

# LEARNING FROM THE PAST: A STUDY OF TSHIVENḌA RIDDLES FROM SOUTH AFRICA

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the educational and cultural significance of Tshivendḍa riddles within the Vhavendḍa community in South Africa, employing an autoethnographic qualitative approach. The researchers, who are both cultural insiders and language educators, analyse how riddles serve not only as entertainment but also as powerful tools for transmitting Indigenous Knowledge (IK), moral values, and cognitive skills. Rooted in Afrocentricity, the study emphasises African ways of knowing by interpreting riddles through a culturally relevant framework that honours the lived realities and philosophical traditions of the Vhavendḍa people. Sankofa theory further supports this perspective by highlighting the importance of reconnecting with ancestral knowledge to inform present and future learning. Data was collected from secondary sources, including schoolbooks, theses, and articles, along with insights from five participants, revealing that riddles foster critical thinking, ethical reflection, memory development, and cultural identity. However, findings also indicate a decline in riddle usage due to modern influences and the marginalisation of indigenous languages in formal education. The study recommends incorporating riddles into language instruction and cultural curricula to preserve and revitalise Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). Ultimately, Tshivendḍa riddles stand as living artefacts of African epistemology, offering relevant, culturally grounded strategies for decolonising education and enhancing intergenerational learning in contemporary South Africa.

**Keywords:** Riddles, Tshivendḍa, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Heritage, Culture

## INTRODUCTION

Riddles are an integral part of the rich cultural heritage worldwide, as seen in African storytelling traditions, indigenous oral histories, and European folklore, where they have long served to entertain, educate, and preserve cultural knowledge. This traditional practice seems to have eroded over time, replaced by technologies such as television, mobile devices, and social media. Today, parents, grandparents, and children remain glued to these devices, leading to the consumption of foreign knowledge and information about cultures far removed from their own (Rwodzi, Mandende, and Makgato, 2021). Consequently, children are increasingly exposed to global ways of knowing while their cultural heritage is often neglected, forgotten, or pushed to the sidelines. This shift in cultural practices has significant implications, especially for the moral and academic development of African children.

Many African speech communities, including the Vhavenda speech community of South Africa, are deeply concerned about the moral decline of their children (Khodjaeva, 2023; Murovhi, 2019, Mudau, Mandende and Mushaathoni, 2024). However, this issue still lacks a concrete solution. One possible way to address this challenge is through the preservation and revitalisation of traditional practices, such as folklore and riddles, which could help ease these problems (Mangoale, 2004; Makaudze and Mkhathshwa, 2023; Sharndama, 2023). Riddles, as part of the oral tradition, have consistently played a crucial role in guiding children's cognitive and moral development. Therefore, this study aims to explore the traditional roles of riddles and consider how these functions might be combined with modern practices to benefit today's generation (Magwaza, 2004; Mtumane and Mojapelo, 2023). There is a notable gap in the existing literature, particularly regarding how this cultural heritage can strengthen the connection between riddles and current issues, such as poor academic performance and moral decline among children (Madonsela, 2020; Friday and Oghenerioborue, 2023). Educationally, riddles can serve as carriers of values that children can internalise. They have the potential to enhance children's listening, reasoning, and turn-taking skills, which are essential for their cognitive and social growth. To understand and solve a riddle, children need to connect the presented items or ideas, exercising critical thinking and problem-solving skills in the process (Mağadzhe and Cloete, 2012). Riddles can also boost children's listening, turn-taking, and teamwork skills, which will benefit them later in life.

Before the introduction of formal reading and writing systems, African education was mainly based on oral traditions, with folklore serving as a key teaching method through which young people learned moral values and life lessons (Mudau, 2024). Folklore, including riddles, proverbs, and folktales, was central to the socialisation and enculturation of an African child. Riddles were often recited to children in the evenings while the family gathered around the fire, relaxing (Masubelele, 2012). During these times, parents and grandparents shared stories about life, the world, and their cultural practices, passing down valuable knowledge from one generation to the next. These activities not only entertained but also strengthened community bonds, as children learned about the social norms, customs, and values that underpinned their society. Through these games, children were enculturated into their cultural practices, gaining insight into their elders' wisdom and developing a strong sense of cultural identity (Mafela, 2012).

The Vhavenda speech community, located in the northern part of Limpopo province in South Africa, is one such community where riddles have been an essential part of the cultural fabric (Mudau, et al, 2024). Although most Vhavenda speakers are found in the Vhembe district, the language has spread to other provinces, including Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Northwest, Northern Cape, Western Cape, Eastern Cape, the Free State, and KwaZulu-Natal, as people seek job opportunities. Some are there for educational purposes (Mukosi, Mandende, and Sebola, 2025). According to Statistics South Africa (2022), about 1.6 million people speak Tshivenda in South Africa. Moreover, twenty-eight (28) traditional leaders and one king govern the Vhavenda people in the democratic state of South Africa (Mandende and Cekiso, 2022). Like other African communities, the

Vhavenda practice polygamy, where a man may have more than one wife (Mudau, 2025). Historically, the Vhavenda community has survived through subsistence farming, which includes both livestock and crop farming. Their main staple food is white and yellow maize meal.

In the modern educational system, riddles can play a crucial role in addressing some of the challenges children face today. This study aims to explore the academic significance of Tshivenda riddles and demonstrate how the values embedded in these riddles can assist children in the 21st century. Specifically, riddles can help children sharpen their listening and reasoning abilities, which are vital in contemporary education (Opoku-Asare and Siaw, 2015; Smuts, 2020). In an era when children are often distracted by technology and social media, traditional cultural practices such as riddles can serve as powerful tools to enhance focus, attention to detail, and critical thinking (Seroto, 2019). The moral and cognitive lessons found in riddles can support children's overall academic growth, especially in problem-solving, creative thinking, public speaking, and communication (Marten and Harding, 2021). These skills are highly valued in modern educational systems that increasingly emphasise the development of critical thinking and independent learning (UNESCO, 2021).

The importance of riddles in education cannot be overstated. When children work on riddles, they are not just playing a game; they are engaging in a process that boosts their cognitive skills and improves their ability to think logically (Smuts, 2020; Opoku-Asare and Siaw, 2015). To find the right answer to a riddle, children need to connect different ideas, use their imagination, and apply their knowledge of the world around them. This process promotes active learning and helps develop the mental agility necessary to solve problems in various situations (Marten and Harding, 2021). Additionally, riddles encourage taking turns and social interaction, which are vital parts of language development and communication skills (Seroto, 2019). These social skills are just as critical today, where teamwork and clear communication are essential for success in both school and work environments (UNESCO, 2021).

Furthermore, riddles offer a valuable way for children to connect with their cultural heritage. In a fast-changing world where traditional practices are often overlooked or abandoned, riddles offer a means for children to remain connected to their roots (Finnegan, 2012; Smuts, 2020; Gumbo, 2024). By participating in recitations and solving riddle puzzles, children can develop a stronger appreciation for their culture and the wisdom of their ancestors. This sense of cultural pride and identity becomes increasingly vital in today's globalised world, where young people are frequently exposed to many foreign cultures and values (Seroto, 2019). Riddles serve as a reminder of the importance of preserving one's cultural integrity while engaging with the broader world, thereby building social identity (UNESCO, 2021).

These riddles possess significant educational value that can benefit children in today's world. By rediscovering and embracing traditional practices like riddle recitation, communities such as the Vhavenda can nurture children's cognitive, moral, and social skills (Opoku-Asare and Siaw, 2015). These cultural traditions, once a core part of family

life, could play a vital role in addressing modern challenges such as poor academic performance and moral decline (Seroto, 2019). Therefore, this study aims to highlight the importance of riddles as a tool for developing key skills necessary for success in today's educational landscape. Additionally, it emphasises the need to preserve and promote cultural traditions to enrich children's educational experiences in the 21st century. Reviving riddles and other traditional practices could provide a promising path for shaping the next generation of thinkers, problem-solvers, and cultural guardians (Marten and Harding, 2021; UNESCO, 2021). Consequently, the current study seeks to address the following objective: To explore how Tshivenda riddles function as cultural tools for preserving Indigenous Knowledge, promoting moral values, and fostering identity within an African-centred theoretical framework.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Tshivenda riddles, as essential parts of South Africa's oral traditions, provide deep insights into the mental, social, and cultural makeup of the Vhavenda people. Although specific studies on Tshivenda riddles are scarce, analysing related African oral traditions offers a broad understanding of their importance. Riddles are crucial tools for cognitive development in many African cultures. For example, in the Siswati tradition, riddles involve children in critical thinking and problem-solving, helping them tackle life's challenges. Madonsela (2020) emphasises that riddles are not just entertainment but are deeply rooted in African belief systems, serving as keepers of artistic expression and traditional knowledge. Likewise, among the Haya people of northwestern Tanzania, riddles are valued for their educational role. They help children fully participate in the social, cultural, political, and economic aspects of their communities by encouraging critical thinking and passing on IK.

Despite their importance, the practice of riddling faces challenges in modern society. Khodjaeva (2023) notes that the popularity of riddles has declined with the rise of contemporary entertainment technologies, resulting in a loss of their educational value. This decline risks the preservation of IK, vocabulary, and cultural practices. Riddles are valued as a form of art in African oral literature, characterised by their use of metaphor, analogy, and poetic language. Finnegan (2012) notes that African riddles rely on figurative language, employing analogies in meaning, sound, rhythm, or tone, and share connections with other literary forms, such as enigmas and praise poems. This artistic nature amplifies the aesthetic appeal and cultural richness of riddles, making them an integral part of African oral traditions.

Madonsela (2020) emphasises that riddles in the Siswati tradition engage children in critical thinking and problem-solving, fostering cognitive development. Similarly, integrating riddles into educational curricula has been shown to improve children's academic performance and essential reasoning skills. Research indicates that incorporating riddles into early childhood education enhances students' academic achievement (Madonsela, 2020). Comparable benefits are observed in other cultures; for example, in Northern Sotho and Akan traditions, riddles are used to cultivate linguistic agility and social awareness. In European folklore, they have historically served as cognitive challenges that encourage metaphorical reasoning and interpretive skills

(Mudau, 2024). This cross-cultural evidence highlights the universal educational and developmental value of riddles, thus reinforcing the importance of this study.

Riddles are regarded as an art form in African oral literature, characterised by metaphor, analogy, and poetic language. This artistic quality enhances the aesthetic appeal and cultural depth of riddles, making them essential parts of African oral traditions. Despite their importance, the practice of riddling faces challenges in modern society.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Two theories underpinned the study, namely Sankofa and Afrocentricity. The Sankofa theory, originating among the Akan people of Ghana, West Africa, emphasises the importance of revisiting the past to move forward, highlighting the value of reconnecting with cultural heritage to address contemporary challenges (Asante, 1990; Chawane, 2016). Correspondingly, Afrocentricity captures African culture and perspectives as foundational to understanding African experiences and advocates the reclaiming of African identity and traditions (Osei, 2020). Together, these theories promote the revitalisation of IKS, such as Tshivenda riddles, to enhance cognitive and moral development in the modern era.

The Sankofa theory, originating among the Akan people of West Africa, is based on the principle that it is not taboo to go back and fetch what you have forgotten' (Asante, 1990). This concept is symbolised by a bird looking backwards with an egg in its mouth, signifying the importance of revisiting the past to move forward. Sankofa emphasises the importance of reflecting on history, traditions, and cultural practices to gain insight and make informed decisions for the future. It encourages reclaiming cultural heritage, wisdom, and knowledge that may have been neglected or lost due to modernisation, development, and colonialism. This theory is especially relevant to the study of Tshivenda riddles, as it emphasises the importance of reconnecting with ancestral knowledge to address contemporary challenges. By examining these riddles, the study advocates returning to past cultural practices to engage with the values and lessons embedded within them, promoting cognitive and moral growth in today's children (Osei, 2020).

On the other hand, Afrocentricity as a theoretical framework places African culture and perspectives at the core of understanding African phenomena and experiences (Asante, 1987). It promotes an Africa-centred approach that challenges Eurocentric models of knowledge and emphasises African identity, culture, and history. Afrocentricity seeks to reclaim African agency and dignity by emphasising the significance of African traditions, languages, and philosophies in shaping both individual and collective identities (Osei, 2020). This theory rejects the marginalisation and stigmatisation of African cultures in favour of dominant Western ideologies and advocates authentic representation of African epistemology. In the context of Tshivenda riddle studies, Afrocentricity is essential as it affirms the significance of traditional African oral practices, such as riddles, as vital sources of knowledge and moral instruction. It supports the idea that African communities should embrace and teach their children the wisdom embedded in their indigenous languages and cultural forms (Menkiti, 2020; Akinyemi and Falola, 2020).

The connection between Sankofa and Afrocentricity is evident: both theories promote returning to African cultural practices to reclaim and preserve IK systems. In this study of Tshivenda riddles, the Sankofa theory encourages revisiting ancestral wisdom to tackle contemporary educational and moral issues faced by children in South Africa. Afrocentricity, on the other hand, highlights placing this study within an African-centred framework, asserting that the values, teachings, and cognitive skills embedded in Tshivenda riddles are fundamental to the identity and growth of the Vhavenda community. Together, these theories support revitalising cultural practices like riddles, recognising them as vital tools for shaping future learners and leaders. This study, therefore, is not just an examination of the traditional roles of riddles but also a call for African communities to reconnect with and utilise their IKS in today's world. By doing so, it aims to bridge the gap between traditional wisdom and modern educational needs.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study follows an autoethnographic qualitative design, grounded in the researchers' personal experiences and deep cultural knowledge of the people being studied. Autoethnography, as a research method, is especially useful when the researcher is both a participant and an observer of the phenomenon (Ellis et al., 2011; Chang, 2008). In this case, the researchers are Tshivenda speakers and lecturers of Tshivenda at the university level. Their close connection to the language and culture allows them to interpret and understand riddles in ways an outsider might not. By drawing on their lived experiences and cultural insights, the researchers can offer a unique perspective, ensuring that the analysis is grounded in a genuine understanding of the language and its traditional roles (Adams et al., 2015). This approach, therefore, enables researchers to become part of their own study, using their personal knowledge and cultural awareness to thoughtfully and analytically engage with the material.

The data for this study were obtained from secondary sources, such as schoolbooks, dissertations, theses, and published articles. These sources provided extensive information on riddles within the Tshivenda-speaking community, enabling the researchers to conduct a thorough review of the existing literature (Finnegan, 2012). The secondary data served as a basis for the researchers' interpretations and insights, guided by their deep understanding of the riddles' cultural context. However, it is essential to note that the researchers did not rely solely on secondary sources; they also engaged with primary data collected through direct interaction with the riddles themselves, enabling them to establish meaningful connections between the textual material and the lived cultural experiences of the Tshivenda people (Kaschula, 2001). This combination of secondary and primary data enriched the study, offering a comprehensive view of the role riddles play in the community.

In addition to the secondary data, five participants were sampled to validate the findings, further enhancing the study's credibility. These participants were selected for their knowledge of Tshivenda culture and familiarity with the traditional practice of reciting riddles. Their insights were essential in providing a more comprehensive understanding of the role of riddles in the cultural and educational practices of the Vhavenda community (Makgopa, 2010). Including these participants not only helped validate the findings but

also ensured internal data validation and reliability. By incorporating multiple perspectives, the study aimed to minimise bias and improve the accuracy of the conclusions (Creswell and Poth, 2018). The use of participant validation underscores the importance of collaboration and dialogue in research, particularly when examining cultural practices deeply rooted in lived experience. This methodological approach, which combines autoethnographic reflection with participant validation, provides a robust framework for understanding the complex role of riddles in the lives of Tshivenda speakers and their potential educational benefits in contemporary society. Participants were informed of their rights to participate, and their responses were used only for this study. They were assured of anonymity and confidentiality regarding the information they shared with the researchers. No response can be linked to any participant, as the researchers used a coding system. The findings of this study can be generalised to all Tshivenda settings. After data collection, the data were organised based on similarities to facilitate theme development.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents and discusses the study's findings on the cultural importance of Tshivenda riddles within the Vhavenda community of South Africa in promoting sustainable development. Drawing on an African-centred theoretical framework, the discussion highlights how riddles serve as tools for transmitting IK, fostering moral values, and strengthening communal identity. The findings demonstrate that these oral traditions, rich in metaphor and symbolism, serve as educational tools that both preserve cultural heritage and foster cognitive growth. By exploring their layered meanings, the study provides insight into how riddles continue to influence social behaviour, moral reflection, and identity development in modern contexts.

### **Theme 1. Riddle as a Symbol of Identity and Uniqueness**

Riddle: *Thaii! Nne ndi nwana wa khotsi na mme, fhedzi a hu na ane a vha nne.*

Translation: *I am a child of my father and mother, yet no one is me.*

Answer: *Munna wa murunzi (a shadow).*

This riddle offers a deep reflection on identity, individuality, and self-worth. While recognising the universal truth that all people are born from parents and shaped by shared cultural heritage, it also celebrates each person's uniqueness. The shadow, inseparable from the person it represents, serves as a poetic metaphor for the unique essence that distinguishes one being from another. In Tshivenda oral tradition, such riddles are not just playful challenges; they serve as ways to affirm personal value and reinforce the cultural ethic of humility. Through autoethnographic reflection, the researchers observed that elders often used this riddle to instil pride in young listeners about their own identity, while also reminding them of the importance of recognising and respecting others' individuality. For children under pressure to conform, the riddle's message provided reassurance, helping build emotional resilience and self-confidence. In this way, it serves a dual purpose, affirming personal worth and promoting the social harmony crucial to Tshivenda community life.

### **Theme 2. Riddle as a Lesson in Wisdom and Age**

Riddle: *Thaii! Hu na mukalaha a sa neti.*

Translation: *There is an old man who never gets tired.*

Answer: *A grinding stone.*

This riddle highlights the enduring qualities of wisdom, perseverance, and quiet service, virtues traditionally associated with both the elderly and essential household tools. The stone, much like an elder, works tirelessly, transforming raw grain into food without complaint or fatigue. It serves as a metaphor for the unrecognised yet vital contributions that support a community. In Tshivenda culture, elders are honoured as keepers of knowledge, moral guidance, and cultural heritage. Likewise, the grinding stone represents stability, resilience, and the capacity to withstand the test of time.

According to the researchers' personal recollections, such riddles were more than just playful mental exercises; they served as educational tools embedded in daily interactions. Children learned, often without realising it, to appreciate the wisdom of the elderly and the efforts, whether human or material, that sustain everyday life. The riddle subtly fosters gratitude, humility, and awareness of interdependence, reminding younger generations that real strength comes not only from visible actions but also from steady, consistent contributions. In this way, the riddle acts as a cultural link, connecting tangible household experiences with intangible moral values, ensuring that respect for elders and appreciation of heritage remain vital parts of social identity.

### **Theme 3. Riddle as a Moral Guide and Social Commentary**

Riddle: *Thaii! Hu luma munna a si na mano.*

Translation: *The man who has no teeth bites.*

Answer: *Thonga (a walking stick).*

This riddle serves as both a moral guide and a subtle social commentary within the Tshivenda oral tradition. At first glance, it seems to present a humorous paradox, but beneath the surface, it offers a deep ethical lesson. The walking stick, a trusted companion for the elderly or those with physical challenges, symbolises support, guidance, and protection. However, when misused or ignored, it can become a source of harm, "biting" the very person who depends on it. The metaphor goes beyond the literal object, offering a warning about human relationships, trust, and responsibility. Just as the walking stick must be handled with care and respect to keep everyone safe, we should also treat those who support us, whether family, friends, or community members, with attentiveness and gratitude. Through their autoethnographic observations, the researchers noted that such riddles serve as moral compasses, reminding us that dependence must be balanced with responsibility, and that trust needs constant care to prevent it from turning into a source of conflict or harm.

### **Theme 4. Riddle as an Environmental and Spiritual Metaphor**

Riddle: *Thaii! Tshi di tshi fhandekanaho na mavu, a tshi divhi he tsha bva hone.*

Translation: *A creature that separates from the earth, yet no one knows where it comes from.*

Answer: *Mvula (rain).*

This riddle embodies a profound spiritual and ecological awareness deeply rooted in Tshivenda culture. While rain is understood scientifically today, it has traditionally been seen as a mysterious and divine event, originating from unknown realms. Its arrival is celebrated as a life-giving blessing crucial for growing crops, replenishing water sources, and supporting all living things. In oral tradition, the riddle's imagery encourages people to reflect on the connection between humans and nature, while recognising the limits of human knowledge. The researchers, using an autoethnographic approach, observed that such riddles do more than entertain; they foster a lasting sense of awe, humility, and respect for nature. By depicting rain as a creature with origins beyond human understanding, the riddle encourages environmental care and strengthens cultural values of gratitude and responsibility for protecting the earth's resources.

### **Theme 5. Riddle as a Reflection of Sacrifice and Service**

Riddle: *Thaii! Hu na tshitumbu tshi a laho hu si nga mulomo.*

Translation: *There is a corpse that eats but not through the mouth.*

Answer: *Candle (a candle).*

This riddle uses the image of a burning candle as a quiet, self-sacrificing source of light to teach about selflessness and purpose. The researchers found that elders used this metaphor to describe teachers, parents, and community leaders who give of themselves to help others, often without recognition. The candle riddle was personally meaningful to the researchers, as they were educators themselves. It resonated with their own experiences of service, often under challenging conditions, for the benefit of students and the preservation of language. Participants confirmed this view, emphasising that it reminded them to appreciate and honour quiet contributors in their families and communities.

The riddles examined in this study proved to be much more than simple linguistic puzzles; they emerged as complex cultural artefacts, intricately woven with humour, metaphor, symbolism, and moral lessons. Using autoethnography, the researchers could uncover these layers, highlighting lived experiences, cultural memories, and insider interpretations that might have otherwise remained hidden or misinterpreted in a detached, purely textual, or outsider perspective. This approach enabled a culturally rooted exploration of meaning, in which riddles once shared around firelit homesteads were reinterpreted as vital expressions of IK.

Each riddle not only entertained but also served as a teaching tool, subtly passing on lessons about identity, community responsibility, reverence for nature, humility, and intergenerational wisdom, core values in Vhavenda society. Often hidden in metaphor and sometimes presented with gentle humour or irony, these lessons formed an oral curriculum where knowledge was shared through play, reflection, and critical thinking. Participants confirmed that riddles played a key role in children's socialisation, intentionally used by elders as structured oral methods to introduce the young to the community's cultural principles. Especially in pre-literate and early literate settings, riddles

acted as mental scaffolds, fostering not only language skills but also improving memory, reasoning, and emotional intelligence.

From an Afrocentric perspective, the study repositions Tshivenda riddles within their rightful cultural and intellectual context, countering the marginalisation of African oral traditions in dominant Eurocentric narratives. Afrocentricity, as articulated by Asante (1988), calls for centring African ways of knowing, valuing indigenous epistemologies, and affirming cultural agency. It recognises the legitimacy of Tshivenda oral heritage as a repository of wisdom, moral instruction, and environmental ethics. In turn, Afrocentricity provides the study with a methodological and philosophical foundation, ensuring that interpretation comes from within the lived experiences, linguistic nuances, and worldviews of the Tshivenda people rather than being filtered through an external lens.

The study enhances the Sankofa theory by illustrating how riddles serve as tools for intergenerational learning, maintaining values, identity, and ecological awareness while adapting to modern realities. Additionally, Sankofa theory strengthens the study's interpretive framework by highlighting the importance of revisiting ancestral wisdom to address current socio-educational issues, such as the loss of IK and the decline of community bonds.

Together, the study advances both theories by providing concrete, culturally rooted examples of how their principles work. Afrocentricity theory is strengthened by demonstrating how a focus on African epistemology leads to richer, more authentic interpretations of oral traditions. The Sankofa theory is enhanced by evidence that reclaiming and revitalising historical cultural forms, such as Tshivenda riddles, can empower both current and future generations. At the same time, the theories enrich the study by grounding its methodology in African-centred thought, making the research not just descriptive but also restorative, reaffirming the cultural pride, moral values, and environmental stewardship found in Tshivenda oral heritage.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the study examines how Tshivenda riddles act as cultural tools for preserving IK, promoting moral values, and fostering identity within an African-centred theoretical framework. This study demonstrates that Tshivenda riddles are not merely traditional oral entertainment, but deeply rooted cultural artefacts that serve as means for moral instruction, cognitive growth, and artistic preservation. Using an autoethnographic approach, the study reveals how Tshivenda riddles serve as informal educational tools that convey core values, including respect, humility, identity, and community responsibility. Their layered meanings, rich in metaphor and symbolism, reflect the complex worldview of the Vhavana people and provide valuable insights into IKS. Thus, it is recommended that educators, linguists, and curriculum developers incorporate Tshivenda riddles into language and cultural education programs, both in formal schools and community initiatives. This integration would not only revive interest in indigenous oral traditions but also enhance learners' language and critical thinking skills, while fostering cultural pride and intergenerational dialogue. Additionally, further research should focus on adapting

these oral forms into modern educational resources to ensure their ongoing relevance and sustainability in contemporary South African society.

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