

Contemporary Kenyan Contexts and Adult Character types in Select Children's Literature.

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ABSTRACT

This present article focuses on the relationship between contemporary Kenyan Context and Adult Character types present in select Kenyan children's literary texts. The texts include; "*Uncle Sese and The Sunday School Project*" by Kabaji, and "*Naomi and Cindy*" and "*Naomi in her New School*" by Muleka. The study aims at identifying different contexts that give rise to the various adult character types present in the texts. The study shows that there is a close link between the contexts the writers have painted in their works and the characters in those works. This indicates that perhaps there is as much realism in children's literature as there is in most adult fiction. Character and characterization being an aspect of technique, the theory of formalism serves as the main analytical tool. The study is descriptive in the manner it delineates contexts and character types. The paper helps to bring out not only the serious nature of children's literature but also adds to the appreciation of the aesthetic value of children's literature.

Keywords: Children's Literature, Context, Character Types.

INTRODUCTION

Literature refers to the works of imagination which are transmitted by means of the written or spoken word. Literary works provide experiences which reflect on human condition by providing insights into human nature, encouraging readers to reflect into their lives and societies. In real life, literature is above all enjoyment; the kind that deepens one's experience, the heightening of one's awareness. Serious literature is known to exhibit artistic merit and reflect on human condition. There is a misconception that children's literature is all play and nothing more. This is clearly corrected through Character and characterization which form a major component of artistic merit. Cain and McGowan (2001) focus on Aristotle verses Plato who discuss the dangers of Poetry and Literature. According to Plato, Literature is Politics. He compares Literature to Politics because both use the words, the same raw materials to influence the audience. The salient message of the literature gets into the mind of the reader and reorients their thinking by challenging social dogmas and rigid systems.

Aristotle on the other hand sees Literature as a Science as it provides a framework to define, clarify, exemplify and provide plausible arguments to understanding phenomenon with the aim of seeing and knowing the uniqueness that exists in different things. He came up with the structure of the tragic form with its elements which include; plot, character, diction, thought, and spectacle which serve as models that creative writers largely conform to. He also identifies three components of the work of the art as subject, form and content which should be combined together to guarantee its completeness by producing unique results bringing context into existence.

According to Foster (2005) the concept of children's literature emerged in the first half of the 20th century and has been accepted nowadays and treated as an important tool which supports language development and creativity at home and in schools among pupils and children. The value of children literature for young

children is both personal and academic. The personal values in children literature include; providing joy for children, increasing their imagination and creativity by engaging their minds endbrains in listening and interpreting the written works as well as allowing them to have varied experiences through interaction. The academic value is that children's literature helps children to learn concepts as they develop their language as well as addressing their literary needs by learning about the print model, style and content of the piece of art thus improving their vocabulary through expressing their feelings and thoughts.

Children's literature being a piece of literary creation draws its subject from the African world view and which is written in a language and style the African child can comprehend thus entertaining the child as well as educating them. By the guidance and keenness of the character types, children's literature strengthens the formation of values and feelings of solidarity, equity and firmly establishes the qualities of tolerance, compassion, sharing, caring, being responsible and ability to resolve conflicts through non-violent means achieved through reading children's books. Literature brings about different contexts that create the ground for character types who play various roles in the lives of children.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature for children comprises literary works written for the young population of readers, children who have not yet stepped into adulthood. Children's literature is viewed as a valuable resource for any society since it mirrors the society. Children's literature provides sources of understanding about the human condition, reduces prejudice, educates about diversity, promotes cultural understanding, reflects life, develops empathy and confronts global issues of injustice.

Twomey, (2016) shows that context is vital in literature he argues that context is important in literature. He says that the meaning of the text, the author's view and value create meaning in a work of art. Therefore, context is the facets of a situation, fictional or non-fictional that inspires feelings, thoughts and beliefs of groups and individuals creating the background information that allows people to make informed decisions. Context being the setting within which the work of art is situated provides meaning and clarity to the intended message creating the relationship between the writer and reader thus providing a deeper understanding of the intended message.

Twomey, (2016) focuses on the importance of context in literature where he argues that, for context to be meaningful, we should consider the meaning of the text, the author's view and values to create the meaning. He adds that without a clear understanding of the context of the text, one cannot fully comprehend the views and values of the author considering the social context of a text which brings out the kind of society in which the characters live and the one in which the author's text was produced. With the help of context, the reader gets a clear sense of the plot or story which brings on board the characters used in the works of art. Foster, (2005) also brings out the importance of context in that, it helps to understand people's situations and ideas because everything we think, say, see, hear and do is a response to the external stimuli of the world which is regarded largely in response to the context it is presented to us. For instance, context brings about school going children (pupils) who attend school to be taught and be guided by their teachers. The contemporary Kenyan contexts include; Family Context, Social Context, Religious Context.

Maurice, (2015) claims that literary context is the background information you provide to inform something is taking place. The works of art are no longer left alone because context is at the heart of any critical engagement with the ways of presenting and interpreting literature which rely on knowledge about the artist's life, the historical circumstances surrounding the works since the works of literature have relationship with the surrounding world. Therefore, contextualization deepens our experience which helps us understand works of literature which in turn functions as a box in which texts are encased and held fast. Once context is identified, it exposes the hidden truth about the work of art for it is context that gives

meaning to what we think and do confirming that context is a key component. Therefore, literature cannot be cut away from context that is cultural context, the social affairs and the economic affairs. Some people argue that children's literature focuses on important role of children's literature yet others argue that it focuses on the context.

Hudson, (1986) looks at context and children's writing. He looks at description of children's views of the context that surrounds their writing and examines five contextual factors which are ownership, setting, audience, purpose and genres. He argues that the recent developments in the teaching of writing, focuses on the writer and the wider contexts that give rise to writing. Through this, researchers have found out that many children write by choice which differs from the assigned writing in school thus making their writing context-related. This leads the children to encounter a wide range of settings, audiences, purposes and genres for their writing as they reflect on the contextual factors. Sally's research is of great importance as it deals with context and children which adds value on this study that focuses on adult character types and their contexts.

Mustofa, and Lynn, (2018) focus on understanding cultural context in responding to literature. They describe several innovative, interactive methods that will help students make connections between life experiences and literary texts, between the author's culture and their own and between their ideas and those of other readers. They claim that for a text to be interpreted in the way the author has intended, readers need to develop knowledge of the author's cultural and historical contexts. Mustofa and Lynn's research add value to this study majorly on how to understand cultural context in literature. Much is borrowed in relation to cultural context basing on life experiences of people and the literary texts.

Walia, (2014) focuses on context and text. He claims that context remains a paramount module in understanding the text, in that any literature be it Australian, Indian, Caribbean, American or South Asian cannot be understood once we put the text out of its millennia. Walia shows how context is important for textual understanding. He argues that literature is the mirror of the society and it depicts the social, political, economic, religious sentiment of a particular era, century or age. To read and understand literature, one should know the contexts surrounding the piece of writing which positions the reader or researcher to identify what the content and form contains. This adds more information on this study, particularly the area of contexts.

Beard (1999), in his book *Texts and Contexts*, focuses on literature and reality, literature and the reader, literature and interpretation, the writer's context language and context. He claims that for a text to be understood, one should base on this aspects which confirm that the reader is as important as the author of the text you read. This is vital as it gives directions on how to analyze works of art.

Characterization in a work of art comprises the persons through whom the writer speaks to who are referred to as 'word masses' whom he says: created by a novelist who gives them names and sex, assigns them plausible gestures and causes them to speak by the use of inverted commas and perhaps to behave consistently. Foster, (1972) argues that Characterization forms the major part of the book and it is through it that the writer is able to appeal to the intelligence and imagination of the reader as the latter seeks to find out to whom the action happened. Characterization is also important in arousing and sustaining the interest of the readers by the help of story and plot. He argues that the story appeals to memory while plot to intelligence. This brings in the aspect of the story being significant to children for them to follow the book. But since the story is normally told through the characters in a book, this places characterization at the center of a child's reading. E.M. Foster talks about flat and round characters. He argues that flat characters do not grow or change while round characters develop with the story to the end. This is significant as round characters help the child reader to learn and develop with one's protagonists. This study narrows down to look at the role of different character types that contribute to the development of children's character which creates a gap from other researchers. Muleka, (2001) posits that characterization in the books that children

read is crucial in their character development because characters types are created from the immediate context from which interaction takes place to bring out their roles. He emphasizes on examination of characters in the literary texts basing on language use to showcase the role they play for value addition.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present study focuses on the relationship between the contemporary Kenyan contexts and adult character types which is guided by formalism theory propounded by Roman Jakobson, Viktor Shklovsky and Ivor Armstrong who brought into existence the tenets of the theory. Viktor Shklovsky introduced defamiliarization as a central tenet which focuses on the exploration of new literary techniques and devices in a work of art for its renewed perception and literariness. Arikian (2008) argues that defamiliarization transforms the way we look, see, feel and verbalize the things within our reach. While Shklovsky focuses on language, Roman Jakobson links techniques to context. Context forms the setting or the reason for the message that will be communicated. In this study, focus is on how contexts give rise to various character types.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher was able to gather information from the close reading and analysis of Uncle Sese, the Sunday school Project and Naomi and Cindy by Kabaji and Muleka respectively. This paper embraces a Descriptive research design which according to Oranga (2016) refers to research design that describes and brings out how context and character types are related. This method allows the researcher to identify the contexts used and the character types that emerge within the established contexts and how they impact on children thus obtaining the target information.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Introduction

This section focuses on the link between contemporary contexts and character types. The character types that are created in different contexts include; the innocent, father figure, mother figure, the caregivers, the ruler, school going children, church going children and the mentors as discussed below.

Family Context

A home brings about a family that has members who have the responsibilities of nurturing their children into responsible human beings. The innocents, father figure and mother figure are the identified character types. A solid and positive relationship between these character types creates a comfortable and conducive environment which accommodates them as they interact. This kind of interaction brings about learning on how to operate and relate with others. Goodall, (2007) focuses on home environment as an accurate predictor of children's achievement. Such an environment encourages children to interact freely with their parents and relatives. Cooney, (1999) asserts that the nature and types of relationships that exist in families bring about character types who are supportive to children thus embracing positivity in their lives.

The **Innocent** are often children who need the adults to administer help, guidance and protection as they earn a living while the **Father and Mother figures** are the biological persons who continually support children by providing care, basic needs and protection in a family or home and they can be biological parents, relatives and guardians. The interaction of these character types in a family provide a favorable environment desired by children thus creating a link to freely and comfortably share what they feel, what they have as well as what they have planned which enables father figures and mother figures to know where

to help and how. Clark, (2009) looks at the importance of families in a child's life. She argues that learning is complex which begins at birth and continues throughout life and parents are the first teachers and role models for their children. They tend to have a strong influence as they interact. For instance, in the text the "Sunday school Project" by Kabaji, parents create a home for their children to guide, protect and provide for. Mr. and Mrs. Sande are Jaro and Paku's parents and they ensure that children get their basic needs.

Paku and Jaro are served with lunch by their mother immediately after church. She got home at half past one and found the family at the table taking lunch. 'You are late, said Jaro, her younger brother. Wash your hands and join us before you tell us about your mission, said Mrs Sande. Apart from food, children are also provided with shelter. Parents make the innocents (children) comfortable by providing them with what they require which make them realize the importance of shelter. As a result, the interactions of the parents with children as brought out by the author, enable the children (the innocent) to form basic ideas and acquire knowledge and a number of interpersonal skills. The family provides the day-to-day context in which human bonds are created thus a key social institution that mediates the individual and the social with identifiable structures, hierarchies and functions. In the contemporary society, most parents have run away from their responsibilities by neglecting their children. They do not provide for their families the basic needs and other requirements. This has weakened the bond between the child and the parent creating the uncomfortable environment for the child thus minimizing the child-parent interaction.

Alazzawi, (2018) looks at family members especially parents as a support system that support children who are growing up for they draw their courage and strength from them. This encourages learning and acquisition of values as well as knowledge and skills. In "Uncle Sese" by Kabaji, Mr Jibe, Bebe's father inspires Bebe which serves as a springboard for Bebe to learn and acquire knowledge and skills to perform duties as well as be responsible. His father instructs him to dress well which happens when they leave to see their uncle in hospital. Bebe dresses shaggily which makes his father to authorize him to go back to the house to dress well before they leave.

Mr Jibe looked at his son and shook his head. "Bebe, what is wrong with you? Look at yourself! I cannot go anywhere with you when you are looking like that!" Bebe did not say anything. He looked himself over and was ashamed. His father authorized him by giving him five minutes to look sharp by smartening up. Bebe rushed to the house. He had to get ready in the shortest time possible. He was determined to take less than five minutes he had been granted. He tucked in his shirt and tied his belt then applied some lotion on his face (pg. 6-7).

Such children are innocent and as they grow up, they lose that innocence and therefore, they need the presence and guidance of their parents to embrace good behavioral patterns. In the Kenyan context for example, most adults use children wrongly; they use children to beg, in drug trafficking, but Uncle Sese nurtures children well by informing them about the dark side of life and its dangers. He also guides and counsels them. Children's literature shows children the strange world to encounter new things and interact with new people (parents, relatives and guardians). Ocelot (2020) says that "parents should build healthy relationships with the mindset that children depend on them because in a home, children receive the first education in their lives. Therefore parents need to be keen and raise up their children appropriately which create and build healthy relationships with their children.

Uncle Sese who is Bebe and Pepito's Uncle interacts and informs them on the importance of rules in a human life, that breaking rules, being disobedient and bad habits lead to torture and suffering. He informs them, that he was under the influence of friends who made him to sneak out from school to buy cigarette to smoke which later made him be amputated because of the disease he contracted. This communicates to Bebe and Pepito that associating with friends who are not of sound mind, influence others into doing what is not expected. Uncle Sese warns Bebe and Pepito to always do what is good and right by following the rules set without breaking them as well as obeying everyone in their vicinity. It is also through family love that

makes children reflect on the wrong they do or did especially Bebe who reflects on what he has been doing. He feels guilty of what he did and decides to reveal. Bebe remembers how he waited until midnight and went to watch his favorite program on TV when the rest were asleep. The author encourages parents to be concerned, responsible and love their children by being present throughout their lives.

Social Context

The social context emerge in a social set up where human beings meet for a given purpose which brings about socialization. It focuses on the portrayal of characters in relation to the daily activities and behavior of individuals as they interact in a society in line with the prescribed norms, ethics and general expectations. Socialization is key as different character types come together with the aim of exchanging ideas, knowledge and skills. The identified character types in a social set up are; the Ruler, the School going children and the Caregivers. Their coming together is meant to teach children about good morals, to help and support them while at school. This adds value to children because most of them are taught what is good and bad through guiding and counseling, punishment, motivation and being rewarded. **The school going Children** are those children or pupils who attend school to acquire values, knowledge and skills. **Caregivers** are those persons who continually support children by providing care, basic needs and protection in a family or home and they include; parents, relatives and guardians.

In a school set up there are two main educators of children; parents and teachers (caregivers) who administer teaching through guiding and counselling, punishment, motivation and rewarding. Parents are known to be the prime educators until the child starts school and remain a major influence on their children's learning at home then later teachers take up their roles at school. "Naomi and Cindy", a literary text by Muleka has school going children who need guidance in everything they do. In this case, the Caregivers support children and make sacrifices on their behalf. They are honorable, loyal and selfless which qualify them to be in a position to care and help the young children. In addition, they provide care, education and protection to children in and outside their families. They ensure that the needs of the children are met adequately and promptly with the aim of promoting holistic child growth as per the society's demands ensuring that the rights of children are protected and promoted. The author brings out the responsible caregivers who sacrifice themselves as they support children unlike in the contemporary society where most caregivers neglect most children.

The ruler is another character type with legal or emotional power over others and holds the control over everything around him/her. Such a character type leads by being in charge of others into achieving the set objectives. They hold unique personality traits that make them ideally suited to direct the rest of the people. In "Naomi and Cindy", Mrs. Jenida leads by example and upholds high levels of integrity and discipline which encourages pupils to do what is expected. She advocates for discipline and helping one another. She organizes the school program to enable fellow teachers perform their duties effectively. Her authoritative nature and the love she has to all people positions her well to perform her duties. Her strictness and authoritativeness brings up straight forward and well-mannered children. Leaders maintain their positions in leadership to guide others to achieve the set goals. In "Naomi and Cindy" by Muleka, Mrs Jenida is the head teacher at Bora Academy. She leads the pupils and teachers towards a common goal where by, she is firm and strict as she leads those in a school setup to ensure that learners excel in their academics. For instance Mr. Bendera is the Standard Four Social Studies teacher. He delivers the content then walks out of class, (pg. 1). Miss Kidogo is the class six teacher of English who teaches the girls about the language and the four skills. This guides the teachers to operate well at Bora Academy. The author informs us about the concerned and responsible ruler and teachers in a school. They show concern, love and care as they administer their services but in the contemporary society, most schools have rulers and teachers who do not care about the well-being of a learner. They molest pupils, ignore and isolate them. They don't support and help the learners but leave them to struggle for themselves.

The caregivers encourage children to talk about their problems to find a solution. Leaders should not neglect children by silencing them as they try to talk about their fears. This provides a room for them to gather the relevant and the required information from them. They are taught to accept mistakes and correct themselves, love and support one another, respect everyone and grow up as responsible human beings to create unity among themselves and with others. The text present children who are capable of accepting to be corrected and respond positively on the directives given by the ruler and caregivers. They are depicted as people with feelings to accommodate others through recognition. The children are given space and a chance to express themselves as well as take part in areas where they are capable of as they learn what values to uphold and what to reject during their daily activities.

Denton, (2002) focuses on the importance of family (parents) involvement at school. He argues that the earlier parents become involved in their children's issues while in school the better, this provides comfort for a child to learn. They boost the child's acquisition of knowledge and develops confidence and self-esteem, and a better parent-child relationship. Parents and Guardians are responsible and influential in that, they support children by providing them with the basic needs and paying them visits while at school. For instance, in "Naomi and Cindy" by Muleka, Aunty Maria and mama Teresia inform mama Penina who is meant to be Cindy's mother and Mama Susan, Nilla's mother to organize a party for Cindy and visit her at school since she is a total orphan. Mama Penina is responsible, concerned and loving. She is in charge of Cindy. She took Cindy to a children's home after her mother was taken away by people claiming that she was a bad person and will never come back (pg11). Other women join hands to support Mama Penina to help Cindy. Cindy's party surprised many until one would notice the disbelief in other pupil's voices. A good number of girls joined Cindy including Mrs Jenida the headmistress which made people to realize how important the function was (pg. 25). This party brings many people together who end up interacting with others from different places. During this function, the headmistress realizes that there are badly behaved girls in school who have the intentions of hurting others. For instance, Jacky who composed a song to sing, hurt and mock Cindy is informed on how wrong and bad it is to sing and laugh at someone who has no parents.

"Come here," the head teacher stretched to hold Jacky's hand. Jacky thought that the head teacher was going to pinch her nose as she often did to badly behaved girls. But instead, she spoke to her gently and said: "It's not polite to laugh at other people because they don't have what we have." Jacky nodded her head in agreement. Tears now rolled down her cheeks freely. She felt so bad about herself but the head teacher spoke to her again: "Don't cry, it will be alright." (Pg. 26)

Teachers and parents play their roles by accommodating and correcting learners who are wrong doers as they support their children and other people's children. That for a child to grow up well, he/she is not only raised up by parents but also teachers, and guardians. These caregivers are depicted as loving, responsible, reliable and hardworking as they add value and interact with children in school. This shows that there is collective responsibility where parents, teachers and guardians come together to support their children by visiting and attending functions in school. In our contemporary society, the caregivers neglect their children once they take their children to school and later fail to support them. For instance, most caregivers in the current society do not mind checking on the progress of their kids while at school, some do not provide for them while others do not pay them visits in school. This shows that there is lack of collective responsibility. Therefore in Naomi and Cindy, the author brings out responsible parents who love, care, support and encourage their children in school.

Bosmajian, (2002) adds that, a child's personality formation is as a result of the general socialization which is the important process in a child's life. He argues that the child commences to socialize within a given society which observes and maintains its culture since the early stage of their childhood at the parent's home is circled by parental atmosphere and other family members which later extends to the school environment.

Teachers and parents create different school activities that give a chance to the pupils to express their capabilities, knowledge and skills as they develop socially. The caregivers nurture pupils (children) to develop socially since first friendships are made at an early stage of life. The social learning in Naomi and Cindy is organized in a way that learners attend lessons in the classroom to acquire knowledge and skills by being taught by teachers after which they join outside to play and sing. Aristotle perceives that literature is the effective way of passing information and integral in the learning process of the children. He further argues that literary presentations are pleasurable because they impart beneficial knowledge. He believes that literature enhances teaching because information is portrayed in an objective manner to convey the right meaning without stimulating negative feelings in the learners. Pupils at Bora Academy play and sing after attending the lessons as a way of refreshing themselves as well as learning new things on how to handle others as they interact. In the text Naomi and Cindy, Cindy's attention had been captured by a group of Kindergarten children in the field. The little ones unable to jump the ropes, could be heard breathlessly struggling with the words of Naomi's song:

Bobo ga...

Baboga...

Nambatwende

I wen fore wo...

Ba na I sto...

Andabrek. (pg. 14)

Through play, children interact and socialize as they learn new things such as songs. Teachers at school allow pupils to have time for play which makes them active.

Katz & McClellan, (1997) focus on schools that form the basis for creation of social development and growth. In a school set-up, teachers are very important during the period of childhood since results showed that the children that created a relationship of trust with teachers are more socially competent in handling others or fellow children as well as relating with others. In Naomi and Cindy, Naomi knows how to handle issues among her friends and the pupils just because she relates well with her teachers. For example, Naomi relates well with her class teacher and trusts her so much that she informs her about Cindy's problems that later permits her to use her phone to contact her Aunt to plan and visit Cindy who has no parents. Naomi is also good in socializing in that she intervenes by controlling the class four children who had composed a song to sing for Cindy to stop the singing as she informs them that it is not good to sing and laugh at one who has no parents. Context in real sense is important since the character types born add value in the lives of children by responding positively through helping and supporting them.

Galda, (2003) examines teachers in a school set up as facilitators of knowledge and good instructors to children. He adds that teachers need to have educative effect, encourage children to accommodate and accept others as they socialize. Through Bora Academy, Mrs Jenida the headmistress informs Jacky a class mate to Cindy that it is not good to hurt someone who has no parents after she composed the song and sang with her friends to mock Cindy. She informs her that it is not good and therefore she should apologize to Cindy for the mistake committed. This makes Jacky to accept the mistake and learns that in life, we need to accommodate and love others despite the situations and therefore promises not to repeat the mistake. Just because Cindy is very bright and always champions, other girls under the leadership of Jacky composed a song to sing, hurt her and mock her. Cindy cried much after she heard the girls singing:

Cindy, the father-less

Cindy, the mother-less

She is the father-less

She is the mother-less

Cindy the useless

Cindy the hopeless

Cindy is mhmhmhmh

She is the mhmhmhmh

The author informs us about concerned and responsible caregivers especially teachers who lead, guide pupils and support them in various disciplines. Through this, children acquire values and virtues through socialization unlike the contemporary society where teachers in most schools do not add value on how children behave. Most of them give learners a backup by inciting them not to value others but end up hurting others.

Cullingford,(1999) researches on teacher and parental involvement in the children's affairs which leads to greater problem-solving skills, greater school enjoyment, better school attendance, fewer behavioral problems in and among children at school and greater social and emotional development. The caregivers (teachers, parents and guardians) encourage children to talk and express their problems with the aim of finding solutions. The caregivers should not neglect children by silencing them as they try to talk about their fears which provide room for them to gather the relevant and required information from them. In "Naomi in her New School", the headmistress takes the initiative of listening to Nilla and Naomi about the case of bullying of others. This helps her to identify a badly behaved pupil known to bully others and acts. Parents, teachers and guardians are known and identified to be having the greatest responsibility in educating children to shun away the wrongs and embrace what is right. They do so by tracking how children interact and socialize while in school. They emphasize on the moral values that the children are required to uphold and discourage the wrong doings once they sense and see among the children.

The authors inform us that children must have caregivers and rulers in their environments and life to guide them to the correct path. This is important since children are not perfect and all-knowing. For the children in the contemporary society, the caregivers do less in the lives of children in a social set up making children to miss out on the expected requirements in the society.

Religious Context

A church is a physical structure where people gather to worship, learn and to have fellowship with those who believe in Jesus Christ. This makes a spiritual community of all people who believe in Jesus Christ. The church is one of the agents in the early development of the child. Children are mostly inducted into Christianity by virtue of their parent's affiliation through interaction. The character types identified in this context include; the mentor(s) and the church going children. The mentor(s) wisely teach and guide the children who attend the church service. They include the pastor, the Sunday school teacher and parents while the church going children include Paku and other children from different families.

The religious context is evident in the text "The Sunday School Project' by Kabaji which brings out Mr and

Mrs Sande, Paku's parents (mentors) who raise her religiously. They attend Sunday service with Paku who feels happy interacting with other children from different homes and families. They help to guide as well as expose their children in church to be informed about God as they interact and socialize when fellowshiping together. Other parents (mentors) allow their children to attend the church service and interact with Miss Pasha the Sunday school teacher who teaches them the values and virtues in life.

Paku and her parents arrived in church earlier than many other worshippers since it was her parent's duty to arrange seats in church. Paku helped them with the work before she joined her friends outside the church for a chat as they waited for their Sunday school teacher. In the church, Paku and other children are taught to love, care and help others by their Sunday school teacher Miss Pasha. They confirm to their teacher whom they love as they promise her who to love, care and help (pg. 3). She teaches children how to love, care, be kind and help others. "...Those of you who help parents, brothers, neighbors, widows and widowers are good children of God." All of us should be good children of God. Therefore, let us all always help those in need. Paku and the rest of the children sat silently listening to their teacher. (Pg. 3-4). Paku together with other children decided to come up with the project to construct a house for mama Daya who is a widow as a sign of love, care and concern. With support of other stakeholders; Parents, pastors and church members (mentors) appreciate the kind of children they have and decided to support them by contributing money, construction materials while others made promises to provide labour. Through this, the support and involvement of the mentors in children's lives and activities change the way they think and do things thus making the project a success (pg. 1). Miss Pasha's Sunday school lesson help children to acquire the values and virtues of life like kindness, love, goodness, being responsible and concerned about others.

The author communicates to the readers that church leaders (mentors-pastors and Sunday school teachers) should administer proper guidance and timely teachings that will make people to develop their understanding in line with the Godly teachings. These character types represent what Kenya wants because they take their rightful position to inform and guide children to do what is good unlike the emergent false prophets who give false teaching that lure and mislead people (mostly children) which later result to death.

Ayi, H. (2019) focuses on the importance of church in children's lives. He argues that socialization cannot occur in a split second but lies within a number of environments one of which can occur in church which elaborate the environment that brings on board different character types such as Sunday school children and the mentors (Sunday school teacher, the pastor and other worshippers). Since the church is a center of worship, it is believed that the interaction of these character types helps children to learn the values and virtues. Oranga (2016) adds that, for a church to be instrumental in the life of the juveniles, it requires to accommodate, understand and recognize children and support them to grow and develop cognitively. The parents, Sunday school teacher and pastors are instrumental because they teach and impart values and virtues that position children to fit and be acceptable in the society. For instance, in "The Sunday School Project", Miss Pasha, the Sunday school teacher, teaches children how to love and care for others.

"...Those of you who help parents, brothers, neighbors, widows and widowers or those who are good children of God." All of us should be good children of God. Therefore, let us all always help those in need. Paku and the rest of the children sat silently listening to their teacher. (Pg. 3-4).

The Mentor(s) teach children to be creative, sociable and kind. Just like Miss Pasha, their youth teacher whose arrival in church made them to crowd because she was likeable and kind. In her teachings, she shows her creativity by teaching the Sunday school children the many songs she knew in the hymns as she sometimes composed her own songs and taught them. Miss Pasha led the children in singing and dancing.

The first session was known as praise and worship. For this day, Miss Pasha asked the children to sing one song again and again. They sang and danced to the song 'Love and care for your Neighbor.' It went like this:

Love you neighbor

Help your neighbor

Help your father

Help your mother

We are all children of God

The old, the youth and the young

Love your neighbor

Help your neighbor

Care for your neighbor

And the blessings of God will be yours

This makes children to widen their scope and think creatively about others. Miss Pasha's Sunday school lesson taught children to be kind hearted and always help those in need. The lesson reminded Paku to think about the old woman called mama Daya in their neighborhood who led a lonely life and decided to pay her a visit with a plan of keeping her company as she thought of how she can help her to construct a house. Mentors are seen as models who contribute much on character formation in the lives of the juveniles. Therefore, Children's literature is not just entertainment, but serious literature which covers serious thematic issues even if they are delivered playfully.

This kind of teacher or pastor or leader is good because she encourages children to do good to themselves and to others. This author presents to us a type of church that is free from leadership wrangles and the pastors deliver what is required to its people. With the churches in our current society, conflict among leaders dominates and less is done to the children thus fail to acquire religious values and virtues.

CONCLUSION

This paper set out to investigate the relationship between context and character types in Muleka and Kabaji's select texts. The paper shows that there is a close connection between contemporary Kenyan contexts and characters created by authors in select texts. Formalism theory which acknowledges the major tenets, was applied to this paper. Writers borrowed much from formalism theory to capture the aspects required for a text to be complete. Formalism theory has been used to showcase the relationship between contemporary Kenyan contexts and adult character types in select children's literary texts by handling the text as an independent entity by closely reading it. This confirms that children's literature is indeed an attempt to initiate young readers and writers into serious literature.

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