

UNIVERSITY MEDIA, ARTS AND COMMUNICATION (UniMAC)
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HOW TRADITIONAL STORYTELLING PRESERVES ETHNIC IDENTITY AND CULTURE
IN THE FACE OF MODERNISATION

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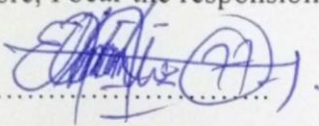
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DECLARATIONS

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Godwin Opoku Gyamfi, declare that this thesis, except for quotations and references contained in published works, which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere. Therefore, I bear the responsibility for any shortcomings.

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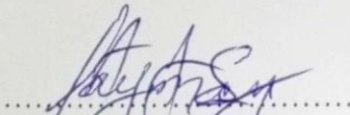
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SUPERVISORS' DECLARATION

I, the undersigned supervisor, declare that I supervised the preparation and presentation of this work in accordance with the guidelines for the supervision of MA thesis as laid down by the University of Media, Arts and Communication.

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Godwin Opoku Gyamfi

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ABSTRACT

Traditional storytelling has long played a central role in preserving ethnic identity, cultural memory, and communal values in Ghana. However, the rapid forces of modernisation, including urbanisation, globalisation, technological advancement, and shifting linguistic practices, have raised concerns about the continuity and relevance of these oral traditions. This study examines how traditional storytelling persists, evolves, or declines in contemporary Ghanaian society, with a focus on intergenerational transmission and cultural identity formation. Guided by Cultural Memory Theory, Hybridity Theory, and Reception Theory, the research employs a qualitative, multiple-case study approach involving the Ashanti, Effutu, and Akuapim ethnic groups. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions with youth, and the analysis of audiovisual materials, including recorded storytelling sessions and digital media adaptations. Thematic analysis, supported by NVivo, was used to identify patterns in cultural

transmission, adaptation, audience interpretation, and intergenerational engagement. The findings indicate that while modernisation presents challenges such as diminished intergenerational interactions and changes in language use, it also offers new opportunities for cultural preservation via digital storytelling, educational initiatives, and hybrid narrative forms. Nonetheless, the study highlights significant gaps in engagement among urban youth, concerns about authenticity in digital adaptations, and unequal power dynamics in the stories that are shared and valued. Overall, the research shows that traditional storytelling in Ghana is neither disappearing nor remaining static; instead, it is evolving within dynamic cultural spaces shaped by both continuity and change. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of how ethnic identity is negotiated in a modernising context and underscores the importance of culturally responsive strategies to sustain storytelling traditions across generations.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Traditional storytelling has long been a vital part of preserving Ghana's diverse cultures. Passed down orally from generation to generation, these stories hold history, moral lessons, and community identity. However, with rapid modernisation, urbanisation, digital media, and changing youth interests, their survival and relevance are increasingly uncertain. Ghana, home to multiple ethnic groups such as the Ga, Ewe, Dagomba, and Fante, each with unique storytelling traditions, offers a rich case study of how oral narratives adapt or fade in modern society. Some communities have embraced digital platforms to sustain storytelling, whereas others experience declining engagement, particularly among younger generations. These stories, often conveyed through song, dance, drumming, riddles, proverbs, and folktales, embody indigenous knowledge systems and ideologies that influence social behaviour and communal values over time. Modernisation driven by technological growth, globalisation, formal education, and mass media has transformed modes of communication and socialisation. Many communities are shifting from traditional forms to modern media, raising concerns about the future of cultural practices such as storytelling. Youth, in particular, grow up amid Western cultural influences, prompting questions about whether traditional storytelling persists and in what forms. Despite these challenges, qualitative data indicate that traditional storytelling persists in various forms across schools, cultural festivals, households, and online platforms. It remains vital to assess how deeply ethnic identity is still shaped by storytelling across different age groups in contemporary culture.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Although oral traditions are widely recognised as vital for maintaining cultural identity and transmitting values, beliefs, and history across generations, little is known about how modernisation affects storytelling practices among Ghana's diverse ethnic groups. Most existing research concentrates on specific communities, particularly the Ashanti, while overlooking the wide variety of oral traditions upheld by other tribes such as the Ewe, Ga-Dangme, Dagomba, and Fante. This restricted focus hampers our understanding of how many groups are adjusting to social change.

Furthermore, the impact of digital media on contemporary oral traditions remains a topic of ongoing academic debate. Some scholars argue that new media platforms offer opportunities to revive storytelling by enabling younger audiences to engage with traditional tales through accessible formats such as social media, YouTube videos, and podcasts (Asante, 2018). However, critics argue that because these digital adaptations often detach stories from their original performative and communal contexts, they risk reducing the authenticity and cultural richness of oral storytelling (Nsiah, 2020). These differing perspectives highlight the need for more in-depth, comparative research on how modernisation, including urbanisation, education, and technology, affects storytelling among different Ghanaian ethnic groups.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study examines the enduring importance of traditional storytelling in preserving ethnic identity and cultural continuity within Ghana's diverse communities, especially as these societies experience rapid modernisation. It investigates how oral traditions such as folktales, proverbs,

myths, music, and communal narratives serve as vessels for transmitting values, history, morals, and collective memory from one generation to the next.

The research further explores whether these storytelling practices are still actively preserved, adapted, or reinvented in today's evolving social landscape. It examines the settings where storytelling now takes place, including family gatherings, schools, community festivals, digital platforms, and media spaces. By analysing these modern expressions, the study aims to understand how traditional narratives are being reshaped to stay relevant in an era shaped by globalisation, technology, and changing cultural preferences.

Additionally, the study examines how people from different age groups, children, youth, adults, and elders, perceive the value and relevance of storytelling. This includes investigating generational differences in participation, attitudes, and levels of cultural attachment. Ultimately, the research aims to determine the extent to which traditional storytelling remains a powerful tool for preserving ethnic identity, reinforcing cultural pride, and fostering social cohesion in contemporary Ghanaian society.

1.4 Research Objectives

The following specific objectives will guide the study:

1. To investigate if traditional storytelling persists among ethnic groups in modern Ghana.
2. To identify the current forms and settings in which traditional storytelling is practised.
3. To assess the influence of traditional storytelling on cultural identity across different age groups.

1.5 Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following key questions:

1. Does traditional storytelling persist among today's ethnic communities?
2. In what forms and settings does traditional storytelling manifest in the modern context?
3. How does traditional storytelling influence cultural identity across different age groups?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study provides valuable insights into the ongoing relevance of oral storytelling as a vital mechanism for safeguarding cultural heritage in Ghana. By exploring how traditional narratives, myths, folktales, proverbs, and communal histories are passed down through generations, the research emphasises the lasting importance of oral traditions as a living repository of indigenous knowledge. Understanding whether and how these traditions endure, adapt, or diminish in modern contexts offers a foundation for developing culturally responsive education and preservation strategies.

The findings of this study could serve as a crucial resource for policymakers, educators, and cultural organisations seeking to enhance Ghana's cultural education initiatives. Insights from the research may inform legislative efforts to integrate indigenous knowledge systems into formal school curricula, thereby helping young learners develop a deeper appreciation of their ethnic heritage. This integration has the potential to strengthen character development, boost cultural confidence, and foster cross-cultural understanding in an increasingly globalised society.

Beyond its academic contribution, the study also plays an essential role in community empowerment. By raising awareness about the importance of preserving oral traditions, it encourages community members, particularly the youth, to value and actively participate in cultural practices that define their identity. Such involvement not only promotes community cohesion but also facilitates intergenerational dialogue, providing a platform for elders to pass on wisdom, moral lessons, and historical experiences to younger generations.

Overall, the study advances scholarly understanding of how traditional knowledge evolves amid technological progress, urbanisation, and shifting cultural priorities. It enriches the expanding body of literature on cultural preservation amidst modernisation and highlights the resilience of indigenous storytelling as both a cultural and educational resource. The insights from this study are vital for informing future cultural policies, academic research, and community-led initiatives aimed at preserving Ghana's rich heritage for future generations.

1.7 Scope of the Study

Geographically, this study will focus on three major ethnic groups in Ghana: the Ashanti, the Fante, and the Ga, each with culturally rich traditions and distinct narrative practices. The Ashanti, located in the Ashanti Region, are renowned for their deep-rooted oral literature, including Ananse stories, proverbs, praise poetry, and historical accounts linked to the Asante Kingdom. The Fante people of the Central Region also possess a strong storytelling heritage, characterised by folktales, dirges, proverbial expressions, and narratives tied to coastal life and community leadership structures. Meanwhile, the Ga people in the Greater Accra Region maintain a vibrant oral culture that includes storytelling, riddles, festival narratives, and folklore associated with urban coastal experiences. The research will investigate storytelling practices in selected communities across

these regions, comparing rural and urban environments. Rural communities often preserve traditional forms more closely due to stronger family structures, communal living, and frequent interactions with elders. In contrast, urban environments may exhibit more modernised or hybrid forms of storytelling influenced by global media, digital technology, and contemporary lifestyles. By examining both settings, the study aims to capture the full range of ways in which traditional storytelling is maintained, transformed, or adapted across different social contexts. Thematically, the study is limited to exploring three key dimensions: the practice, forms, and perceived influence of traditional storytelling in contemporary times. First, it will investigate the nature of storytelling practices, including who tells the stories, when and where they are told, and how often these activities occur in daily life or special events. Second, it will examine the various forms storytelling takes today, ranging from oral performances, music, chants, and folktales to digital reinterpretations through radio, television, social media, and community theatre. Finally, the study will assess the perceived influence of storytelling on cultural identity, moral education, social cohesion, and intergenerational knowledge transfer among different age groups. By focusing on these dimensions, the research provides a clearer understanding of how traditional storytelling operates within the dynamics of modern Ghanaian society.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

One notable limitation of the study is the potential for language barriers. Many traditional stories within Ghanaian communities are deeply rooted in indigenous languages and dialects such as Twi, Fante, and Ga. These stories often rely on idiomatic expressions, tonal variations, symbolic references, and culturally specific metaphors that may not translate smoothly into English. As a result, the process of interpretation or translation, whether carried out by the researcher or

community members assisting in the study, may unintentionally alter subtle meanings, emotional nuances, or the original intent of the storytellers. This limitation could affect the depth of analysis and the authenticity of the stories collected.

Another constraint concerns the accessibility of participants, particularly older adults, who are the primary custodians of oral traditions. Elders often possess invaluable knowledge about folktales, myths, customs, and historical accounts. However, reaching them can be challenging for several reasons. Some may live in remote rural areas with limited transportation, making fieldwork time-consuming and resource-demanding. Others may face age-related health issues, memory decline, or limited availability, which could impact their participation or the richness of the data they provide. These challenges might reduce the diversity of stories gathered or limit the number of in-depth interviews conducted.

Furthermore, while the study seeks to offer meaningful insights into the storytelling traditions of the Ashanti, Fante, and Ga ethnic groups, its scope naturally constrains the generalisability of the findings. Ghana is home to over 70 ethnic groups, each with distinct oral traditions, cultural practices, and storytelling styles. The experiences and viewpoints from the selected groups may not fully capture the broader national picture. Cultural differences across other groups, such as the Ewe, Dagomba, Gonja, or Nzema, may lead to distinct storytelling dynamics that are not addressed in this research.

Despite these constraints, the study makes a valuable contribution by illuminating the evolving nature of storytelling across three culturally influential ethnic communities. Recognising these limitations enables readers to interpret the findings appropriately and encourages future research to expand the scope across additional ethnic groups and linguistic contexts.

1.9 Organisation of the Study

This research is structured into five comprehensive chapters, each designed to logically build towards a deeper understanding of traditional storytelling and its role in cultural preservation.

Chapter One provides an introductory foundation for the study. It begins with the background, explaining the historical and cultural importance of oral storytelling within Ghanaian communities, and how modernisation presents both challenges and opportunities for its continuity. The chapter then presents the problem statement, clearly outlining existing knowledge gaps and the rationale for the study. It further details the research objectives, both general and specific, as well as the guiding research questions. Additionally, Chapter One defines the scope and delimitation of the study, including its geographical, thematic, and conceptual boundaries. It concludes by highlighting the study's scholarly, cultural, and policy contributions.

Chapter Two offers a comprehensive review of existing literature pertinent to the study's themes. This chapter examines scholarly work on traditional storytelling as a cultural heritage tool, focusing on its functions, forms, and symbolism. It also reviews literature on cultural preservation, emphasising theories and frameworks that explain how communities sustain identity across generations. Furthermore, the chapter explores research on modernisation and globalisation, analysing how these forces influence cultural transmission and potentially reshape storytelling practices. Through this review, Chapter Two establishes the conceptual and theoretical foundation for the study and identifies gaps that the current research aims to address.

Chapter Three outlines the methodology adopted for the research. It discusses the research design, clarifying whether the study uses qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods approaches and why each approach is suitable for exploring storytelling traditions. The chapter also details the study population, sampling techniques, and participant selection within the Ashanti, Fante, and Ga

communities. It explains the data collection methods such as interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and document analysis, and describes the tools or instruments used. Furthermore, Chapter Three clarifies the data analysis procedures and ethical considerations, ensuring transparency, credibility, and respect for cultural sensitivities.

Chapter Four presents the results and provides an in-depth discussion of the findings. This chapter organises the data into themes, illustrating how storytelling practices manifest in contemporary settings and how different age groups perceive their relevance. The analysis interprets these results in relation to the research questions and relates them to findings from the reviewed literature. It also highlights significant patterns, contrasts, and insights, helping readers understand the broader implications for cultural sustainability and identity preservation.

Chapter Five concludes the research by summarising the key findings and demonstrating how they address the objectives outlined in Chapter One. It wraps up the analysis of the evidence and reflects on the study's overall contribution to knowledge and cultural discourse. This chapter also offers practical recommendations for policymakers, educators, cultural institutions, and community leaders on how to strengthen and revitalise traditional storytelling practices. Suggestions for future research are provided to guide scholars interested in further exploring oral traditions, cultural identity, and modernisation.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The transmission of ethnic identity and cultural values in Ghana has historically depended on the rich and vibrant tradition of oral storytelling. Through folktales, myths, proverbs, songs, and communal narratives, generations have preserved their collective memory, moral lessons, and social norms. These oral traditions have served not only as entertainment but also as essential educational tools, community-building mechanisms, and repositories of indigenous knowledge. However, the rapid onset of modernisation, characterised by technological advancement, urbanisation, formal education, global media influence, and shifting social structures, has raised important concerns about the ongoing relevance and sustainability of these storytelling practices. In response to these changes, scholars have increasingly questioned whether traditional storytelling still maintains its central role in cultural life or if it is being overshadowed by modern forms of communication and entertainment. This chapter critically engages with existing scholarly literature to explore these debates and examine the evolving role of storytelling in contemporary Ghanaian society. It considers key theoretical perspectives on oral traditions, cultural continuity, and identity formation, emphasising how storytelling functions as a medium for transmitting collective values, reinforcing social norms, and fostering a shared sense of belonging. Beyond merely reviewing previous studies, this chapter aims to analyse the assumptions and contradictions within the current body of research. Some scholars argue that modernisation threatens the survival of oral traditions, leading to their gradual decline, while others suggest that storytelling is not disappearing but evolving through new media and hybrid forms. These differing

viewpoints demonstrate a field that is rich yet fragmented. Consequently, this chapter identifies areas where scholars agree and where significant gaps remain, particularly regarding how different generations perceive these traditions, how storytelling practices vary across ethnic groups, and how modern platforms influence the transmission of cultural narratives.

Ultimately, the aim of this chapter is to situate the current study within the wider academic discussion. By critically evaluating the strengths, limitations, and inconsistencies in existing research, the chapter underscores the need for a more detailed, context-specific analysis of storytelling in Ghana. This analytical foundation supports the study's contribution to understanding how traditional knowledge systems adapt, endure, or decline in response to modernisation, thereby progressing the dialogue on cultural preservation and identity in a society that is constantly evolving.

2.2 Traditional Storytelling and Cultural Continuity

2.2.1 Oral Narratives as Cultural Archives

Traditional storytelling in African societies has long been recognised as a fundamental method for preserving collective identity, strengthening social bonds, and transmitting indigenous knowledge. Scholars such as Okpewho (1992) and Finnegan (2012) highlight that oral narratives, whether conveyed through folktales, myths, legends, riddles, or proverbs, serve as vital repositories of history, wisdom, and cultural memory, particularly in communities where literacy has historically been limited or absent. In the Ghanaian context, ethnic groups such as the Ashanti, Ewe, Dagomba, and others rely on storytelling traditions not only for entertainment but also as structured practices that pass down ancestral knowledge, uphold moral values, and foster a strong sense of identity and belonging among community members.

These scholars collectively identify three interconnected roles of storytelling: historical record-keeping, moral education, and reinforcement of identity. As historical tools, oral narratives record past events, genealogies, and societal changes, helping communities remember their origins and ensuring continuity across generations. As moral instruments, stories often embed ethical lessons, warning listeners against undesirable behaviour while promoting virtues such as honesty, courage, respect, and communal responsibility. Finally, in strengthening identity, storytelling celebrates shared heritage, cultural heroes, and symbolic values that shape the worldview of ethnic groups. However, a critical review of the literature reveals that these functions are often depicted as static, uniform, or universally applicable across different African societies. For example, while Yankah (2012) emphasises the role of oral traditions as substitutes for written historical records, Abubakari (2019) concentrates on their educational importance within community and family learning systems. Similarly, Asante-Darko (2020) stresses the expressive, symbolic, and emotive power of proverbs and folktales in affirming ethnic identity and cultural pride. Although these scholars offer valuable insights, many of their analyses implicitly assume that the meanings and roles of oral traditions are unchanging over time.

What is often absent from the current literature is an acknowledgement of the dynamic and adaptable nature of traditional storytelling. Few studies thoroughly investigate how stories change across generations, how younger audiences interpret them differently, or how modern influences, such as digital media, formal education, and urbanisation, alter their meaning, relevance, and presentation. Additionally, there is limited focus on how storytelling practices vary across regions, communities, or even within the same ethnic group by age group.

This analytical gap underpins the present study's contribution. By exploring the evolving interpretations, contemporary expressions, and shifting importance of storytelling within selected

Ghanaian communities, the research challenges the idea that oral traditions are fixed. Instead, it argues that storytelling is a dynamic cultural instrument, continuously reshaped by social, technological, and generational changes. Such an approach provides a more nuanced understanding of how traditional narratives function in modern Ghana and continue to influence cultural identity in a rapidly changing world.

2.2.2 Varieties of Storytelling Traditions

Ghanaian storytelling traditions are remarkably diverse, reflecting the country's multi-ethnic makeup and rich cultural heritage. These oral forms include familiar genres such as Anansesem, the well-known folktales centred on the trickster figure Ananse the spider, which serve both entertainment and moral purposes (Sutherland-Addy, 2005). They also comprise epic historical narratives that recount the bravery of warriors, the lineage of ancestors, the migration histories of ethnic groups, and key events shaping communal identity (Abdulai, 2017). Additionally, expressive forms like proverbs, riddles, dirges, chants, praise poetry, and drum language play vital roles in communication, conflict resolution, and moral instruction (Yankah, 2012). These traditions are deeply rooted in daily life and continue to influence socialisation processes in ceremonial settings (such as festivals and rites of passage), educational contexts (like informal mentorship and family instruction), and recreational environments (including evening storytelling sessions and community gatherings). Despite their richness, the existing body of literature often presents an uneven view of Ghana's ethnographic landscape. Many studies, while detailed and insightful, focus predominantly on well-documented groups, particularly the Ashanti, whose prominence in historical, political, and anthropological scholarship results in an overrepresentation in academic narratives. This focus tends to overshadow equally vibrant but lesser-known groups,

such as the Sefwi, Frafra, Gonja, Nzema, and Ga-Dangme, whose storytelling traditions receive considerably less scholarly attention. This imbalance reveals a methodological and cultural bias within the literature. By privileging dominant or more extensively studied ethnic groups, researchers risk creating a homogenised understanding of Ghanaian oral traditions that fails to accurately reflect the country's cultural diversity. Such limitations may also conceal how regional variations, linguistic differences, belief systems, and historical experiences shape distinct storytelling practices. A lack of comparative frameworks further hampers the ability to analyse how different ethnic groups adapt narratives, respond to modernisation, or negotiate cultural identity through storytelling. Recognising this gap is vital, as it underscores the need for research that adopts a more inclusive and comparative approach. Expanding the ethnographic scope to include less-studied communities will not only enrich the existing literature but also provide a more comprehensive and accurate portrayal of Ghana's storytelling traditions. The present study, therefore, seeks to address this imbalance by examining diverse ethnic contexts and investigating how their storytelling practices endure and develop within contemporary society.

2.3 The Disruptive Influence of Modernisation

2.3.1 Cultural Erosion and Fragmentation

Modernisation, driven by rapid urbanisation, globalisation, shifts in communication patterns, and technological advancements, has transformed the social landscape in which traditional storytelling once thrived. Scholars such as Nsiah (2020) and Agyekum (2018) report a noticeable decline in intergenerational storytelling, largely attributing this to urban migration, which fragments extended family structures and reduces opportunities for communal gatherings where storytelling traditionally occurred. Formal education systems, emphasising literacy and Western knowledge

frameworks, further marginalise oral traditions by positioning them as secondary or informal compared to written texts and institutional curricula. Another significant challenge is language shift, especially the increasing dominance of English and Ghanaian Pidgin in urban centres. Since many stories depend on idiomatic expressions, tonal nuances, and cultural metaphors rooted in indigenous languages, this linguistic shift can threaten the authenticity, symbolic significance, and emotional depth of traditional narratives.

While these scholarly insights offer compelling evidence of the pressures that modernisation places on oral traditions, they tend to adopt a somewhat deterministic or pessimistic outlook, portraying modernisation as an unstoppable force that erodes cultural practices. This view often overlooks the complexity and resilience of tradition. Some aspects of storytelling, including proverbs, riddles, and praise poetry, demonstrate remarkable endurance, continuing to play roles in political discourse, social commentary, and conflict resolution. Moreover, the literature rarely clarifies which aspects of storytelling are most vulnerable to change and which are better able to adapt within new social environments.

Furthermore, few studies explore how modernisation can help renew interest in cultural heritage. New digital platforms, including YouTube, podcasts, community radio, social media, and digital archives, offer fresh opportunities for narrators, educators, and cultural groups to share stories with broader audiences. These platforms enable younger generations to connect with tradition through formats that fit their lifestyles. Modern festivals, theatre performances, and cultural programmes in schools also demonstrate how oral traditions can be reimaged instead of simply disappearing. The balance between decline and transformation remains underexplored in current research.

This study aims to close these gaps by adopting a more nuanced approach, analysing not only how modernisation endangers storytelling practices but also how it opens pathways for reinvention. By

examining both resistance and adaptation, the research seeks to offer a balanced perspective on the dynamic relationship between tradition and contemporary change in Ghanaian society.

2.3.2 Storytelling's Resilience and Adaptation

A growing body of literature challenges the notion that traditional storytelling in Ghana is inevitably in decline, instead demonstrating how these practices are evolving and adapting to contemporary contexts. Asante (2018) notes that digital platforms such as YouTube, podcasts, social media, and animated videos are increasingly used to share cultural knowledge, folklore, and moral lessons. These platforms allow storytellers to connect with audiences beyond their immediate communities, crossing geographical boundaries and engaging younger generations who are more comfortable with digital media. Similarly, Opoku-Agyemang (2021) highlights educational programmes that incorporate storytelling into formal school curricula, using folktales, proverbs, and historical narratives to teach language, ethics, and cultural history. Such initiatives not only help preserve heritage but also affirm traditional knowledge as a key part of modern education.

These hybrid forms of storytelling demonstrate a dynamic process where tradition interacts with contemporary social and technological contexts. This idea aligns with Bhabha's (1994) concept of cultural hybridity, which suggests that cultural practices are neither fixed nor purely traditional; instead, they are continually reshaped as they encounter new environments and influences. In this way, digital and educational adaptations of storytelling can be viewed as extensions of oral tradition rather than replacements, ensuring continuity while encouraging innovation.

Despite these positive changes, the literature reveals significant gaps in understanding the social and cultural effects of these adaptations. Few studies examine how different generations view and

engage with digital or institutionalised storytelling methods. While younger audiences may appreciate the accessibility and interactivity of digital narratives, older generations might question the authenticity or depth of meaning compared to traditional face-to-face storytelling. Furthermore, existing research rarely assesses whether digital adaptations maintain the narrative richness, emotional expression, and communal engagement typical of in-person storytelling. Traditional oral storytelling often involves participatory elements, such as call-and-response, gestures, song, and audience interaction, that strengthen social bonds and reinforce community identity. How much of this participatory quality remains or is lost in hybrid formats remains underexplored. By exploring these aspects, this study aims to provide a more detailed understanding of how traditional storytelling adapts to modern settings, how it is received across different age groups and ethnic communities, and the extent to which digital and educational innovations preserve or might alter the cultural, moral, and social roles of oral narratives.

2.4 Ethnic Identity Formation in Transition

2.4.1 Narratives as Identity Anchors

Storytelling in Ghana functions not merely as entertainment but as a cultural compass, guiding individuals and communities in navigating their identities amidst the pressures of rapid globalisation. Scholars such as Tonah (2019) and Mensah (2020) argue that shared narratives, whether through folktales, proverbs, historical epics, or ritual performances, play a crucial role in maintaining cultural continuity. These narratives reinforce collective memory, embed ethical norms, and provide a framework through which individuals understand their place within a broader ethnic and national context. Additionally, storytelling can serve as a subtle form of cultural

resistance, countering the widespread influence of Western media and global cultural homogenisation by reaffirming locally grounded values, histories, and worldviews.

Despite these insights, the effectiveness of storytelling in maintaining ethnic boundaries and identity in modern Ghana remains underexplored, particularly in multicultural urban settings. Urbanisation and greater mobility have fostered diverse social environments in which individuals encounter multiple cultural influences and negotiate identities rather than fix them. In such contexts, the ways traditional narratives are preserved, adapted, or diluted remain uncertain. The literature often assumes that storytelling inherently preserves culture, without critically examining the specific conditions that facilitate this preservation or the subtleties of cultural negotiation across diverse urban spaces.

Furthermore, while previous studies establish a general link between narrative and belonging, they often overlook the micro-politics of storytelling. Questions of authorship, authority, and representation, such as who has the right to tell stories, which stories are prioritised, and how power dynamics influence their interpretation, are rarely addressed. For example, elders or community leaders often act as gatekeepers, determining which narratives are transmitted and how they are framed, thereby privileging specific perspectives while marginalising others. Similarly, generational differences can affect reception and interpretation, as younger audiences might reinterpret traditional narratives through contemporary lenses, digital media, or cross-cultural experiences.

This study aims to address these gaps by adopting an audience-centred perspective to examine how different generations and ethnic communities perceive, engage with, and reinterpret storytelling traditions. By focusing on reception and generational interpretation, the research moves beyond a simplistic view of storytelling as static heritage. Instead, it recognises storytelling

as a dynamic cultural practice in which identity, memory, and social norms are continually negotiated. This approach enables a more nuanced understanding of how traditional narratives function in modern Ghana, balancing the tensions between preservation, adaptation, and the realities of a globalising social landscape.

2.4.2 Intergenerational Divergence

Generational differences in engagement with traditional storytelling are a recurring theme in literature. Scholars such as Amoako (2021) highlight that many young Ghanaians perceive conventional oral narratives as outdated or irrelevant, often favouring modern forms of entertainment like television, online videos, and popular music. Oduro-Frimpong (2019) similarly notes that youth engagement with storytelling tends to be selective, with younger audiences showing greater interest in formats that blend traditional content with contemporary media, such as animated versions of folktales, podcasts, social media storytelling, or interactive digital narratives. These trends indicate that while traditional storytelling still influences society, its methods of transmission and reception are being reshaped to suit modern tastes and technological practices. Despite these insights, much of the current research relies on small-scale or anecdotal evidence, limiting its ability to identify broader, systematic patterns of youth engagement. Many studies focus on isolated communities, schools, or online platforms, which restricts the generalisability of their findings. Additionally, the literature often generalises youth preferences, overlooking the nuanced ways in which factors like socio-economic class, urban versus rural residence, educational background, and linguistic diversity affect engagement with both traditional and modern storytelling formats. For instance, urban youth may have greater access to digital platforms and global media, whereas rural youth may still encounter oral traditions through

community events or family gatherings. Similarly, proficiency in indigenous languages can influence the receptivity of young audiences to indigenous storytelling. This research aims to address these gaps by adopting a fieldwork-based, audience-focused approach. By engaging directly with participants from multiple ethnic groups, age groups, and geographical locations, the study seeks to map how different segments of the youth population experience, interpret, and value storytelling practices. It also investigates how contemporary digital media formats, educational programmes, and hybrid storytelling interact with traditional narratives to shape perceptions of cultural relevance and identity. Through this analysis, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of generational dynamics in cultural transmission, highlighting the adaptive strategies employed by both storytellers and audiences to sustain Ghanaian oral traditions in a society undergoing modernisation.

2.5 Gaps and Limitations in Existing Research

Despite the substantial scholarly focus on traditional storytelling and its role in maintaining ethnic identity, several notable gaps and limitations remain in the existing literature. First, much of the research is ethnographically limited, focusing primarily on individual ethnic groups such as the Ashanti, Ga, and Ewe, without making cross-cultural comparisons. This narrow scope restricts the generalisability of findings, making it difficult to draw conclusions about storytelling practices across Ghana's diverse ethnic landscape. It also misses opportunities to explore interethnic learning, exchange, and cultural integration, which could show how different communities adapt similar narratives, share values, or respond to modern pressures in unique ways. Second, there is a significant gap concerning the influence of digital storytelling on traditional practices. While some studies recognise the rise of digital platforms, few systematically examine how these modern

adaptations impact the authenticity, transmission, and reception of ethnic narratives. Questions remain about whether digital forms preserve the emotive, participatory, and symbolic richness of face-to-face storytelling and how these formats might alter how communities perceive and engage with their cultural heritage. Third, the perspectives of youth audiences are often underrepresented. Existing research provides limited insight into how younger generations, particularly those in urban, cosmopolitan, or diasporic contexts, engage with storytelling traditions. There is little understanding of whether youth reinterpret, hybridise, or selectively participate in these narratives, or conversely, whether they detach from them entirely. Without this perspective, the literature presents an incomplete view of the mechanisms through which cultural continuity is negotiated in contemporary society. Finally, methodological limitations persist in much of the scholarship. Many studies rely heavily on descriptive or anecdotal approaches, providing detailed ethnographic accounts but lacking empirical rigour in sampling strategies, audience analysis, or longitudinal designs that could track changes in storytelling practices over time. This lack of methodological sophistication hampers the ability to draw robust, generalisable conclusions about the patterns, functions, and transformations of traditional storytelling in modern Ghana. These gaps collectively highlight the urgent need for research that combines ethnographic depth with methodological rigour, incorporating systematic fieldwork, diverse participant sampling, and multi-generational perspectives. By addressing these limitations, the present study aims to contribute a more comprehensive and empirically grounded understanding of how traditional storytelling continues to shape ethnic identity, adapt to modern contexts, and engage contemporary audiences in Ghana.

2.6 Theoretical Foundations

This study is guided by three interconnected theoretical perspectives that collectively provide a nuanced framework for understanding traditional storytelling as a dynamic, adaptive, and socially embedded process. These perspectives allow the research to explore not only the content of stories but also their cultural significance, modes of transmission, and reception across different audiences and contexts.

Cultural Memory Theory (Assmann, 1995) serves as a foundational lens by emphasising the role of storytelling in preserving and passing on collective memory and identity. According to this theory, cultural memory involves the ways communities encode, store, and recall shared histories, values, and experiences. Storytelling acts as a key mechanism for maintaining continuity between past and present, enabling individuals and groups to situate themselves within a broader historical and cultural narrative. In the Ghanaian context, oral narratives such as folktales, proverbs, and epic histories function as living repositories of communal knowledge, reinforcing social norms, ethical codes, and a sense of belonging. By applying Cultural Memory Theory, the study can investigate how stories are actively maintained, adapted, or reinterpreted to sustain ethnic identity amidst changing social environments.

Hybridity Theory (Bhabha, 1994) complements this perspective by offering a framework for understanding how traditional and contemporary storytelling intersect, blend, and transform in response to modernisation, globalisation, and technological innovation. Bhabha's concept of the "third space" highlights the liminal zones where cultures meet and negotiate, producing hybrid forms that are neither entirely traditional nor wholly modern. This theoretical lens is particularly useful for analysing the emergence of digital storytelling, educational programmes, and media-based narratives in Ghana, where oral traditions are being reimagined for new audiences. Hybridity

Theory enables the study to explore how adaptation and innovation in storytelling do not imply cultural loss but rather reflect creative resilience and negotiation, allowing communities to maintain continuity while engaging with contemporary social realities.

Finally, Reception Theory (Hall, 1980) offers critical insight into how audiences interpret, internalise, and respond to narratives. Hall emphasises that meaning is not passively received but actively constructed by audiences within their social and cultural contexts. Applying this theory, the study examines how diverse audiences, particularly youth, engage with storytelling practices, interpret moral and historical messages, and negotiate their own identities in relation to these narratives. This approach highlights the participatory and contested nature of storytelling, recognising that interpretation varies by age, generation, location, and exposure to modern or digital formats. It allows the research to move beyond viewing storytelling as a fixed or universal practice, instead portraying it as a dynamic process shaped by social interaction, power relations, and individual agency.

Collectively, these three theoretical perspectives, Cultural Memory Theory, Hybridity Theory, and Reception Theory, present storytelling as a lively, contested, and evolving site of identity formation and cultural continuity. They enable the study to examine not only the preservation of tradition but also its adaptation, negotiation, and reinterpretation, offering a comprehensive framework for understanding how Ghanaian oral narratives remain relevant and meaningful in contemporary society.

2.7 Conclusion

The reviewed literature highlights the dual nature of traditional storytelling in contemporary Ghana, showing both its resilience and fragility. On one side, storytelling remains a powerful cultural tool, strengthening ethnic identity, moral values, and social unity. Folktales, proverbs, historical epics, and ceremonial stories continue to be vital parts of community life, serving as repositories of collective memory and channels for sharing knowledge across generations. On the other hand, modernisation, driven by urbanisation, formal education, global media influence, and technological advances, brings forces that both disrupt and transform these traditions. While some elements of oral tradition decline, others adapt, blend, or take new forms in digital media, educational programmes, and contemporary performance contexts.

Existing research offers a solid foundation by documenting the functions, types, and cultural importance of storytelling. Scholars have explained how narratives promote moral education, historical awareness, and identity reinforcement, and have examined the effects of social structural change and generational gaps. However, the literature also reveals key gaps. First, the comparative scope is limited, as most studies focus narrowly on specific ethnic groups, thereby restricting understanding of storytelling practices across Ghana's diverse communities. Second, research on digital adaptation remains limited, leaving questions about the authenticity, reception, and interpretative depth of digitally mediated storytelling largely unresolved. Third, studies on how different generations engage with storytelling are limited, particularly regarding how youth in urban, cosmopolitan, or diasporic settings perceive, reinterpret, or disengage from traditional narratives.

This research aims to fill these gaps by adopting a multi-faceted approach that considers both spatial and generational differences. By studying storytelling practices among the Ashanti, Fante,

and Ga across rural and urban environments, the research explores how these traditions endure, change, or fade in response to modernisation. It also includes an audience-focused perspective, examining how different age groups, especially younger generations, interact with, interpret, and value storytelling. Through this, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the adaptive strategies and challenges that shape the contemporary relevance of oral narratives, thereby contributing to both academic discourse and practical efforts to preserve culture in modern Ghana.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter offers a detailed account of the methodological framework used in this study, which explores the role of traditional storytelling in maintaining ethnic identity and cultural heritage in Ghana, especially within the context of modernisation. The methodology was carefully crafted to provide a systematic and transparent process for collecting, analysing, and interpreting data, ensuring that the study's objectives are addressed in a rigorous, ethical, and culturally sensitive manner.

Given the exploratory and interpretive nature of the research, a qualitative approach was adopted. Qualitative methods are particularly apt for examining complex social phenomena, such as storytelling, which involve lived experiences, shared memories, cultural values, and symbolic practices that cannot be fully captured through numerical data alone (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach allows the researcher to gain in-depth insights into the meanings, functions, and transformations of storytelling, highlighting the subtle ways in which narratives are transmitted, received, and reinterpreted across different generations.

By employing qualitative methods, the study aims to explore various aspects of storytelling practices. Firstly, it investigates how traditional narratives are preserved, adapted, or modified within different ethnic communities, including the Ashanti, Fante, and Ga. Secondly, it examines the intergenerational dynamics of storytelling, focusing on how younger and older audiences perceive, engage with, and reinterpret oral narratives. Thirdly, the methodology facilitates an

analysis of the influence of modernisation, including urbanisation, formal education, and digital media, on the continuity, relevance, and cultural importance of storytelling practices.

Furthermore, qualitative methods enable a rich, contextually nuanced understanding of cultural practices, allowing the researcher to capture the subtleties of language, performance, audience participation, and symbolic meaning embedded in storytelling. This approach also aligns with the study's ethical considerations, prioritising respectful engagement with participants, recognising the value of local knowledge, lived experience, and community perspectives. Ultimately, the chosen methodological framework allows the study to generate insightful, grounded, and nuanced findings that contribute significantly to both academic discourse and practical strategies for cultural preservation in modern Ghana.

3.2 Research Philosophy

The philosophical orientation of this study is rooted in a realist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology, providing a balanced and coherent foundation for examining storytelling as both a cultural phenomenon and a lived social practice. Realist ontology holds that social and cultural phenomena such as traditional storytelling exist independently in the world, even if individuals' understanding or expression of them varies (Maxwell, 2013). In this view, storytelling is seen as a real and enduring cultural structure embedded within Ghanaian communities. It influences social relationships, passes down values, and reinforces identity, regardless of the subjective interpretations held by different individuals. Although modernisation may affect the performance, content, or frequency of storytelling, the core phenomenon remains recognisable and observable across time.

Complementing this stance, an interpretivist epistemology claims that knowledge is not simply discovered but is co-constructed through interactions, dialogue, and shared meaning-making between the researcher and participants (Schwandt, 2015). From this perspective, understanding storytelling requires more than merely observing the act itself; it involves engaging deeply with the meanings that individuals and communities assign to these narratives. Interpretivism highlights the subjective, contextual, and socially mediated nature of human experience, making it well-suited to a study that examines how different people, elders, educators, youth, and community leaders interpret and make sense of storytelling traditions within their changing cultural environments.

The combination of both realist and interpretivist perspectives allows this research to reflect the complex duality of storytelling: its existence as a cultural institution on one hand, and its fluid, negotiated meanings on the other. This philosophical stance aligns closely with the aims of the study, which go beyond simply documenting the presence of storytelling practices. Instead, the research aims to explore how these practices are interpreted, valued, and reshaped by different demographic groups within their socio-cultural contexts. For example, elders might emphasise storytelling as a moral and historical foundation, while younger audiences could see it through the lens of entertainment, hybridity, or cultural rediscovery. The interpretivist approach enables these diverse viewpoints to be understood in their own terms.

Together, realist ontology and interpretivist epistemology provide a comprehensive philosophical foundation, allowing the study to recognise storytelling as a genuine cultural tradition while also valuing the subjective experiences, interpretations, and meanings that sustain it across generations. This philosophical approach enhances the study's capacity to uncover nuanced insights into how

traditional storytelling shapes ethnic identity and cultural continuity in an era of rapid modernisation.

3.3 Research Design

The study adopted an exploratory, multiple-case study design, a methodological choice well-suited for investigating cultural practices such as traditional storytelling, which are deeply embedded in social contexts and subject to diverse interpretations. As Yin (2018) explains, case study research is particularly valuable for examining contemporary phenomena within their real-life settings, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its surrounding context are blurred or fluid. Storytelling in Ghana fits this description: it is simultaneously a cultural tradition, a social activity, an educational practice, and an evolving form shaped by modern influences. An exploratory case study design, therefore, enabled the researcher to explore these complexities in depth without prior assumptions.

The use of a multiple-case study approach strengthened the research by allowing for comparative analysis across different ethnic and geographical contexts. While the Ashanti people formed the primary focus due to the richness and prominence of their storytelling traditions, the inclusion of additional cases from the Effutu and Akuapim groups expanded the cultural scope of the study. These groups were selected to reflect various socio-cultural settings, coastal, forest, and highland environments, as well as differing degrees of urbanisation and traditional continuity. By examining these culturally distinct cases side by side, the study identified shared themes, divergent patterns, and unique adaptations in storytelling practices.

This design also enabled analysis of how traditional storytelling is practised, preserved, and potentially transformed in both rural and urban contexts. Rural communities often maintain

stronger links to customary practices due to more cohesive social structures and sustained intergenerational interaction. In contrast, urban settings may introduce external influences, including technology, cosmopolitan lifestyles, and linguistic shifts. The multiple-case design, therefore, provided a nuanced understanding of how local cultural dynamics intersect with broader forces of modernisation.

Moreover, the intentional inclusion of diverse cultural sites enhanced the study's potential for analytic generalisation, which is the preferred form of generalisation in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Instead of seeking statistical representativeness, analytic generalisation aims to develop theoretical insights that can be applied to similar cultural contexts beyond the specific cases studied. By examining three distinct ethnic groups, the study generated broader conceptual understandings of the resilience, flexibility, and evolving nature of storytelling as a cultural practice in Ghana.

In summary, the exploratory multiple-case study design offered the depth, flexibility, and comparative richness needed to understand how traditional storytelling endures and evolves amid modernisation. It enabled the research to go beyond simple description towards a more comprehensive interpretation of how storytelling fosters cultural continuity and identity formation across multiple Ghanaian communities.

3.4 Population and Sampling

The target population consisted of individuals and groups engaged in the creation, transmission, and reception of traditional storytelling. This included:

1. Elders and cultural custodians, such as storytellers, linguists, and traditional leaders, who have first-hand knowledge of oral traditions.

2. Educators, including lecturers and teachers in performing arts, who incorporate storytelling into educational or cultural programmes.
3. Youth, including students and members of youth cultural groups, who represent the continuity or transformation of storytelling practices in contemporary Ghana.

Purposive sampling was used to ensure participants had relevant experience or expertise (Palinkas et al., 2015). Stratification was applied across three dimensions: age (elders vs youth), location (urban vs rural), and ethnic group (Ashanti, Effutu, Akuapim). The target sample size was set at 15–20 participants, with final recruitment guided by data saturation, the point at which no new insights emerged from additional data (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

3.5 Data Collection Methods

To develop a comprehensive and well-rounded understanding of the research problem, the study employed three primary data collection methods: in-depth semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and the review of audiovisual materials. Using multiple sources of evidence allowed the researcher to capture the complexity of storytelling as both a cultural tradition and a contemporary practice, thereby enhancing the depth and richness of the findings. In-depth semi-structured interviews served as the core method, enabling the researcher to engage directly with key knowledge holders such as elders, cultural custodians, educators, and youth. This approach provided the flexibility to explore participants' experiences, memories, and interpretations of storytelling while maintaining a guiding structure aligned with the research objectives. Semi-structured interviews were especially valuable for probing nuanced topics such as the symbolic meaning of stories, perceptions of cultural decline, and intergenerational differences, which require open-ended dialogue and the opportunity for participants to express their perspectives in

their own words. Focus group discussions (FGDs) complemented the interviews by promoting collective dialogue and shared reflection among community members. As storytelling is inherently a social practice, FGDs helped recreate the interactive nature of cultural conversations, allowing participants to respond to each other's memories and viewpoints. This method was particularly useful for understanding communal norms, group interpretations, generational contrasts, and the ways in which storytelling functions within social settings. The group dynamics often revealed perspectives that may not emerge in individual interviews, thus enriching the dataset. In addition to verbal accounts, the study incorporated a review of audiovisual material, including recorded storytelling performances, digital folktales, community festivals, and cultural archives. This method enabled the researcher to observe actual storytelling practices, the gestures, music, tone, audience participation, and staging, which might differ from participants' descriptions. Audiovisual sources also offered insight into contemporary adaptations of storytelling, such as digital animations, YouTube performances, and radio drama episodes, highlighting the intersection between tradition and modern media. Together, these three methods formed a triangulated approach, enhancing the credibility, dependability, and validity of the findings. According to Carter et al. (2014), triangulation allows researchers to cross-check information from multiple sources, reducing bias and increasing confidence in the results. By integrating individual narratives, group perspectives, and visual/audio evidence, the study constructed a more holistic understanding of how traditional storytelling is practised, interpreted, and transformed across different communities and generations in Ghana.

3.5.1 In-depth Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with elders, storytellers, educators, and cultural officers to capture their lived experiences and reflections on storytelling practices. Interview

guides contained open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed narratives while allowing for follow-up probing (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and was conducted in a familiar, comfortable setting for the participant. When necessary, interviews were conducted in local languages with the assistance of translators, and all sessions were audio recorded with participants' consent.

3.5.2 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were organised with selected youth groups to gain deeper insight into their perceptions, engagement levels, and attitudes towards traditional storytelling within their communities. Each discussion group was intentionally composed of six to eight participants, a size recommended by Morgan (2019) for encouraging active participation while keeping the conversation focused and manageable. This setup created an environment where participants felt comfortable sharing their views, personal experiences, and responding to others' perspectives. The sessions were guided by a structured thematic outline that explored key areas such as the role of traditional storytelling in identity formation, its relevance and appeal in contemporary society, and the influence of modernisation on cultural practices and intergenerational knowledge transfer. Participants were encouraged to reflect on how storytelling shapes their sense of belonging, the extent to which they still engage with such practices, and the factors contributing to its decline or transformation. Each FGD lasted between 60 and 90 minutes, providing sufficient time for in-depth discussion while maintaining participants' attention and energy. With the informed consent of all participants, the discussions were audio-recorded to ensure accurate documentation and facilitate detailed analysis during interpretation.

3.5.3 *Audio-Visual Material Review*

Audio-visual materials, including recorded storytelling sessions, radio programmes, television broadcasts, and various forms of digital media adaptations, were systematically collected and analysed to enrich the primary data gathered through interviews and focus group discussions. The use of audio-visual data was particularly important because storytelling is an embodied, performative, and contextual cultural practice that cannot be fully captured through verbal accounts alone. These materials enabled the researcher to observe the dynamics of storytelling as they naturally occur, including tone of voice, gestures, audience interaction, musical accompaniment, and the use of symbolic objects, all of which are critical to understanding the tradition's depth and richness.

Recorded storytelling sessions, both community-based and those archived by cultural institutions, provided insight into how stories are performed in their traditional settings. These recordings revealed variations in narrative styles, performance techniques, and storytellers' adaptations of their delivery for different audiences. Radio programmes and community radio storytelling segments offered examples of how traditional narratives are being mediated for broader and more diverse audiences. Analysing these broadcasts illustrated how radio continues to serve as a platform for cultural preservation, particularly in rural areas where oral traditions remain strong. Television broadcasts, on the other hand, showcased how modern media formats incorporate visual dramatisation, costumes, and scenography to reinterpret traditional stories for contemporary viewers. These visual elements often introduce new layers of meaning, reflecting changing societal values, modern production techniques, and the influence of global entertainment standards. Digital media adaptations, such as YouTube videos, animated folktale series, social media storytelling clips, and podcast episodes, were examined to understand how young people, in particular, are

engaging with storytelling in innovative, technologically mediated ways. These platforms demonstrated the shift from communal storytelling to more individualised, on-demand access to cultural narratives, highlighting broader trends in media consumption among younger generations. By analysing these diverse audiovisual sources, the study identified how traditional stories are being transformed and reimagined in the digital era. The materials provided supplementary evidence on the evolution of narrative structures, changes in performance practices, and the extent to which technology is shaping both the form and content of storytelling. This approach strengthened the study's ability to capture a holistic and contemporary picture of how storytelling functions within modern Ghanaian society.

3.6 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), was adopted as the primary approach for analysing the qualitative data because it offers a flexible yet rigorous method for identifying and interpreting patterns of meaning across large datasets. This analytical strategy allowed the researcher to move beyond surface-level descriptions of participants' responses and instead focus on deeper, latent meanings that speak to how storytelling functions within contemporary Ghanaian society. The process began with familiarisation, during which the researcher read and re-read the interview and FGD transcripts, listened to audio recordings, and reviewed audiovisual materials to gain an overall sense of the content. This immersion was essential for understanding the context, tone, and nuances of participants' narratives.

The second phase involved generating initial codes. Here, the researcher systematically highlighted segments of data that appeared meaningful or relevant to the research questions. Codes were applied to recurring ideas such as cultural transmission, generational differences, modern

influences, changes in storytelling formats, and perceptions of cultural decline or continuity. NVivo software was used to support this process by enabling efficient organisation, retrieval, and comparison of coded segments, thereby enhancing the reliability and transparency of the analytic process.

In the third step, theme search, the researcher organised related codes into broader thematic categories. For example, codes relating to shifts in performance style, digital adaptations, and the influence of Western media were clustered under potential themes reflecting hybridity and cultural transformation. The fourth step, reviewing themes, involved refining these preliminary categories by checking them against the dataset to ensure they accurately represented participants' experiences and perspectives. Themes that were too broad or insufficiently supported were reorganised, merged, or discarded.

The fifth phase required the definition and naming of themes. Here, each theme was articulated clearly, outlining its core meaning and demonstrating its relation to the overall research objectives. Subthemes were also identified where necessary to capture finer distinctions within the data. Finally, the sixth step involved producing the analytical narrative that forms the findings of this study. This stage required weaving together the themes, supporting them with direct quotations from participants, and linking them to existing literature and theoretical perspectives.

Three key theoretical lenses shaped the analytical process. Cultural Memory Theory (Assmann, 2011) helped interpret how storytelling functions as a repository of shared heritage and how cultural knowledge is transmitted across generations. Hybridity Theory (Bhabha, 1994) enabled an examination of how traditional storytelling practices intersect with modern influences such as media technologies, urbanisation, and global cultural flows to produce hybrid forms of expression. Reception Theory (Hall, 1980) guided the analysis of how different audiences, particularly youth

groups, interpret and make meaning from storytelling in ways that reflect their socio-cultural realities. Together, these frameworks provided a robust analytical foundation, enabling the study to understand not only the content of stories but also how they are received, adapted, and reimagined in an era of rapid modernisation.

3.7 Trustworthiness

To ensure methodological rigour, the study adhered to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for trustworthiness:

Credibility: Achieved through prolonged engagement with the field, member checking, and triangulation of data sources.

Transferability: Boosted by offering detailed, vivid descriptions of the study sites, participants, and cultural settings.

Dependability: Secured by keeping a thorough audit trail of research choices, interview procedures, and coding frameworks.

Confirmability: Achieved through reflexive journaling and peer debriefing to reduce researcher bias and maintain objectivity.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical integrity was a key aspect throughout this study. Approval was granted in accordance with institutional and national research ethics standards. Major ethical measures included:

Informed consent: Participants were thoroughly briefed on the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits, and were informed of their right to withdraw at any point.

Confidentiality: Pseudonyms were assigned, and all audio files, transcripts, and related documents were securely stored.

Cultural respect: Community gatekeepers and traditional leaders were consulted beforehand to secure their approval and guidance.

Minimising harm: Questions were designed to prevent emotional distress, and participants were given the option to skip or withdraw from discussions when necessary.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter provides a comprehensive and detailed examination of the methodological framework guiding this study, offering a clear rationale for each decision made throughout the research process. It begins by establishing the philosophical foundations of the study, rooted in realist ontology and interpretivist epistemology, which together shape the approach to understanding storytelling as both a culturally grounded reality and a socially constructed practice. The chapter then outlines the research design, explaining the choice of a qualitative, multiple-case study strategy as the most suitable means of exploring complex cultural phenomena within their real-life contexts. This design enables the study to capture variations in storytelling practices across different ethnic groups and settings while identifying broader patterns that reflect national cultural dynamics.

The sampling procedures are also detailed, highlighting the purposive selection of participants, elders, educators, storytellers, and youth whose lived experiences and cultural knowledge provide layered insights into the transmission and transformation of traditional narratives. In parallel, the

data collection methods, including in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and the review of audiovisual materials, are justified as complementary strategies that enable methodological triangulation. Collectively, these methods ensure that the investigation captures both spoken experiences and mediated forms of storytelling, thereby enriching the overall dataset.

The chapter further elaborates on the analytical techniques used, with thematic analysis as the main method for identifying patterns and meanings within the data. Supported by NVivo software, the analysis is organised systematically and grounded in Cultural Memory Theory, Hybridity Theory, and Reception Theory. These frameworks enhance the interpretation of findings by connecting participants' narratives to wider processes of cultural preservation, adaptation, and audience engagement.

Ethical considerations are also discussed in detail, ensuring that participants' confidentiality, autonomy, and cultural sensitivities are fully respected throughout the research process. The chapter additionally addresses measures to ensure trustworthiness, including credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability, which enhance the rigour and reliability of the study's findings.

Overall, the methodological framework is carefully crafted to generate rich, nuanced, and contextually grounded insights into how traditional storytelling continues to uphold ethnic identity in Ghana amidst rapid social change. With this foundation in place, the next chapter presents the empirical findings from the fieldwork, providing an in-depth account of how storytelling is practised, perceived, and reshaped across generations and cultural contexts.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the study's empirical findings, weaving together the voices, memories, and perspectives of the custodians and inheritors of our storytelling traditions. Guided by the interpretivist stance, the data reveal not only the practices of storytelling but also the profound meanings they hold for the Ashanti, Effutu, and Akuapim people in modern Ghana. The analysis is structured around the key themes that emerged from the thematic analysis, moving from the deep historical roots of oral narratives to their contemporary adaptations and the intergenerational dialogue that will shape their future. This is not merely a presentation of data; it is a narrative of cultural resilience, a conversation across time, and a testament to the enduring spirit of our identities.

4.2 The Living Archive: Storytelling as Historical Consciousness and Moral Compass

Across all three ethnic groups, storytelling was consistently described as a "living archive," a dynamic collection of history, philosophy, and law. This theme directly supports the literature on oral narratives as cultural archives (Okpewho, 1992; Finnegan, 2012), but the data adds an important layer of emotional and spiritual depth.

4.2.1 Ashanti: The Weight of Adinkra and the Saga of Okomfo Anokye

For the Ashanti participants, especially the elders, history is not merely abstract; it is woven into symbols and compelling stories. Nana Kwabena, a 72-year-old Akyeame (linguist) from Kumasi, did not just tell a story; he summoned a presence. Speaking in a calm, resonant tone, he explained:

You see, our history is not only in books. It is in the Adinkra symbols. Sankofa is not just a bird looking backwards. It is the story of our resilience, the lesson that we must return to reclaim our past to move forward. When I tell the story of the Golden Stool, I am not talking about an object. I am speaking of the very soul of the Asante nation, given to us by the great priest Okomfo Anokye from the heavens. To the youth, it is a magical tale. To us, it is our covenant, our identity. It is the reason we say 'Asanteman' exists as long as the Stool exists.

This narrative exemplifies Cultural Memory Theory (Assmann, 2011), in which the story of the Golden Stool serves as a foundational memory, continually re-enacted to unify the community across generations.

4.2.2 Effutu: The Aboakyer Festival as a Story Enacted

The Effutu participants from Winneba emphasised how their most important historical narrative is not merely narrated but enacted annually during the Aboakyer (Deer Hunt) festival. Osofo Kweku, a 68-year-old traditional priest, described it as a "drama of our migration and covenant with our god, Penkye Otu."

Before the hunt, we gather the young men and tell them: 'This is not a sport. You are re-enacting the journey of our ancestors from the ancient Western Sudan. The deer we seek is the sacrifice our god demanded to grant us this land.' The story is in the chase, in the rituals, in the songs. It is our

living history book, written in action and blood. If we stop telling this story through the festival, we stop being Effutu.

This finding challenges any limited definition of "storytelling," broadening it to encompass performative, ritualistic enactments that serve the same purpose of preserving history and reinforcing identity.

4.2.3 akuapim: Proverbs as Concise History and Wisdom

In the Akuapim context, elders highlighted the significance of proverbs (mmebussem) as the most refined form of storytelling. Madam Ama, a 70-year-old queen mother from Larteh, demonstrated this with a proverb:

We say, 'The ruin of a nation begins in the homes of its people.' This simple sentence encapsulates the wisdom of our past leaders, the failures of ancient communities, and is a guide for today's governance. It is a story told in one breath. The youth think it is old-fashioned, but it is the most sophisticated technology for storing wisdom we have ever created.

4.3 The Winds of Change: Modernisation as Both Erosion and Catalyst

The data confirms the disruptive influence of modernisation, as noted by scholars such as Nsiah (2020). However, it also reveals a more complex and nuanced picture of adaptation and resilience, echoing Bhabha's (1994) Concept of Hybridity.

4.3.1 The Urban Disconnect and Linguistic Shift

A clear theme of fragmentation emerged, especially in urban areas. A focus group discussion with young people in Accra, including members from Ashanti, Effutu, and Akuapim, showed a familiar feeling. Kofi, a 24-year-old man from Akuapim, shared:

In the city, life moves swiftly. There is little time for ‘Anansesem’ by the moonlight. My landlord would complain about the noise. We are on our phones, watching Netflix. The stories our grandparents tell are beautiful, but they seem like they come from a different world, and they are always in Twi or Gua. It is not easy to feel the same connection when you are thinking in English. This emphasises the dual challenge of urban living and language change, resulting in a perceived cultural divide.

4.3.2 Digital Rebirth: The School of Performing Arts, University of Education, Winneba

Contrasting the narrative of erosion, the study identified vibrant sites of adaptation. A significant finding emerged from an in-depth interview at the School of Performing Arts, University of Education, Winneba. Dr Abena Animwaa, a lecturer in African Drama and Storytelling, offered a compelling counter-narrative.

We are not presiding over a funeral for storytelling here. We are overseeing its evolution. We take the ancient Anansesem, and we deconstruct it. We have students from Effutu creating digital animations of the Aboakyer story. We have Akuapim students composing hip-hop songs around traditional proverbs. This is not dilution; it is translation. The soul of the story remains the trickery of Ananse, the bravery of the hunters, and the wisdom of the proverb, but it is wearing new clothes so that a new generation can see it. We are using modern tools to protect an ancient treasure.

This perspective strongly exemplifies Hybridity Theory. The "modern" forms (animation, hip-hop) are not displacing the "traditional" core but are in an active relationship with it, producing a new, culturally hybrid form that facilitates transmission.

4.4 Weaving the Future: Intergenerational Dialogue and Identity Negotiation

The most important theme that emerged was the ongoing negotiation of identity across generations, a process in which storytelling is the primary medium.

4.4.1 The Elders' Hopes and Fears

Elders across the groups expressed deep anxiety about cultural amnesia but also a resilient hope. Nana Kwabena (Ashanti) lamented, "The chain of oral transmission is rusting, and while Osofo Kweku (Effutu) worried that the young ones see the festival as a party, not a prayer."

4.4.2 The Youths' Selective Re-engagement

The youth participants, however, demonstrated not a complete rejection, but a critical and selective engagement. In a focus group, Akosua, a 22-year-old Ashanti woman studying history, stated:

I do not need stories to tell me who I am; I already know I am Asante. However, I do need them to guide me on how to be Asante in 2025. I want stories that uplift women, not just those about kings and warriors. We are reinterpreting them for our time. That is not disrespect; it is how we keep them alive.

This aligns with Reception Theory (Hall, 1980), as the youth are not passive recipients but active "decoders" who interpret narratives through their own modern social and personal contexts.

The data reveals a dynamic, sometimes tense, but ultimately productive dialogue. The elders hold the canonical versions, while the youth, inspired by institutions like the School of Performing Arts, are becoming the curators and innovators, ensuring the stories do not become museum pieces but remain living, breathing guides for life.

4.5 Conclusion: The Unbroken Thread

The findings from the Ashanti, Effutu, and Akuapim communities tell a story not of imminent death, but of profound transformation. Traditional storytelling, as a vessel of historical consciousness, faces undeniable pressures from modernisation, manifesting as urban disconnect and linguistic shift. However, the research also reveals strong currents of resilience and adaptation. Through ritual performances like the Aboakyer, the sophisticated use of proverbs, and, primarily, innovative digital and educational hybridisations at the University of Education, Winneba, these narrative traditions are being fiercely re-imagined. The intergenerational dialogue, though marked by concerns, is ultimately a sign of a living culture, one that is confidently weaving its ancient wisdom into the fabric of the future, ensuring the thread of identity remains unbroken.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter consolidates the key findings and interpretations from Chapter Four to provide a comprehensive reflection on how traditional storytelling continues to uphold ethnic identity and culture amid modernisation among the Ashanti, Effutu, and Akuapim people of Ghana. It emphasises the study's main insights, offers conclusions grounded in both empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks, and presents recommendations for policy, education, and community practice. Ultimately, the chapter reaffirms that storytelling remains a vital cultural force, constantly evolving to adapt to modern realities while maintaining its moral, historical, and philosophical significance.

5.2 Summary of Major Findings

The study demonstrated that storytelling, in its various forms such as oral narration, proverbs, ritual performances, and digital reinterpretations, functions as a living archive and a moral compass across all three studied ethnic groups. Among the Ashanti, the historical sagas of Okomfo Anokye and the symbolic importance of Adinkra serve as enduring symbols of communal memory and identity. For the Effutu, storytelling goes beyond spoken words and becomes a performative act during the Aboakyer Festival, transforming history into ritual theatre. Among the Akuapim, proverbs continue to distil centuries of wisdom, conveying moral lessons and social philosophies through concise verbal art.

Despite modernisation and linguistic shifts, storytelling remains neither extinct nor meaningless. Instead, it has undergone a significant transformation. Urban youth, although disconnected from traditional settings, still engage with cultural narratives through hybrid and digital formats such as social media skits, music, and animation. Institutions like the School of Performing Arts at the University of Education, Winneba, have become crucial spaces for this cultural revitalisation, integrating indigenous knowledge systems into contemporary performance and media arts. Furthermore, the study highlighted a generational dialogue at the heart of cultural continuity. Elders act as custodians of authenticity and spiritual importance, while younger generations reinterpret these stories through contemporary values, particularly those that support gender equality, creativity, and social relevance. This intergenerational tension is not a sign of decline but a sign of vitality, showing that storytelling continues to evolve as a dynamic tool for shaping identity and maintaining culture.

5.3 Conclusions

The findings indicate that traditional storytelling in Ghana remains a resilient cultural institution, deeply embedded in collective memory and social ethics. The study confirms that oral traditions among the Ashanti, Effutu, and Akuapim people are not passive relics but active cultural practices that continually influence the moral and intellectual life of their communities. Storytelling has demonstrated its ability to incorporate modern influences without losing its essence, aligning with Homi Bhabha's concept of cultural hybridity, in which the interaction between tradition and modernity produces new cultural forms rather than displacing old ones.

The research also shows that modernisation, although causing linguistic and social disruptions, has catalyzed cultural innovation. Through educational institutions, festivals, and digital platforms, storytelling has found new media for survival and sharing. The voices of young participants further suggest that ethnic identity is not fixed but adaptable, shaped and reshaped through ongoing dialogue between generations.

Ultimately, storytelling remains a spiritual, educational, and social institution that embodies the codes of belonging, moral order, and historical consciousness. Its persistence demonstrates that modernisation in Ghana does not necessarily lead to cultural loss, but can foster a creative fusion of the past and present. This condition helps sustain ethnic identity amidst change.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, several recommendations are suggested to strengthen the role of traditional storytelling in fostering cultural preservation and identity formation.

Firstly, Ghana's educational policy should deliberately incorporate indigenous storytelling into both formal and non-formal curricula. Schools, particularly at the basic and secondary levels, ought to use storytelling as a teaching method to impart moral education, local history, and civic values. This approach will help connect oral heritage with academic learning whilst fostering cultural pride among young learners.

Secondly, community and cultural organisations should record and archive oral stories using both audio-visual and digital technologies. Chiefs, queen mothers, and cultural custodians can work with researchers and creative industries to save these stories in accessible formats, such as

podcasts, animations, and short films. This method would help ensure that traditional wisdom continues to reach younger audiences through the media they use most.

Thirdly, government and local authorities should support festivals and community storytelling events that highlight Ghana's oral heritage. These festivals should be repositioned not just as tourist attractions but as educational and intergenerational spaces where cultural transmission occurs naturally. The Effutu Aboakyer Festival, for example, could feature youth storytelling competitions and oral history workshops as part of its yearly programme.

Fourthly, research and academia must continue to explore indigenous methods of knowledge creation. Universities should establish dedicated centres for oral literature, cultural performance, and ethnographic documentation. This would strengthen scholarly engagement with storytelling traditions and foster intercultural dialogue both within and beyond Ghana.

Finally, the youth should be encouraged to see storytelling not as an outdated relic but as a creative resource. By combining traditional narratives with modern art forms such as music, film, and digital media, young Ghanaians can assert their identity while confidently engaging in the global cultural space.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

While this study has illuminated the cultural functions and adaptive strategies of traditional storytelling among three ethnic groups, future research could broaden its scope to include other Ghanaian and African communities to investigate comparative patterns of resilience and hybridity. Additionally, quantitative studies could evaluate the influence of digital storytelling on

cultural identity formation among urban youth, and further investigate the gender dynamics of storytelling, particularly how women reinterpret traditional tales in modern contexts.

It would also add valuable depth to existing literature.

5.6 Conclusion

In summary, the research confirms that traditional storytelling remains an ongoing link that connects the Ghanaian people to their ancestral roots while guiding them into the modern world. The stories of the Ashanti, Effutu, and Akuapim people continue to embody the nation's cultural DNA, resilient, adaptable, and deeply human. Storytelling acts both as memory and as a mirror: it recalls where we came from and shows who we are becoming. In this ongoing blending of old and new, Ghana's ethnic identities persist, not as static relics of the past, but as living, evolving expressions of collective wisdom and cultural pride.

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