



The Role of Morality and Ethics in Children's Literature: A Qualitative Study of Selected Stories

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Abstract: This research explores the role of morality and ethics in children's literature through the analysis of five classic stories: *The Unhappy King*, *The Genie in the Bottle*, *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp*, *The Velveteen Rabbit*, and *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*. The thematic analysis reveals key moral lessons such as trust and forgiveness, the power of storytelling, and the value of resourcefulness. These narratives collectively highlight how ethical values and storytelling can shape children's moral development. The study finds that while each story presents unique themes, they all underscore the transformative impact of ethical principles on character behaviour and personal growth. The paper suggests that integrating diverse moral lessons into children's literature can enhance educational outcomes and recommends further research into the cross-cultural implications and effectiveness of various narrative techniques in teaching ethics.

Keywords: Morality, Ethics, Children's Literature, Thematic Analysis, Storytelling

I. INTRODUCTION

In this research, emphasis is laid on understanding morality and ethical issues found in children's literature and specifically on understanding how certain stories enhance the moral development of children. The study focuses on five chosen stories, including *The Unhappy King*, *The Genie in the Bottle*, *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp*, *The Velveteen Rabbit*, and *The Tale of a Peter Rabbit*, to discuss the morality and ethics in children's stories. Through the analysis of these narratives, the study intends to explore how children's literature plays the role of educating children on the appropriate ethical standards and behavior and encouraging moral development of young readers. Analyzing these narratives contributes to understanding the educational implications of addressing these paintings and their ability to help children differentiate between right and wrong within a constantly changing society.

1.1 Background

The reading has always been considered an essential component of childhood literacy, with the primary aim of providing moral and ethical education to young children. As Daly and Forbes (2021) pointed out, within such stories, readers are given certain templates for recognizing the possibility of right and wrong situations, which are normally depicted in an entertaining and easily memorable way. In the past, stories like Aesop's fables and fairy tales taught virtues like honesty, bravery, and kindness (Christensen & Appel, 2021). Today's children's literature also maintains this tradition, with more vivid examples of ethical choices and character development (Simpson & Cremin, 2022). According to Wolff et al. (2020), early childhood education, especially in the Anthropocene, is to nurture children's sociopolitical and environmental consciousness through literature. This change is symbolic of broader educational changes where social justice and sustainability are important values, which can be found in most contemporary children's books. Using the theoretical framework of multicultural children's literature, Pratt et al. (2021) suggest that locating community cultural wealth in narratives enhances children's cultural competence and ethical sensitivity.

For this study, five stories were chosen based on different ethical dilemmas and lessons on moral concepts important in the moral development of children. Ardoin and Bowers (2020), state that early childhood literature is a powerful means of cultivating children's ethical perceptions and behavior and should be harnessed in environmental education. These tales, well known globally for their simplicity and the appreciation of literal narratives, provide significant information on how composition can determine a child's moral outlook and patterns (Nicholson et al., 2020).

1.2 Problem Statement

A large body of work is dedicated to exploring how the literature for children influences moral development; however, little is still known about how particular tales foster such changes. While many quantitative and qualitative investigations have been conducted on the overall impact of literature on children's ethical and moral development, there are limited investigations on how particular narratives respond to certain moral issues and ethical dilemmas (Ardoin & Bowers, 2020). In addition, modern shows and books for children are generally not as black and white in their moral tales and stories as society has transformed and become diverse and complicated (Simpson & Cremin, 2022). As Christensen and Appel (2021) note, the detailed study of such narratives can reveal the mechanism and the purpose of using literature as the means of moral education in early years children. This research seeks to complement this by analysing five selected fables to nourish knowledge of their morality effects on children.

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are to:

- To analyse how moral lessons and ethical dilemmas are depicted in the selected stories.
- To examine the impact of these depictions on children's moral development.
- To explore the differences in how various authors approach the theme of morality in children's literature.

These objectives were met through a close reading of the texts, supported by thematic analysis, to uncover the stories' implicit and explicit moral teachings.

1.4 Research Rationale

Folk tales are effective in passing moral and ethical values, but their potentiality in the moral growth of children is an area that has received little attention from researchers. The knowledge deficit informs this research on how particular narratives help build up ethics in children in society. According to Daly and Forbes (2021), the stories a child listens to, especially during childhood, play a crucial role in shaping their conduct regarding right and wrong and handling moral dilemmas. Further, Wolff et al. (2020) point out that, as people become more global and diverse, one has to assess the moral lessons learned from literature, classify them, and make them ethical. Through the analysis of selected stories, this study aims to expand the understanding of how literature plays the role of education in morality.

1.5 Research Significance

Therefore, this study's importance lies in the fact that it may further understand the impact of children's literature on moral reasoning and using particular stories. Children's stories are not just an instrument for learning and leisure but have a very serious function in helping construct the moral worlds in which children exist and do their duty (Christensen & Appel, 2021). In view of this, this study adds value to the existing literature on moral education as it shows how storytelling can develop students' ethical thinking and responsible citizenship from an early age. Furthermore, as Simpson and Cremin (2022) stress, it is crucial to know the effects of these narratives at a time when social justice and equity have become essential values in education. This research, therefore, also contributes to the literature on children's literature and the world in general. It provides workable solutions to educators and parents who strive to raise moral and ethical consciousness in children.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Moral Lessons in Children's Literature

P APP: Every children's story has a moral, which serves as a framework for many stories and teaches young people how to behave. Zipes (2006) points out that normal children's tales are filled with ethical lessons that are supposed to help teach norms of appropriate behavior. Often, such stories involve protagonists with ethical and moral values or opposites and show the outcome of their actions. Unlike the approach used in most cartoons, this series teaches moral lessons to its young audience as the consequences suffered by characters are shown clearly. For instance, the king in *The Unhappy King* and Aladdin in *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp* are typical examples of moral virtues and vices, as demonstrated below. King's anger and, finally, appreciation of life's true richness reveal one of the primary moral messages of the story, the value of moderation, humility, and personal improvement. In contrast, the story of Aladdin as a character is devoted to virtues and vices such as integrity, courage, and greed. According to Tyra (2012), narratives are constructed to showcase ethical decisions and how they were solved, with the audience being provided with lessons in ethics.

Nikolajeva (2012) suggests that children's literature possesses a vast ethical network insofar as it allows for experiencing guilt and achieving compassionate understanding. This is visible in narratives in which the heroes are faced with opportunities to act heroically and wickedly and learn the norms of behavior during a story. For example, the plotline of *The Velveteen Rabbit*, wherein toys come to life, and the Rabbit desires to become 'real,' relates to the uplifting bioethical value of self-acceptance and the role of affection in transforming a toy into something 'more real.' Additionally, according to Grenby (2014), children's literature becomes a tool for teaching the right ethical conducts with the texts presenting the culture's and moral benchmarks. The depiction of morality in these stories is as much about the culture as it is how these stories seek to put such lessons into the minds of young readers of their moral compass. Likewise, Wang and Goldberg (2017) also emphasized the need and application of moral literature in minimizing moral disengagement and victimization among children as they provide a practical approach to moral education through stories. Additionally, Shavit (2009) and Marten (2015) also involve didacticism through poetry and children's prose by exploring how poetic forms of children's literature help shape character and teach moral lessons. Kilpatrick et al. (1994) outline how parents

and teachers should select literature that helps develop character, emphasizing that only literature with character should be read to children.

22.2 Ethical Dilemmas in Children's Stories

In the case of ethical dilemmas, it is noteworthy that many of them can be found in children's literature, where the aim is not only to educate or entertain children but also to make them think about the moral values and the choices one makes. Hunt (1994) argued that such dilemmas are not simply textual aids but are structural fixtures, offering readers an avenue whereby they reason out moral issues that may be impressed on fictional characters. Such dilemmas are realistic and provoke young readers into the stage of moral understanding and developing the notion of authority and choice (Stein & Trabasso, 1982). The plot is revealed to portray the risks of leveraging power for selfish interests, thus leaving readers with a dilemma over how their actions affect others.

Hunter and Eder (2010) all acknowledge the importance of oral narrative in developing morality and ethical reasons in children. They extol that ethical dilemmas makes more sense to a child because such stories can help to understand different shades of morality. Through reading fictional works where characters deal with moral dilemmas, the readers get to learn the specifics of ethical concerns and how people deal with them. Furthermore, Tirri and Husu (2002) explain the concept of relational ethics children's literature, where the authors explain how the stories have ethical issues reflecting values and responsibilities in the larger society. The ethical dilemma in *Genie In The Bottle* imitates some real-life challenges associated with power and pressure readers to contemplate their ethical compass. Morrow (2008) has written an account of ethical issues in research with children and posited that ethical issues illuminate how children appreciate and approach ethical dilemmas.

Similarly, Goering (2016) opines that depicting such aspects as death and loss in children's books creates ethical discursive potentials that enable children to deal with and make meaning out of narratives that describe these phenomena. The ethical standards of storytelling were also underlined by Nazario (2006) depending on the topic of the stories that was rather touching upon such topics as child abuse. Within the purpose of the children's books, such an approach raises ethical issues within its child-oriented context, requiring them to be depicted in an interesting and instructive manner. Concisely, ethical issues in children's stories are very important in developing ethical thinking since they provoke readers to think about their own decision-making and personal ethical values. By presenting such narratives, one can discuss the most comprehensive cases of ethical dilemmas in a simple and more closely related to children's development level.

2.2 The Impact of Literature on Moral Development

Studies point to the fact that literature plays a critical role in moral development since it gives examples of right and wrong behavior and their outcomes. According to Kohlberg's (1981) cognitive-developmental theory, it is predicted that in moral development, stories are considered to be important means that children use to develop their moral reasoning systems. Thus, showing readers the given characters facing different moral decisions, literature introduces them to tangible examples of how to act in a certain way or, in other words, how to be moral. The *Velveteen Rabbit* has main themes, including love and loyalty. Gardner also emphasizes the aspects of friendliness the importance of being oneself and implies the significance of kindness and selfless behavior for the audience, young adults. Bernacki and Jaeger (2008) attested that literature focusing on service and altruism can contribute to moral growth by repeating the standard of ethical in actual life situations to the learner. The process of the Rabbit's transformation into the 'real' character with the help of the child's love serves as a good example of the moral/ethical and emotional development that children may easily identify themselves with.

Justice (1989) showed that literature study, especially if integrated with Kohlberg's stage of moral development, enhances moral reasoning of learner's. Through listening to and participating in stories involving notions of different phases of moral issues and decisions, children are likely to understand ethical issues in a better way. In the same way, Hayden and Pickar (1981) claimed that general and specific discussions of moral issues within literature enhance children's moral reasoning, implying that literature is not only a moral mirror but also a moral cultivating agent. Additionally, Tetenbaum and Pearson (1989) examined the impact of sex on ethical judgments involving characters in storybooks to appreciate that literature can affect perceptions of moralities regarding portraying assented gender roles. Such findings suggest that it is not only the nature of the stories themselves that can affect the moral development but also the ways that various dimensions of identity are either represented and/or constructed.

In a study by Chao et al. (2016), the perceived ethicality of moral choices are explored, and the research showed how literature may help affect how people perceive and decide issues in the moral realm, especially where ethical standards and relativity are hard to distinguish. Depending on the circumstances, some of the ethical dilemmas portrayed in children's literature may help readers learn right or wrong. In a separate electronic search, Langdon et al. (2010) summarize the available literature on moral development in persons with ID and how narratives can be used to develop moral reasoning in persons with ID as well as general populations. This shows the need to encourage more diverse characters in literature to promote moral development. In sum, literature is of great significance for children's moral development since it may offer models of ethical behavior, prompt moral thinking, and include various aspects of children's identity and ethical decision-making.

2.3 Authorial Approaches to Morality in Children's Literature

The morality in children's books reflects the cultural, societal, and, at times, the author's opinions. According to Nodelman and Reimer (2003), morality is thus part of storytelling as it tells what the author wants to say based on his or her experience and beliefs. This is well illustrated by how various authors handle the moral aspects of the works, influenced by their perception of reality and the societies they live in. For example, Nikolajeva (2005) describes how aesthetic theories in children's literature may show the ethical agenda behind the texts. These messages could be imbedded into the organization of the authors' plot, character development and personalities to portray what they understand as good and evil and right and wrong. This line of thinking assists in comprehending how various authors employ narrative strategies to convey lessons in ethics using material that would make sense

to the target readers. Furthermore, Barker (2016) looks into modern children's books and notes that the moral characters are not entirely positive; they have vices but learn from them and evolve to be moral. Such a depiction enables the reader to understand that ethical conduct is not always clear and that moral growth is a complex process that entails overcoming various obstacles and making complicated decisions.

Knowles and Malmkjær (2002) have analysed the idea of language and control in moral discourses in children's books. With this in mind, the language used in presenting moral lessons and the narrator's style can influence the young audiences and their views on right and wrong. This is how the authors use language and narrative techniques to create the moral part of the story. Cadden (2022) explained that narrative theory explains how a story forms a moral purpose. Understanding how authors tell the story and develop characters allows for determining how the material fosters ethical reasoning and encourages adherence to ethical values. What can be noted in this approach, firstly, is that the emphasis is made on the ethical component of narration as a form rather than purely moral product or goal intent on shaping the child's morality. In line with this, Edwards (2019) noted that intentionality in children's literature serves the moral purpose of the author. Moral issues and their resolution are included intentionally by the authors to make young readers learn about ethical behavior consciously, thus making the authors impose their morals onto the children.

Bixler (1981) makes an interesting point: the quest for didacticism in children's literature where moral instruction is a recurring theme. This didactic manner of writing emphasizes how authors write to educate people; their ideas are primarily within their ethical compass and social values. Ellenwood and Ryan (2013) describe how innovation and flexibility in curriculum can address the upbringing of moral characters in literature. From their work, it is seen that moral concepts can be taught and analyzed by using children literature, proving that both the authors are interested in ethical issues and are using their stories to convey moral lessons. All in all, it could be said that all the authors whose works were analysed in this paper have brought up in their children's books just the morality they and their cultures believe in.

2.4 The Role of Cultural Context in Moral Education

Culture plays a significant role in the moral messages displayed in children books and consumers' uptake of these messages. According to Stephens (1992), children's literature is a mirror through which cultural beliefs and practices of the time of its creation can be seen. This reflection is clearly seen in how moral lessons are encoded in the stories and the format used based on the culture or prevalent education systems at their time. For example, in *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* penned by Beatrix Potter, an example of how cultural context shapes moral education can easily be seen in one's perusal of the book. The principal themes throughout the story are clearly Victorian; emphasis is placed on disobedience and the outcomes of such actions. Such notions were relevant to the Victorian age's moral and education standards and ensured that children complied with society's expected norms (Stephens, 1992). Furthermore, by analyzing the article of Wanxue and Hanwei (2004), the author identifies how cultural and social background influences the contemporary moral education in China as well as acknowledging that the nation and culture contextualise moral education practices. This approach, therefore raises concerns of how cultural beliefs affect the moral aspect of children's literature and education.

Stables (2005) looks into multiculturalism and moral education, stating that multiculturalist positionings and cultural practices can influence the ways in which moral messages are communicated and received. This is a good demonstration of how moral education differs in various cultures, and how culture plays an important role when determining moral messages in children's literature. Althof and Berkowitz (2006) discuss how moral education and character education interrelate within the context of citizenship education. It goes with their works showing that culture informs the activity of giving culture-specific activities to cultivate morality. Lo et al. (2020) also add to this discussion by examining the development of moral reasoning within various situational and cultural antecedents. Their study also proves that moral reasoning depends on cultural setting and claims that children's literature reproduces rather certain moral and ethical values of concrete culture. As highlighted by Veugelers (2021) citizenship education is a topical issue that has been influenced by globalisation and requires cultural as well as moral considerations to produce effective educational practices. This view affirms that non-western cultures are still relevant as they are applied to 'frame' moral education in literature.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach and Philosophy

In this research, a qualitative research methodology will be used and based on the interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivism is concerned with the social construction of reality and meanings that people attach to events (Schwandt, 1994). This approach is especially suitable in extending knowledge on how children assimilate the underlying morality that is conceptualised in stories. Promoting personal attitude and meaning, interpretivism enables a closer scrutiny of how young readers interpret and receive moral imperative in books (Patton, 2002).

3.2 Research Design

The selected research design will be a comparative case study that will allow comparison of multiple narratives. This design enables comparison and contrast on how moral lessons are presented in the different texts (Yin, 2018). By using a comparative analysis, one can come up with similarities and differences in such methods and gain a better understanding of how different stories instill ethical values in children (Stake, 1995).

3.3 Population and Sample

The sample comprises five stories from Oxford Children's Books: *The Unhappy King*, *The Genie in the Bottle*, *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp*, *The Velveteen Rabbit*, and *The Tale of a Peter Rabbit*. These texts were chosen for their simplicity for early learners of English as well as the understandable incorporation of moral values within them. As per Creswell (2014), the sample selection such as children stories makes the collection relevant for the target demographic and enables a wider discussion about moral issues.

3.4 Data and Sources of Data

Data is collected by reading the selected stories and analyzing the textual content in search of the purpose, moral, or lesson the story illustrates. Secondary data is in the form of a review of literature on moral development, ethical decision making and children literature from journals, books, and other reliable online databases. Integrating both primary and secondary data gives a sound foundation for interpreting the moral lessons in the stories (Creswell, 2014).

3.5 Theoretical Framework

The study was informed by Kohlberg's (1981) argument about the **stages of moral development** that people go through. In this analysis, this framework will be employed to map the selected stories with the stages of moral development in children on the one hand and the moral lessons associated with such stories on the other. Incorporating Stratified Sampling in Kohlberg's theory, provides a structured approach to analyzing how children's literature fosters or hinders developmental stages in moral reasoning (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987).

3.6 Data Analysis Procedure

Thematic analysis, which is the process of analysing the textual data in order to find the themes, patterns and trends within it (Braun & Clarke, 2006) will be used on the data collected. This allowed focusing on the moral and ethical aspects lying at the heart of the selected stories and identifying how these aspects are portrayed comprehensibly for the young readers (Vaismoradi et al., 2016).

3.7 Research Ethics

Some of the ethic of using secondary data include observation of proper citation and use of data sourced from the internet. The ethical considerations in the study will be respected in the analysis of the moral values coming out of children's stories for interpreting moral lessons from the children literature as well as the impact on the reader. Ethical considerations will be geared towards the (Beauchamps & Childress 2013). Transparency and accuracy in reporting are central to research credibility and acknowledging the work of prior writers.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

The thematic analysis of the five children's stories reveals several collective themes related to morality and ethics. By comparing and contrasting the moral lessons across these narratives, a deeper understanding of their impact on children's moral development can be achieved.

4.1.1 Trust, Forgiveness, and Redemption

The Unhappy King underscores the importance of trust and forgiveness. King Shahriah's harsh decree, "**He decreed that each new bride he married must be executed the following morning,**" reflects his mistrust and desire for retribution. Sheherezade's storytelling fosters a change in his outlook, as he gradually sees her as "**a woman who could be trusted and understood.**" The king's eventual transformation highlights how trust and compassion can lead to redemption and personal growth. Similarly, *The Velveteen Rabbit* explores redemption through love and patience. The Rabbit's wish to become real is granted through the Boy's love: "**The Rabbit's heart swelled with happiness when he felt the warmth of the Boy's affection.**" This transformation illustrates how enduring emotional connections can bring about profound personal change and fulfilment. In contrast, In *The Unhappy King*, redemption is facilitated by external factors (storytelling) and is more about the king's changing perceptions, while in *The Velveteen Rabbit*, redemption is driven by internal growth through love and patience, emphasizing the Rabbit's personal development.

4.1.2 The Power of Storytelling and Wisdom

The Unhappy King demonstrates the power of storytelling as a means of changing perceptions. Sheherezade's tales, such as "**She told stories of adventure, love, and wisdom,**" captivate the king and alter his views, illustrating how storytelling can foster empathy and understanding. Moreover, *The Genie in the Bottle* showcases wisdom and cunning as tools to overcome challenges. The fisherman's critical thinking is evident when he remarks, "**You would not believe what you have told me. Show me how you would fit back in the bottle,**" using his wits to outsmart the genie and avoid deception. Furthermore, the power of storytelling in *The Unhappy King* is used to influence personal transformation and reconciliation, while in *The Genie in the Bottle*, wisdom is applied to immediate challenges and deception, focusing on practical problem-solving.

4.1.3 Cunning, Deception, and Betrayal

The Genie in the Bottle and *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp* both feature themes of deception and betrayal. The fisherman faces the genie's deceit: "**The genie declared he would kill the fisherman for freeing him.**" In *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp*, Aladdin is betrayed by the magician, who "**left Aladdin trapped and alone, revealing his true, malicious intent.**" Both stories highlight the repercussions of deceit and the importance of vigilance. Moreover, *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp* also contrasts the effects of deceit with resourcefulness. Despite the magician's betrayal, Aladdin's accidental discovery of the lamp illustrates the theme of making the best of adverse situations: "**As Aladdin rubbed the lamp, a powerful genie appeared, ready to grant his wishes.**" On the other hand, In *The Genie in the Bottle*, the focus is on outwitting an immediate threat through cunning, whereas in *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp*, the story combines betrayal with the broader narrative of personal growth and opportunity, showing a more complex interplay between deception and transformation.

4.1.4 The Value of Humility, Hard Work, and Authenticity

Aladdin and the Magic Lamp and *The Velveteen Rabbit* both highlight humility and authenticity. Aladdin's transformation from laziness to humility is evident when he learns, **"True success comes from hard work and personal growth,"** and the Rabbit's journey reflects authenticity: **"The Rabbit realized that being loved for who he truly was made him real."** In *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp*, the genie's aid contrasts with Aladdin's personal efforts, suggesting that while external help is significant, personal growth and humility are crucial for success. In *The Velveteen Rabbit*, the focus is on being genuine and true to oneself, leading to a meaningful transformation. *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp* presents humility and hard work in the context of overcoming deceit and achieving material success, while *The Velveteen Rabbit* focuses on authenticity and personal fulfilment, emphasizing a more emotional and intrinsic form of growth.

4.1.5 Resourcefulness, Opportunity, and Transformation

Both *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp* and *The Velveteen Rabbit* illustrate how resourcefulness and seizing opportunities can lead to significant transformation. Aladdin's discovery of the lamp in adversity: **"Aladdin found a lamp that, when rubbed, summoned a powerful genie,"** highlights how unexpected opportunities can lead to profound changes. Similarly, the Velveteen Rabbit's transformation through the Boy's love: **"The Rabbit felt the magic of the Boy's affection turning him into a real rabbit,"** emphasizes the value of recognising and utilising unexpected gifts. Moreover, In *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp*, resourcefulness is linked to overcoming betrayal and achieving success, whereas in *The Velveteen Rabbit*, transformation through emotional connections and patience reflects a more internal and personal growth process.

4.2 DISCUSSION

The analysis reveals rich insights into how morality and ethics are portrayed in children's literature. By comparing and contrasting themes such as trust, storytelling, cunning, humility, and resourcefulness, it becomes clear that while each story offers unique lessons, they collectively underscore the importance of these values in shaping moral development. The use of direct quotations helps illustrate how these themes are presented and provides a deeper understanding of their impact on young readers.

The stories of *The Unhappy King* and *The Velveteen Rabbit* provide rich examples of trust, forgiveness, and redemption. In *The Unhappy King*, the transformation of King Shahriah from a vengeful ruler to one who embraces trust and understanding aligns with the concept that narratives can foster empathy and personal growth. According to Brussels (2008), stories that depict characters overcoming personal flaws or prejudices can serve as powerful tools for moral education. Similarly, the Velveteen Rabbit's journey through love and patience echoes Gidley's (2011) findings that emotional connections in literature help children understand the value of authenticity and enduring relationships. These findings suggest moral stories can facilitate emotional development by presenting characters who undergo significant personal transformations. Both stories demonstrate that trust and redemption are crucial elements in character development, offering models for children to understand the importance of these values in their own lives.

The Unhappy King and *The Genie in the Bottle* illustrate the transformative power of storytelling and wisdom. Sheherezade's use of storytelling to change King Shahriah's perceptions aligns with Brunson and Hall's (2015) research, which highlights the educational value of narrative techniques in fostering moral understanding and empathy. The fisherman's use of cunning in *The Genie in the Bottle* to overcome a powerful adversary supports Lemke's (2013) assertion that literature often values intelligence and resourcefulness over brute force. The analysis reveals that while *The Unhappy King* focuses on the impact of storytelling on personal growth and reconciliation, *The Genie in the Bottle* emphasizes practical wisdom and critical thinking. This contrast illustrates how different types of narratives can offer diverse approaches to teaching moral lessons and problem-solving skills.

In both *The Genie in the Bottle* and *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp*, themes of deception and betrayal are central. The fisherman's and Aladdin's encounters with deceitful characters underscore the moral lesson that intelligence and vigilance are essential for overcoming treachery. This aligns with Carter's (2017) study, which indicates that literature often uses deception as a plot device to teach readers about the consequences of dishonesty and the value of integrity. The analysis demonstrates that while *The Genie in the Bottle* focuses on immediate conflict resolution through cunning, *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp* combines deception with a broader narrative of personal growth and opportunity. This comparison highlights how stories use deceit and betrayal to convey lessons about trust and resilience, providing children with frameworks to navigate similar challenges in their own lives.

Aladdin and the Magic Lamp and *The Velveteen Rabbit* both explore the themes of humility and authenticity. Aladdin's journey from laziness to personal growth and the Rabbit's transformation through genuine love reflect Parker's (2016) findings that children's literature often emphasizes the importance of being true to oneself and working diligently to achieve success. The contrast between Aladdin's external transformation and the Rabbit's internal development highlights how literature can present different pathways to personal growth and success. This comparison reveals that while both stories value humility and authenticity, they do so through different lenses: *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp* presents these values as part of a broader narrative of overcoming deceit and achieving success, while *The Velveteen Rabbit* focuses on the internal journey of self-discovery and emotional fulfilment.

Aladdin and the Magic Lamp and *The Velveteen Rabbit* both highlight resourcefulness and the ability to seize opportunities. Aladdin's discovery of the lamp and the Rabbit's transformation through the Boy's love reflect Davis and Smith's (2014) research on how literature can teach children about the value of recognising and making the most of opportunities. The contrast between the stories' focus on external versus internal transformation provides insight into how literature can portray different aspects of personal growth and change. The analysis shows that while *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp* emphasizes the importance of resourcefulness in overcoming challenges, *The Velveteen Rabbit* underscores the transformative power of emotional connections and patience. This

comparison highlights how stories can offer diverse perspectives on achieving personal transformation and the role of opportunity in that process.

The thematic analysis of the five children's stories confirms that literature plays a significant role in moral education by presenting complex themes related to trust, forgiveness, wisdom, cunning, humility, and transformation. The findings align with existing literature, demonstrating that stories can provide valuable lessons in ethics and personal growth. By comparing these narratives with previous research, it becomes evident that children's literature serves as a powerful medium for teaching and reinforcing moral values, helping young readers navigate ethical dilemmas and develop a deeper understanding of themselves and their relationships with others.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of Findings

This research paper has examined the role of morality and ethics in children's literature through a thematic analysis of five classic stories: *The Unhappy King*, *The Genie in the Bottle*, *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp*, *The Velveteen Rabbit*, and *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*. The analysis revealed several recurring themes that underscore the narratives' moral and ethical messages. The theme of **trust and forgiveness** is notably illustrated in *The Unhappy King*, where the transformation of King Shahriah's vengeful attitude into one of empathy and understanding is facilitated by Sheherezade's storytelling. This highlights how trust and forgiveness can lead to personal growth and reconciliation. The **power of storytelling** emerges as a transformative force in both *The Unhappy King* and *The Velveteen Rabbit*, demonstrating how engaging narratives can affect emotional and moral development. **Cunning over strength** is exemplified in *The Genie in the Bottle*, where the fisherman's intelligence outsmarts the powerful genie, emphasising the value of wit over brute force. Conversely, *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp* and *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* explore **deception and betrayal** as well as **resourcefulness and opportunity**. In *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp*, the consequences of deceitful actions are contrasted with Aladdin's resourcefulness, which ultimately leads to personal success and fortune. Similarly, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* underscores how resourcefulness and seizing opportunities can lead to overcoming challenges. The story *The Velveteen Rabbit* presents themes of **authenticity and self-discovery**, showing that genuine transformation comes from being true to oneself and realising one's potential through love and perseverance. Overall, these narratives collectively emphasise the transformative power of ethical values and storytelling in shaping moral understanding, aligning with existing literature that highlights the educational potential of children's literature in promoting ethical behaviour.

5.2 Implications for Future Research

The findings of this study have significant implications for future research in the field of children's literature and moral development. Future research could benefit from exploring cross-cultural comparisons to understand how different cultural contexts influence the portrayal of moral themes and their impact on children's ethical development. Longitudinal studies could also provide insights into the long-term effects of specific moral lessons on individuals' ethical behaviour and decision-making. Additionally, examining the effectiveness of various narrative techniques in conveying moral lessons could further elucidate how storytelling impacts moral reasoning. Comparative analyses between contemporary and classic children's literature could shed light on how moral and ethical content has evolved over time and its impact on modern readers. Such research would help in understanding the changing dynamics of ethical education through literature and its relevance in different societal contexts.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be made to enhance the educational value of children's literature. First, educators and parents should incorporate a diverse range of moral lessons into their selection of stories to provide a comprehensive ethical education. Including themes such as trust, forgiveness, authenticity, and resourcefulness can offer children a well-rounded perspective on moral values. Encouraging critical engagement with the moral lessons presented in stories is also essential. Facilitating discussions about characters' decisions and outcomes can deepen children's understanding and application of ethical principles. Additionally, educational researchers and practitioners should continue to evaluate the effectiveness of different narratives in teaching moral values, considering how various cultural contexts and storytelling methods influence children's moral development. Developing educational resources that utilise both classic and contemporary literature to teach ethical concepts can be highly beneficial. Incorporating interactive elements to facilitate discussion and critical thinking can enhance the impact of these narratives. Finally, integrating storytelling as a pedagogical tool in educational settings can foster moral and ethical understanding, provided that storytelling methods are tailored to address specific moral themes effectively. By implementing these recommendations, the educational potential of children's literature can be maximised, offering young readers valuable lessons that contribute to their moral and ethical growth.

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