

Gullibility and Zimbabwean Shona Folktales: Implications to Biblical Teachings and People with and Without Disabilities

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Abstract

Gullible behaviour is as old as humankind. As such, every traditional culture and religion has different ways of expressing this phenomenon towards people with and without disabilities. Among the traditional Shona, for example, folk tales are among the many popular methods employed to warn society from succumbing to gullibility. Popular folktales involving tricksters such as Mr Hare in which uncle baboon is outwitted by his nephew, Mr Hare. These are textbook examples of how societies express gullibility. Following these reflections, this paper analyses how gullibility is expressed in traditional Shona folktales with a view to draw lessons for modern society. Two popular but different folktales involving uncle baboon and Mr Hare were sampled for an in-depth analysis with a view to establish meanings behind each folktale in relation to gullible behaviour. The paper found out that gullibility is a fact of life. Further, it came out clear that gullibility in Shona society is veiled through animal characters the most common ones are Mr Baboon and Mr Hare. The former represents individuals who are disadvantaged or vulnerable in society while Mr Hare represents those people in society who have the propensity to taking advantage of other people's innocence or ignorance. At face value, Mr Hare is portrayed as the wise one, but he is considered a rogue in society who makes it in life by outwitting other people through crafty means (folk tale one). Additionally, the findings revealed that most victims of gullible behaviour experienced shame and embarrassment. Supported with Biblical verses and appropriate interpretations the findings revealed that gullibility disrupts relationships between individuals and groups. Against this background, the paper recommends that; for society to live harmonious the principle of 'unhu' should be embraced at any level of human interaction towards both people with and without disabilities. Further, the study recommended that there is need for religious institutions to encourage certain behaviours and characteristics through critical analysis of meanings of folktales as an indirect way of reprimanding, teaching and using folk stories as teaching aids to issues of life and diversity including issues of disability.

Keywords: gullible behavior, Chivanhu, Shona folktales and Zimbabwe.

1.0 Introduction and Study Background

Long before writing became institutionalised as it is today, telling stories was an important vacation in traditional societies and also very instrumental in teaching various lessons. African traditional societies such as the Shona tribes generally, lived by a word of mouth and storytelling to preserve cultural norms, values and shaming of social vices. Shona society has a rich tradition of storytelling like any other societies in the world. This tradition was then, traditionally the vehicle for transmitting social norms, values and to criticize vices at the local level of society. Social vices such as gullibility were also reflected in various folktales (Charamba, 1970). Most of these stories were spiced with proverbs in order to create the base for learning or change of behaviour towards certain habits or type of people, such as people with disabilities (PWDs). For example, the proverb *makurumidze wakadana mandinonokera* (hurriedness gave birth to lateness or they stubble that run fast). This proverb teaches people to avoid rushed decisions as these are susceptible to gullible behaviours. It was meant to warn members of the society to be on the lookout for situation that prompts them to be credulous. Another of the same kind is *Usakurumidza kumedza kutsenga kuchada* (never swallow without chewing). It teaches that individual members should not jump into conclusions when confronted by situations in life as this will result in such individuals falling victim to undesirable circumstances as is traditionally known about PWDs. For example, in the African context people have a tendency to blame the family for a child's disability or gullibly pretend able to cure disabilities. This paper is based on folktales as a mechanism bent on poking fun, shaming and name calling on gullible behaviours perpetuated by some members of the community.

One of the famous folktales in which Shona culture poked fun and name called gullible behaviour is the *Hare and the Baboon*, in which Mr Baboon was outwitted by his nephew Mr Hare through craft and lies (Gelfand, 1985). In most cases, Mr Hare became a hero through crafty and wits in order to win the sympathy of the audience. Overall, although Mr Hare is portrayed as the wise one, the truth is his behaviour betrays him as one who did not live according to the dictates of society, such as telling the truth or being honest, faithfulness and not taking advantage of other members in society. In the African context, generally people with disabilities (PWDs) are taken advantage of in most circumstances. Mr Hare represents those people in society who have the propensity to take advantage of other people's innocence or weaknesses. At face value, Mr Hare is portrayed as the wise one, but he is considered a rogue in society who makes it in life by outwitting other people through

crafty means (folktale one). The importance of folk stories in Shona society cannot be over-emphasized. Folktales in Shona society involve both people and animal characters. This paper is more interested in folktales with animal characters.

There are a number of other different types of folk stories involving animal characters. In this paper we selected two famous stories to illustrate how gullible behaviour is perceived and expressed in Shona folk stories. We invite you to read through a sample of folk stories in order to have firsthand experience of how these stories would be told in their original contexts and how gullible behaviour is veiled (see Appendix one and two). The paper's thrust is to identify gullibility from Shona selected folktales with a view to promote behaviour change through analyzing their meanings and biblical implications to people with and without disabilities in Zimbabwe.

1.1 Methodology

There are several textbook stories which exemplify how societies express gullibility. This paper analysed how gullibility is reflected using two selected popular folktales involving Mr Baboon and Mr Hare. In-depth analysis was used to establish meanings behind each folktale in relation to gullibility in accordance to Shona culture and biblical implications since every traditional culture and religion has different ways of expressing this phenomenon. For example, in this paper the selected popular traditional Shona, folktales are used to warn society from succumbing to gullibility where one could be tricked and outwitted as portrayed by the characters of Mr Hare and Mr Baboon. Using the narrative analytical stages adopted by Chataika (2007) from Muller (1999) the paper analysed reflections of gullibility in the selected folktales with a view to draw lessons for modern society and the Christian community. To analyse the selected folktales the paper used narrative analytical stages which Chataika (2007) adopted from Muller (1999, p221-238) to establish meanings and reflections of gullibility. The analytical stages include; 1) entering the text-reading and preliminary coding to gain familiarity; 2) interpreting and finding connections in the data through successive readings and reflection; 3) verifying-searching the text and other sources for alternative explanations and confirmatory and disconfirmatory data; 4) representing an account of what has been learned and 5) illustrating and selecting representative codes. These stages helped to determine how gullible reflections unfolded from the folktales. Through this analysis most salient aspects in stories from which lessons could be learnt were identified, such as, conceptual unity of beings; essentialities of human solidarity; if you dig a hole for another man you are likely to fall into it and many others. Several biblical verses were used to support the findings from which conclusions were drawn. Recommendations were then, drawn from the analysed discussions.

1.1.1 'Chivanhu'/ Tradition: a conceptual framework

This paper is based on a cultural perspective of gullibility. In a country with traditional communities such as Zimbabwe there are compelling cultural elements in understanding how gullibility is perceived and addressed. Shona understanding of gullibility and the methods of shunning this phenomenon draws meaning from a philosophy widely known as *unhu/hunhu or ubuntu*, known as beingness in English, "a social philosophy embracing the ethical values of reciprocity; humane consideration of others in the community; mutual assistance; humility; industriousness; cooperation; hospitality; solidarity and social cohesion" (Mandova, 2012:367; Konyana, 2013:5). Within the framework of *unhu*, a person with *unhu* is likely not to take advantage of other members of the community. In most traditional tales Mr Hare took advantage of Mr Baboon which is generally taken as a sign of Mr Hare's deviation from the norm. *Unhu* is the norm and principle guiding the life of individuals and society at large. *Unhu* is the life blood suggesting that without *unhu* society could not have reached where it is now. It is the basis upon which life is built and society moves and sustains the life of every individual member regardless of age, sex or disability.

Mawere (2010:279) drawing from Ramose (1999) argues strongly for the existence of an African philosophy. Further he argues that Shona peoples being part of the African society have a philosophy popularly known as *unhu/hunhu*. From this framework, this paper settles on Shona philosophy of life and, more specifically, on *Chivanhu* (traditional belief system, customs, customary law and way of life) in relation to gullibility. Although the concept of *Chivanhu* emerged in literature in the 1930s through the instrumentality of Clement Doke, it has a long history because theoretically it refers to the period before colonialism (Kabweza, 2002).

Chivanhu is a broad concept which cannot be covered within this limited space. However, for purposes of this paper, the focus is mainly on folktales and their contributions to deeper understanding of the phenomenon gullibility. In other words, gullibility among the Shona is a phenomenon that cannot be understood and applied without linking it to *Chivanhu*, (Traditional) in particular folktales. Accordingly, an understanding of folktales and how they reflect gullibility phenomenon is very important because it is the basis upon which approaches to poking fun, name calling and shunning gullibility originated and from which it has developed to what it is today as exemplified the summaries of selected Shona stories.

1.2 Folktales one: The hare and the baboon

The two namely, Hare and Baboon courted and fell in love with girls. They made plans to visit these girls on appointment. As the days to visit their girls drew closer, Hare spoke behind his friend Baboon in order to win the sympathy of baboon's girl-friend. On the day of the visit, Hare pretended to be sick but his friend was willing to carry him as a sign of commitment. This similar to incidences where some people were reported to have pretended to be blind or unable to walk to gain sympathy or opportunities they did not deserve, just as Hare tricked Baboon in this story. At the end, Baboon's sacrifice to carry Hare on his back lends him into scorn by his girl-friend and ultimately into embarrassment and losing the girl to Hare (Gelfand, 1985). (See **Appendix, one**).

1.2.1 Significance of the folktale

Shona people are a heterosexual society where heterosexual marriages are valued despite threats growing from gay marriages in the modern society. In this society, boys courted and are still courting girls for marriage as it is understood in this context. In other words, according to the traditional African culture all the boys that have reached well above the legal age of majority (that is 18 years+) are expected to court a girl. In this culture, it was not customary for girls to visit a courted boy. It was the responsibility of boys to visit the courted girls as indicators of the boy's seriousness, trustworthiness and commitment to the relationship. This explains why the two Mr Hare and Mr Baboon had planned to pay a visit to their girls. In this story, the two friends courted girls who were friends and lived within the same vicinity, a gesture which was encouraged in the Shona culture to marry within neighbourhoods. After having established solid courtships the two made plans to visit their loved ones for the second time. In this story, the visit to girls is the main event suggesting that, what happened on these visits is the gist of the matter providing a context for gullible behaviour and how it is perceived and expressed in Shona society.

In this story, gullible behaviour begins to show off when a few days before the visit to the courted girls, Mr Hare lied to Mr Baboon that he was not feeling well and that they should postpone their planned journey. Unknown to Mr Baboon, Mr Hare had secretly visited the girls and had told them that one day he will come riding on Mr Baboon as his servant. The visit fulfilled the cultural expectation where only boys had the mandate to visit girls they had courted. In this story, Mr Baboon was reluctant to cancel the visit on the basis of his sickling friend to avoid embarrassment to girls who expected them.

Generally, a boy could not go alone but was always expected to be accompanied by someone to escort him. In other words, visiting a girl by oneself was a sign that the individual was not in cordial harmony with other people particularly those of his age group. Therefore, to prove that an individual was in good books with fellow members of his age group, he was expected to make such visits accompanied by a friend(s). Paradoxically, in this story, Mr Baboon needed a company while on the other hand he took it as a kind gesture for his friend Mr Hare to visit his girlfriend. This explains why these two were seen together on this occasion.

Surprisingly, a discord is noticed between the two friends when Mr Hare's gullible plans betrayed Mr Baboon's noble intentions. The behaviour took Mr Baboon by surprise yet to the girls it fulfilled what Mr Hare had previously told the girls that one day they were going to see him riding on the back of his servant Mr Baboon. Gullibility reached its climax when Mr Baboon succumbed to Mr Hare's wits and he carried Hare on his back to where they were meeting their courted girls. As earlier on pointed out, no one would dare visit his girl when he was out of his best form because he was going to risk breakdown of the relationship resulting in him losing the girl and chances of getting married. The riding of Mr Hare on the back of Mr Baboon resulted in the risk of being labelled an idiot. Culturally, the way a boy carried himself about was in most cases guarantee for a sustainable relationship.

On arrival, the Mr Hare made sure that the girls saw him riding on the back of Mr Baboon with the intention of embarrassing Baboon by openly showing that he was up to outwitting him in front of his courted girl. The story teller expresses that because of the gullible behaviour of the hare Mr Baboon did not want to see him for the rest of his life (Gelfand, 1985), indicating that gullibility was unacceptable in society. Losing a friend as is the case with Mr Hare through crafty ways was a shame for poor Hare, although he later got all the girls. Getting all the girls casts a shadow on polygamy that some individuals in Shona society could use any possible means to lure women on their side. Getting women on one's side was not as important as the methods employed to get those women, for example gullibility. This is central to Shona society. In this story and many others, Mr Hare was successful but his actions were unjustified and this casts a shadow on Mr Hare. For example, in the African context people generally do not want to be associated with people with disabilities (PWDs), thus in one popular story Mr Hare outwitted Mr Baboon again by telling the girlfriend that he had a deformed back yet he had also told Mr Baboon not to allow his girl to ever touch his back because she would bewitch him. Mr Baboon again lost his girl through Mr Hare's gullible behaviour. This other story teaches us not to discriminate our partners and give them up because they have acquired a disability or when our friends scornfully despise them. The other lesson is that every person is sexually active whether disabled or not. The chief culprit in this story is gullibility a vice which Shona society name called and shunned through a folktale with a view to transform bad behaviour and to warn people to be careful in chasing friends or partners. In Appendix 2 is another lesson

teaching story.

1.3 Folktale two: The baboon and the Hare

In this folktale, Mr Hare and Baboon are friends. However, the two survived on stealing and also to alleviate hunger. They both decided to suture their rectums (Hodza and Chiromo, 1987). When both sutured their rectums, Baboon's rectum was tightened while Mr Hare made sure that his rectum was not tightly done as Mr Baboon's. At the end, Mr Baboon got into the field where he overfed himself and could not pass out wastes through his rectum since his rectum was too tightly tied. As a result Mr Baboon could neither walk nor move until the wife of the owner of the field carried him to her husband thinking he was dead. Unknowingly, the credulous wife invited her husband to come and skin the animal for their consumption. This wife's husband not aware of the pretence of Mr Baboon to be dead while alive, pushed the knife through the rectum of Mr Baboon which relieved him and helped him to gather strength and ran away. This husband's hand and the knife were trapped inside as Mr Baboon tightened his rectum, thus could not remove his hand so he was then dragged by Mr Baboon as he ran for his life leading to the death of the husband (see **Appendix two story**).

1.3.1 Significance of the folktale

This tale succinctly captures gullible behaviour in a variety of ways: cheating by Mr Hare, pretence by Mr Baboon when he got caught in the fields and credulity by both the wife and husband. In Shona society, conflict is veiled differently and its results differ according to situations. In this story, we have typologised the scenario of going into the fields to represent conflict meaning when Mr Baboon went into the field that is a sign of conflict of interests. Thus, getting into another person's field and plucking plants without permission indicates a conflict of interests between various members of the society because hunger is basic to human life. Note that this paper does not equate stealing with conflict, but hunger is a veiled expression of conflict in this folktale. In other words, without hunger Mr Baboon could not have entered the fields. Thus, hunger is a type of conflict that exists in every human being and is very basic but fluctuates every now and then. The owners of the fields represent attempts by various individuals to address the problem of conflict such as, hunger by tilling the land and planting crops. In this story, conflict is veiled by hunger which sends Mr Baboon into the fields to steal. In the process of trying to address hunger, gullible behaviours manifests in different forms: pretence and credulity.

How gullible behaviours manifested is crystal clear in this story. In the first place, gullible behaviour lends Mr Baboon into trouble when he trusted Mr Hare "to suture his rectums" (Kileff, (1987). This is shown when Mr Baboon loosely sutures Mr Hare's rectum while his was tightened unknown to him. While trust is a property of social relationships, it should have limits as blind trust could expose someone to danger as was the case with Mr Baboon whose rectum was tightened without his knowledge. The act caused Mr Baboon to be unable to move and thus was caught red handed by the owner of the field. Normally, it is expected of thieves when caught red handed to run away but Mr Baboon could not do so because his rectum was tightened. As an escape route, he pretended to be dead. Through pretence Mr Baboon played out gullible behaviour and was not spared by the woman's credulous behaviour. In peace building, it is common knowledge that victims of violence turned out to become perpetrators of violence too. The same principle seems to have applied here that a victim of gullibility often turns out to become a perpetrator of gullible behaviours too. Mr Baboon was cheated by Mr Hare who tightened his rectum. In turn, Mr Baboon pretended to be dead leading to the next series of credulous behaviours.

Overall, the three characters, Mr Baboon and the wife paid for their behaviours. Mr Baboon suffered the pain of a knife that was pushed into his rectum and while the husband, in this story, was dragged around for being credulous and eventually lost his life. Lastly, the wife lost her husband for being credulous too. This story reflects that gullibility has some devastating costs at some stages in life. On this basis, this story serves as a warning to every member of the society to be on the lookout for situations that could lead them into trouble through gullible behaviour or actions. The complexity of gullible behaviour is that sometimes it comes about in the form of a fortune. For example, when Mr Baboon thought hell had exposed him; while the wife thought it was a fortune when she discovered Mr Baboon lying down helplessly in her fields and the husband thought his wife had been very brave by managing to kill a baboon which was stealing from their field which they were going to feast as relish for their food. Thus, the story teaches that gullibility is a reality not myth. As such both perpetrators and victims suffer the same fate in various ways.

1.3.2 Overall synthesis of the two folk tales

All folk tales in this paper indicate the reality of gullible behaviour which manifested in the form of backbiting, shaming a friend, outwitting, stealing, acting without proper analysis and pretence. From the analysis of the two folk tales, it is evident that gullible behaviour has devastating results both to the perpetrator and the victim but most importantly to the perpetrator because when he/she succeeds in outwitting other people the perception that is created is that, *chikara kununa kudya kamwe* (animals survives on each other). This kind of perception suggests that in life there are people who make it in life through taking advantage of other people. Note that this proverb does not seek to condone such kind of behaviours but shun it. This proverb seeks to communicate that

life is full of puzzles such as individuals taking advantage of the vulnerable individuals in society. For example, where non disabled people use PWDs as charity objects to gain goods for their own benefits while not benefiting those they are meant for is another common gullible behaviour where several people and even some organizations have shortchanged the goals for sourcing for PWDs. It is within this framework that *unhu* as a principle of life becomes important in that individuals should respect the rights of other people in order for society to be harmonious. A harmonious society is that characterized by individuals and groups that respect other people as humans regardless of their intellectual ability, sex, age or disability, just to mention a few.

In folk tale two, it is clear that gullible behaviour is found in human societies. Mr Baboon became credulous when he trusted Mr Hare to suture his rectum. In addition, both the wife and husband are reflected as credulous. Mr Baboon used the chance where the woman took for granted that he was dead, thus used such fertile ground to pretend to be dead. In other words, gullible behaviour has a context. In this story, credulity first by Mr Baboon and second by both the wife and her husband created fertile ground for gullible behaviours to manifest. It worked well in a context where both wife and husband became credulous. Gullible behaviour reared its ugly face through the woman when she assumed Mr Baboon to be dead and told the husband to push the knife through the rectum. Also, when ... “the man pushed the knife into the rectum...” (Kileff, 1987) that was a sign of credulity. Under normal circumstances, the rectum is the last thing to think about when skinning an animal for meat. The first thing is to cut the throat when intending to skin an animal for meat. Thus, the pushing of the knife into the rectum is against the norm. This violation of the norm secured Mr Baboon an escape route. Simply put, gullible behaviour is a violation of the norm of love, respect and trustworthiness.

Furthermore, it is interesting to notice that after being outwitted all the victims of gullible behaviour experienced shame and embarrassment. In folk tale one, Mr Baboon felt embarrassed in front of his courted girl. To deal with the situation Mr Baboon later went into withdrawal while Mr Hare felt proud of himself when he proceeded to take Mr Baboon’s girl. This shows that gullible behaviours produce different results between the perpetrator and the victim. Mr Hare felt that he had made it when he outwitted his friend while Mr Baboon felt embarrassed (folk tale one) and lost his girlfriend. In the second, folktale, when Mr Baboon outwitted the woman by pretending to be dead, he felt he outdid the intellectual ability of the woman. In that sense, it is also clear that there are people in societies today who have made it in life through the practice of gullible behaviours. However, in the second story, the woman expressed disappointment over the untimely death of her husband. It is not clear why her husband started by pushing the knife through the rectum as no concrete reason was provided. The underlying theme is people should not always swallow before chewing meaning one should think before taking any action. Ignorance also emerged in way the husband and wife took for granted that the Baboon was dead, yet still alive.

The use of animal characters in folktales is strongly supported in literature. Charamba (n.d.:6) states that: “the use of human and animal characters during folk-telling, helps to make the audience, who are almost always young children, feel what will be speaking to them is not the *Sarungano* but are the human and animal characters in the folktale. All these two folk tales talk about Mr Hare and Baboon which exhibits two different types of people found in society the wise and the unwise; advantaged and disadvantaged or vulnerable; and the disabled and non disabled. These qualities reflect dynamics that take place in societies and how the wise always take advantage of the unwise and so on. In contrast, the woman was outwitted by Mr Baboon who pretended to be dead that reflects that, even the wise can be outwitted by other individuals perceived as idiots in society. The basic ruling is that all members of the society are susceptible to gullible behaviours at any level of interaction.

However, use of other modern folktales could have given the extent to which African traditional tales still exhibited gullible lessons. Nevertheless, the underlying wisdom in folktales has timeless meaning that it keeps in step with constant changing environments. As such, this paper was developed with the modern societies in view that all societies are susceptible to gullible behaviours. Although, environments have changed gullible behaviour manifests in different forms as there are still people who experience hurts after having been cheated by relatives, friends and colleagues.

In the current paper, the findings might have been different if more attention was given to analysis of dramas in modern Zimbabwe. The trickster, Mr *Hare* in this study could be compared to Satan and his demons. In the Bible, Satan tried to influence Adam and Eve into doubting the goodness of the creator, God (Genesis 3). In the process, the woman became credulous and she ate the forbidden tree and equally influenced her husband to eat the same God forbidden fruit in the middle of the Garden of Eden. This action led Adam and Eve to experience the phenomenon of sin that is disobedience to their creator. When God asked Eve why she ate the forbidden fruit the response was ‘the Snake deceived me.’ In Christian circles, this historical account is meant to warn people from falling victim to gullibility perpetuated by some evil forces, this scenario is now taken as a precedent to practice gullibility against women. The general belief which has since become fertile ground for practicing gullible behaviours against women is that all women are weak because Eve was deceived by the snake, yet in reality gullibility has nothing to do with the sex or age of an individual. Hence, we read of many stories involving both men and women in media having suffered/experienced deceitful circumstances.

In another attempt Satan attempted Jesus, the Son of God into disobedience, Jesus overcame him with principles of the truth (Matthew 4): ‘worship the lord and him only’. In all narratives, Jesus is the only ideal person who managed to overcome gullible behaviour. In spite of these models by Jesus, Christians today still suffer from gullibility by tricksters who masquerade as angels of light or pretend to heal PWDs while asking for payment for the job first before witnessing the miracles. In support, Greenspan (2008) posits that the notion of Satan as a manipulative trickster who preys upon gullible and weak is still alive and existing in some religious wiles as evidenced by day-to-day media reports on how people are being tricked by church leaders, Pastors and some religious leaders.

On this basis, this paper acknowledges that gullible behaviour cuts across the various sectors of societies. Religion and non-religious circles fall victim to gullibility as exemplified in this paper. The bottom line is gullible behaviour disrupts relationships. As such, the findings in this study implore all individuals and groups to be on the lookout for situations that expose them into falling victim to gullibility.

1.4 Biblical related examples and implications

The study aims to remind Africans to learn lessons from their folktales and make correct interpretations and the implied messages or teachings which usually apply biblical expectations. However, as reflected by the stories in this paper, there are some Christians who naturally have tendencies of believing every false teaching on the pretext that the preacher knows it all (expert power) rather than read the scriptures with understanding. For example, the wife was not supposed to be duped by Mr Baboon by taking for granted that he was dead without verifying, maybe according to African culture where only men are considered to be expert hunters, she assumed her husband to be an expert on skinning animals. The wife was punished by later living as a widow while the husband was equally punished through death for focusing on their relish desires without reasoning. In support, the scriptures in Proverbs 1: 32 in the Bible (p. 563) reads, *For the waywardness of the simple will kill them and the complacency of fools will destroy them*. Even in this story and most folktales Mr Baboon is someone with a history of being deceived by Mr Hare, thus should have learnt lessons from past circumstances.

In support of the same views Timothy 4: 3-4 in the Bible (p. 202) reads: *For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear*. The other teaching urges Christians to avoid relying on their canal mind without reliance on the Bibles which we are urged to make the standard of our lives. In the same story Mr Baboon trusted Mr Hare to suture his rectum as agreed yet he was aware of his usual historical dirty tricks. It is because of people with personalities as Mr Hare’s whom we are likely to meet in life that the scriptures forewarn us in Proverbs 14: 15 (p.574) and thus quotes, *A simple man believes anything but a prudent man gives thought to his steps*. In support Greenspan (2008) elaborates how human beings allowed themselves to be taken advantage of despite previously learnt lessons. Thus, in most instances, after telling folktales to our children we always ask their characters of preferences in the stories and always ask for reasons for their choices. This way, most African children’s maturity and reasoning is tested and corrected to promote wise decision making and to stay alert to gullible friends, relatives and strangers. The same people are described and summarized by the verse in Romans 16:18 (p. 155) as, *For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naïve people*. Our hearts therefore need to be strengthened by grace and not by eating ceremonial foods as emphasized by the verse in Hebrews 13:9 (p. 216).

Since society comprises of diversified people, the paper further addresses the implications of Biblical stories and folktales to people with disabilities. Thus, this paper would be incomplete without addressing the relatedness of matters under study to people with disabilities (PWDs). The implications of the story where Mr Hare told Mr Baboon’s girlfriend to reject him because he was disabled and had a hatchback portrays how PWDs were culturally despised and considered as hopeless, asexual, and on the other hand felt that a non-disabled person was not expected to marry someone with a disability. This indicates that people are ashamed of PWDs thus in most cases misinterpret the Biblical stories about disability. The Bible in Proverbs 11:13 (p.571) says, *A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret*. The verse emphasizes how a gossip separated Mr Hare and Mr Baboon’s friendship because of gossip and gullible behaviour. Greenspan (2008) supports the analysed folktales by focusing on human-to-human gullibility in literature and folktales. Yet God created every person through his image including PWDs. Thus, he endured his acquired disabling marks on the limbs, hands and the speared left side while on the cross. When he resurrected Jesus used these marks to identify himself, as an indicator that issues of PWDs are integral to theological reflections. Thus the impetus of this paper challenges you and me to rethink and reconsider PWDs as equal beings because God created an inclusive community comprising of people with and without disabilities for a purpose and by so doing he created space for them.

In support, the most misinterpreted verses include John 9:3 where the disciples asked who sinned the blind man who had received his sight or his parents. Some people further misinterpret verses where healed

people are told to sin no-more; as such some people interpreted that to mean that PWDs are sinners or sins are the root cause of their disability. Yet, the scriptures only intended to make people realize that God could be made to manifest in him so that his power could be seen in his Son Jesus. That way disability discourse was introduced in theology to portray its prevalence in humanity. According to Leviticus 21: 18-21 (p.107) in the Old Testament, people with disabilities and animal which are disfigured or deformed were not accepted for offerings or allowed inside or near the house of the Lord, thus some people interpreted that as myths towards PWDs. The stories and examples in this paper affirm that diversity is an integral of God's creation. The emphasis is then, on infusing issues of disability in theology education and ethics to help people make appropriate and correct interpretations through unlearning certain prejudices and misconceptions infused by the old schools of thought. In the Old Testament if God considered PWDs as a myth he would not have spoken to Moses who was not an eloquent speaker in Exodus 4: 10. The folktales also teach us to trust only God. The Bible verse in Proverbs 12:26 (p.573) reads, *A righteous man is cautious in friendship, but the way of the wicked leads them astray*, indicating that we should not even take our closest friends for granted but stay cautious not to easily fall into gullibility as Mr baboon, the wife and husband did in preceding tales to stay wise and alert of friends with the Judas kiss and gullible behaviour which betrayed Jesus, though this had to happen for our salvation today. All the same we are cautioned to stay wise. The Bible further suggests that we should not reject our gullible friend but teach them the right things. This supported by the biblical verse in 1 Corinthians: 33-34 (p.166) which reads, *Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character. Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning for there are some who are ignorant of God-I say this to your shame*. The folktales and the corresponding Biblical verses therefore teach us to do unto others as we would like them to do unto us.

1.5 Conclusions and recommendations

This paper reflects that gullibility is a reality in human societies especially African who are the focus of this paper and it takes place every now and then. The use of animal characters depicts that in societies there are people with good and bad characters and influences. Hare represent those that survive through crafty manners while Baboon represents those individuals experiencing intellectual inability or who are vulnerable to tricksters. That people are equal but not equal is a fact of life and some relevant biblical verses were selected to support the findings. Furthermore, the paper emphasized that people should read or listen to folktales with sober consciousness in order to learn from them and religion should equally play an active role through biblical teachings. People are equal in terms of dignity but different in terms of abilities, sex status and belief systems. In view of the above, this paper accepts gullibility as a fact of life. Thus, the following is recommended:

- There is need for churches to equally value and recognise folktales as behaviour change agents by aligning them to Biblical themes and stories so that religious understanding is from known to the unknown;
- That religious institutions use folktales to build the imagery of listeners such as, youths and reinforce its linkage to religious life;
- That religious institutions use folktales to maintain modern life styles through comparing and contrasting habits and discouraging bad behaviour in relation to Biblical tales and expectations;
- That churches use folktales to give emotional intelligence as a means of healing souls for unstable lives with a view to build stable societies;
- That media such as, televisions use folktales during children's sessions to inculcate in children the values that are in tune with meaningful teachings and the relatedness to biblical implications;
- There is need for religious institutions to encourage certain behaviours and characteristics through critical analysis of meanings of folktales as an indirect way of reprimanding, teaching and using stories as teaching aids to issues of life;
- That people learn lessons from Jesus' response to gullible behaviour; and;
- That people are taught through folktales that tricksters are equally tricked in life so as to mitigate the gullibility circle.

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Appendix one

Story One (1) (The hare and the baboon)

Story teller: There was a hare and a baboon,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The hare said to the baboon,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: Let us go and propose love to girls,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: And the baboon said, 'Let us go.'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: They reached where there were girls,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The baboon started to propose love to one of them.
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The baboon was more handsome than the hare,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: This disappointed the hare,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: Because the girl the hare loved had been chosen first by the baboon,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: But the hare did not openly show it to the baboon.
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: They spent the day chatting happily with their girls,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: But when the sun was setting,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The hare and the baboon bid good-bye to their girls,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: And told the girls that,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: 'We will return the day after tomorrow.'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The hare and the baboon went their way.
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: They cooked their sadza, ate it and slept.
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The next day after sunrise,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The hare said to the baboon
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: 'My friend baboon, I am going to wash,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: 'When I have finished you will take your turn.'
Audience: Go on,

Story teller: And the baboon said, 'Alright my friend.'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The hare went to the stream and washed,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: After washing, he went to the girls in secret,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: Without his friend the baboon, knowing it.
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The hare met the girls and said to the baboon's girl,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: 'You are a fool of a girl.'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: 'Why have you said I am a fool?'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The hare said,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: 'You love the baboon, do you not know he is my horse?'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The girl said, 'You are lying you hare.'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The hare said, 'You are lying you hare.'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The hare said, 'Is it not true that we are visiting you tomorrow?'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The baboon's girl friend said, 'Yes, what about it?'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The hare said, 'I am coming riding him.'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: 'When you see it do not reveal that I told you, '
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: 'That baboon in my horse.'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: And all the girls said, 'We promise,'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: 'But we would love to see it.'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The hare spent the whole day saying things that were not true to the girls.
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: When the hare noticed that the girls fully believed him,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: He bid them good-bye and went home.
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: When he met the baboon,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The hare complained, 'My stomach is aching.'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The baboon asked, 'What has happened to your stomach to ache?'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: And he replied, 'It is severely aching.'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The baboon asked, 'What have you eaten at the river where you had gone?'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: And he said, 'I have eaten figs.'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The baboon then said, 'Have a sleep and rest.'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: And the hare pretended to be sleeping,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The baboon started cooking sadza (stiff porridge) for the hare.

Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The hare woke up and took a few morsels of the sadza and stopped.
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: He was doing this to convince the baboon that he was ill.
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: After the meal they slept.
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The next day after sunrise,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The baboon said, 'What about our journey? What should we do?'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: 'Our girls would be waiting for us.'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The hare said, 'We must not miss meeting them,'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: 'If we stay they will think we are deceivers.'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The baboon then asked, 'How can we go when you are ill?'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: And the hare asked, 'Don't you want to carry me on your back, my friend?'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The baboon replied, 'I can carry you on my back, my friend,'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: Then the hare said, 'If that is the case carry me and let us start now.'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The hare was then carried by the baboon.
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: When they were near the home of the girls,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The baboon said, 'Where will you alight?'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The hare replied, 'I will alight at the stream near their home.'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: They walked on and on until they reached the stream,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: And the baboon said, 'We have reached the stream, you get down.'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The hare alighted,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: He staggered and fell down,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The hare said, 'I don't think I can walk,'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: 'You have to carry me, my friend, for us to reach there.'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: Poor baboon had to carry the hare again,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: And he walked while carrying him.
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: And the hare said, 'My friend,'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: And the baboon asked, 'What has happened again?'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: And the hare said, 'May I have something soft to sit on?'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: Leaves were plucked and placed on the back of the baboon,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: And the hare said, 'That's better, my friend.'
Audience: Go on,

Story teller: 'It is much more comfortable now,'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: 'But I am having difficulty with flies,'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: 'Please cut for me twigs and use that as a fly-switch.'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The baboon cut the twigs and gave them to the hare,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: They walked on and on,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: And the hare said, 'My friend, I am feeling dizzy,'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: 'Peel off fibre from the bark and tie a noose and put it on your neck,'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: 'I will hold on to this when I feel dizzy.'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The baboon peeled off fibre and tied a knot
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: Which he hooked round his own neck,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: They walked on and reached the home of the girls.
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The hare saw the girls sitting outside their home,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: He held on to the fibre string with all his strength,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The baboon was flicked with the twig,
Audience: Go on
Story teller: And the baboon asked, 'What's wrong my friend?'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: 'You are hurting me with the twig.'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The hare said, 'What are you saying now?'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The hare flicked and flicked the baboon,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: When the girls saw this happening, they said,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: 'Oh, we see, you are the hare's horse?'
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: They began to laugh at the baboon,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The baboon got very very angry,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: He also felt very embarrassed and wished the earth would open up and and swallow him,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The hare then alighted,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The baboon ran away and left them.
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: He did not see the hare for the rest of his life,
Audience: Go on,
Story teller: The hare remained and took possession of the girls.
Audience: Go on,
That is where story-teller ended.

Appendix two

Story Two (2) (The baboon and the Hare)

There once was Mr Baboon and Mr Hare. They both decided to suture their rectums so that once they felt they had taken enough food, they would never get hungry easily. The baboon made sutures on the hare which were loose but the hare's sutures on the baboon were so tight that they could not be loosened easily.

One day Mr Baboon went out to look for food in a certain woman's field. He got roots of some kind of tuber, and ate them until he could not take any more, forgetting that he could not empty his rectum. As a result of this, he could neither walk nor talk, and remained pinned to the spot.

By chance, fortunately for the baboon, the woman who owned the field arrived and seeing the baboon, who now only stood as her prey, took it and lifted it into her basket, thinking it was dead.

On reaching home, she proudly shouted to her husband, "Would you please skin the prey I brought home!" clearly boasting of her luck and bravery. He promptly and smilingly worked on it and unknowingly started removing the suture-line thereby releasing the baboon's burden. As soon as the man pushed the knife into the rectum, his hand got stuck in there. But the baboon had no time to waste-as soon as his burden was released he ran wildly, pulling the knife and the man's hand behind him. The man struggled to free himself without success because the baboon had contracted his sphincter muscle so tightly that nothing could escape the grip. The man dragged mercilessly over stones and thorns. The wife presuming that her husband did not want to leave his prey, shouted to, "Please, darling, leave him alone." The man rudely exploded, "How can you possibly call this monster our prey when it is giving me all this pain?"

The man could not release himself and as he was dragged along he was wounded by thorns and stones, as a result of which he died with his hands still in the baboon's rectum. When the baboon saw the hare again, they beheaded the man and hung his head on an upright pole. They mercilessly moved away from the place.

Seeing her husband's head at a distance the wife quickly blurted, "Darling, may we please go home; but why are you smiling?" Coming nearer she saw the head on the pole and his body lying somewhere nearby.

She lamented the death of her husband, regretting her mistakes in bringing home the baboon which brought fate to her husband and ended in the termination of his life.

This is where the story ended!