciation to all participants who have helped the project as well as the administration of UiTM Kedah for the resource and equipment support. They also appreciate the time and expertise of everyone who took part in this study, and last but not least, they value the knowledge and time of all the participants who were involved in this research.

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