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A Critical Assessment of Selected Warning and Advisory Proverbs in Yoruba Routine Conversation

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Abstract

This paper delves into the utilization of proverbs among the Yoruba people, focusing specifically on their role as instruments of warning and facilitators of peace and unity within the community. Proverbs, deeply embedded in the Yoruba culture, serve as reservoirs of wisdom, reflecting beliefs, cultural norms, historical contexts, and moral principles. They are employed to elucidate, moralize, and embellish discourse across various aspects of human life. Using a stylistic analysis approach, this study examines twenty randomly selected Yoruba proverbs from routine socio-linguistic communication. Through the lens of Yankah's (1989) Theory of Proverb Praxis and other stylistic and pragmatic tools, the aim is to unveil the nuanced meanings and patterns inherent in warning proverbs. The analysis reveals that warning proverbs play a significant role in shaping desirable traits, fostering credible character development, and maintaining a harmonious societal structure within Yoruba culture. These proverbs serve as guiding lights, illuminating diverse human situations and offering timely warnings to navigate through challenges. Warning proverbs exemplify the cherished values and strategies for personal growth characteristic of African societies, particularly the Yoruba community. They serve as invaluable tools for cultivating peaceful coexistence and fostering unity among individuals. Through the analysis of these proverbs, a deeper understanding of Yoruba cultural values emerges, highlighting their pivotal role in nurturing a cohesive and harmonious human community.

Keywords: *Stylistic Analysis, Selected, Warning, Advisory Proverbs, Yoruba*

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Introduction

Proverbs are concise and often witty expressions which serve as potent vehicles for encapsulating the beliefs, culture, and worldviews of language users. The richly woven African discourse utilises proverbs to function as palatable spices that impart conversations with depth and meaning. Proverbs not only reflect the realities of life but also serve as pillars upon which the expression of culture and societal values rests. As Chinua Achebe famously remarked, "In Africa, proverb is the palm oil with which words are eaten," thereby accentuating the vital role of proverbs in communication and cultural transmission.

These linguistic ornaments, often marked as figurative and idiomatic expressions, serve versatile functions within societies. Such functions of proverbs are in the areas of moralizing, acculturating, and fostering social cohesion. As a result, Proverbs act as guiding principles of socialisation; directing individuals towards desirable behaviours and attitudes, especially for a peaceful and ongoing society. Their diverse functions can be categorized into three distinct categories, each shedding light on different aspects of human experience.

The first category comprises abstract statements that express universal truths and life's realities, such as "what goes up will surely come down" or "a hungry man is an angry man." This category of proverbs serves as timeless reminders of fundamental principles. The second category draws attention to everyday occurrences through vivid examples, crafting indisputable points that echo universal truth. For instance, "Don't count your eggs before they are hatched" expresses the folly of premature assumptions. The third category delves into specific domains of wisdom, encompassing traditions, agricultural practices, and the vagaries of nature. Proverbs in this category draw on established patterns of life, beliefs, and behavioural norms, such as "a hand that refuses to toil deserves no morsel of food."

In the Yoruba worldview and culture, proverbs play requisite socio-cultural roles, serving as vehicles for the reiteration of views, beliefs, and traditions. They substantiate facts, sanction behaviours, and teach moral and societal norms, contributing to the overall education and social order of the Yoruba society. Proverbs pervade Yoruba music, literature, and various socio-political and economic activities, dynamically enriching these domains with their wisdom. Their persistent usage underscores their significance as integral components of Yoruba identity and corporate existence.

Moreover, proverbs persist in popularity across Africa, serving as commentaries on life and guardians of social order. They serve as signposts illuminating Yoruba civilization's commitment to equity and peaceful coexistence, moving the timeless wisdom of ancestors into the contemporary milieu.

Given the profound impact of proverbs on societal values and character formation, it is imperative to assess, illustrate, and analyze warning and advisory proverbs among the Yoruba people. Understanding their effects on peaceful coexistence, moral values, and character development will further illuminate the enduring relevance of these linguistic resources in shaping Yoruba society in particular and that of the world in general.

Literature review

Proverbs are "short traditional utterances" which serve as potent vessels that sum up cultural truths and reflect recurrent social situations. Embedded in nonfigurative statements, proverbs offer insights into the general truths and realities of life, providing expressive means to showcase the beliefs, culture, and worldviews of language users.

In their comprehensive roles, proverbs apply persuasive and dissuasive powers, expressing reverence or confidence, echoing worry, instilling fear or esteem, and even employing mockery, as specified by Meider (1985:6). Proverbs concentrate their attention on specific spheres of conventional wisdom and traditions, drawing upon established patterns of life, beliefs, and behavioural attitudes to convey their messages.

Contemporary Yorùbá writers adeptly employ Yoruba proverbs to depict colonial and post-colonial political experiences, thus inspiring political consciousness and active participation in public administration for socio-cultural and political emancipation, as noted by Adeyemi (2009:531). Proverbs thus serve vital socio-political functions, creating awareness and stimulating engagement in the governance process.

Asade (2000:124) underscores the versatility of proverbs as a universal linguistic phenomenon, particularly among the Yoruba people. Proverbs enrich speech by logically presenting ideas and elevating discourse content, concretizing and clarifying the underlying messages. They remain enduringly popular across Africa and within the Yoruba-speaking world, serving as

commentaries on life and guardians of social order, reflecting Yoruba civilization's commitment to equity and peaceful coexistence.

Reflecting Dynamic and culture-specific roles, proverbs portray the evolving relationships among phenomena, beings, and thoughts, expressing various characteristics of static or dynamic systems, as highlighted by Paczolay (1996:59). Marital norms, codes, and women's roles are deeply ingrained in Yoruba proverbs, reflecting societal values and norms, as noted by Kolawole (1998:73). Through proverbs, the concept of an ongoing society is realized, incorporating general and personal behavioural patterns, family values, marriage customs, and societal norms.

Proverbs serve as invaluable sources of knowledge, fulfilling functions of warning, education, and moralization throughout history. Hussein (2005:58) underscores the roles of proverbs as value-carrying instruments, facilitating cultural understanding and social transformation. Therefore, meaningful analysis of proverbs as a linguistic form should consider such factors as cultural, social, cognitive, and historical surroundings, the degree of mediation between text and situation, and the range of context being addressed. In this vein, Mey (2001:246) stresses "the universe of discourse which comprises an ensemble of phenomena in socially determined conditions." These conditions define the cultural background of an occasion as formal, informal or festive.

Halliday (1996:89) emphasizes the role of language in establishing and maintaining human relationships, while Akinlade (1987:54) underscores the importance of proverbs as a linguistic resource to articulate warning proverbs as the instrument for the maintenance of peaceful coexistence. Widdowson (1996:97) suggests that investigating language use in texts or talks reveals linguistic patterns that inform intuitive awareness of artistic values. In analyzing warning proverbs, Critical analysis enhances our understanding of the inherent ideologies and communicative intentions embedded within these proverbs and also, and pragmatic analysis which explores the contextual and situational factors surrounding the use of proverbs and, its role in promoting peaceful coexistence and social cohesion.

This paper critically assesses, illustrates, and analyzes proverbs that perform warning and advisory functions, exploring their impact on peaceful coexistence, moral values, and character formation among the Yoruba people. Through this exploration, deeper insights into the cultural richness and societal dynamics of the Yoruba community are illuminated.

Theoretical framework

The Theory of Proverb Praxis, as formulated by Yankah, presents a comprehensive framework for understanding the nature and utility of proverbs within specific cultural and situational contexts. Emphasizing the significance of context and situation, this theoretical framework facilitates a nuanced comprehension of proverbs' cultural intricacies and communicative roles. Yankah (1989) underscores the importance of context, which encompasses various socio-linguistic factors such as the social status and linguistic proficiency of both the speaker and the audience, as well as the specific circumstances in which the proverb is employed. Central to the Theory of Proverb Praxis is the acknowledgement of proverbs as repositories of profound cultural knowledge. By delving into the contextual and situational dimensions of language use, this theoretical approach enables a deeper understanding of the cultural subtleties embedded within proverbs. Furthermore, Yankah's framework recognizes the multi-layered nature of proverbs, acknowledging their capacity to convey diverse meanings. Through a contextual analysis, the Theory of Proverb Praxis aims to unravel the intricate layers of meaning inherent in proverbs, thereby elucidating their cultural significance and communicative functions. In the context of this research, this theoretical framework serves as a valuable analytical tool for examining the warning functions performed by proverbs. By adopting a contextual approach, researchers can discern how the context shapes the meaning and intent of proverbs, particularly regarding their role in reinforcing cultural values, social norms, and cohesive communication. On this note, Yankah's Theory of Proverb Praxis provides a robust foundation for conducting thorough studies and analyses of proverbs, offering valuable insights into their cultural relevance, communicative strategies, and socio-linguistic functions.

Method of Data Collection and Analysis

This research involved selecting twenty proverbs randomly from Yoruba socio-linguistic communication to represent diverse warning and advisory functions. Critical analysis focused on linguistic features contributing to these functions, while pragmatic analysis explored contextual and situational factors. Illustrative examples supported the analysis, providing insights into proverbs' practical application in everyday discourse. Overall, the method of data

collection and analysis provided valuable insights into proverbs' cultural significance and communicative efficacy.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was done mainly at stylistic and pragmatic levels to demonstrate the issue of warning proverbs and their capacity to employ proverbs to perform warning and advisory functions and their effect on peaceful coexistence, moral value and character formation among Yoruba people.

-Data 1. *Mákùú ò mawo, ó n bá wọ̀n bọ́'pa; Mákùú ò mọ̀'wẹ̀, ó n bá wọ̀n mòòkùn lódò, ìgbàwo ni Mákùú ò ní kú? '*

*Literal translation: Mákùú is uninitiated but he dabbles in the occult; he cannot swim yet dives into a river. How long could he survive such escapades?

The proverb employs metaphorical imagery, comparing uninitiated individuals to someone dabbling in the occult and unable to swim yet diving into a river. This imagery emphasizes the recklessness and danger of engaging in activities without proper preparation or knowledge. The proverb uses a rhetorical question to drive home its message. By asking, "How long could he survive such escapades?" the proverb prompts reflection on the potential consequences of reckless behaviour. The structure of the proverb follows a parallel pattern, repeating the phrase "Mákùú ò" to emphasize the contrast between someone uninitiated and their reckless actions.

The proverb makes use of the illocutionary forces of assertion, warning and doubt to assert the foolishness of engaging in activities beyond one's capabilities and warn against reckless behavior as well as illuminate the potential consequences of overestimating one's abilities. Rhetorical question is utilized to express doubt about the survivability of someone like Mákùú engaging in risky behaviour. The proverb reflects Yoruba cultural values and beliefs, particularly the importance of initiation rituals and acquiring necessary skills before undertaking certain activities. It underscores the significance of wisdom and caution in decision-making.

Data 2: *Ọba n pe ó, O ní ò n mu gaàrí lówó, ta ló nió? Ta ló lomi tí ò fi n mu gaàrí?*

*Literal Meaning: The King is calling you, and you claim to be eating gaàrí. Who owns you? Who owns the water with which you are eating gaàrí?

The proverb employs rhetorical questions to emphasize the absurdity of making excuses and to express doubt about the sincerity of the excuse given by the person being called by the King. The repetition of "ta ló" ("who owns") in both questions reinforces the rhetorical effect. The proverb juxtaposes the regal command of the King with the mundane act of eating gaàrí, adding a humorous element to the expression. This juxtaposition highlights the incongruity between the authority of the King and the triviality of the excuse. The use of "eating gaàrí" metaphorically represents engaging in everyday activities or making excuses, while "The King is calling you" symbolizes a summons or command from authority.

A pragmatic force of assertion is utilized to assert the authority of the King and emphasize the necessity of obedience to his commands. It warns against disobedience and the consequences of making flimsy excuses when called upon by those in power. The rhetorical question expresses doubt about the sincerity of the excuse provided by the individual being called by the King. The analyzed proverb, therefore, serves as a poignant reminder of the importance of obedience, respect, and accountability in Yoruba society.

Data 3: *"È jọ tó o rò tíí láàárò, tó òjàre, báwo lo ẹ f'èrò ó lálẹ tó ó jàre?"*

*Literal Meaning: A case you could not win with your pleadings in the morning, how do you hope to win it in the evening?

The proverb exploits a rhetorical question to express doubt about the effectiveness of delaying action in resolving issues. The question challenges the logic of postponing action, highlighting the futility of hoping for a different outcome by delaying intervention. The metaphorical comparison between winning a case with pleadings in the morning and winning it in the evening illustrates the concept of delayed action and its potential consequences. It vividly portrays the idea of addressing issues promptly to avoid unfavourable outcomes. The structure of the proverb follows a parallel pattern, repeating the phrase "tó" ("that") to emphasize the comparison between morning and evening and the actions taken within those time frames.

The proverb asserts the importance of taking timely action in resolving issues or challenges. The rhetorical question expresses doubt about the effectiveness of delaying action and highlights the necessity of addressing issues promptly. The proverb reflects the cultural value placed on diligence, promptness, and taking proactive steps to address issues within Yoruba society. The proverb functions as a warning to individuals to take immediate action when faced with challenges or responsibilities. The analyzed proverb serves as a powerful reminder of the

importance of diligence and the pitfalls of procrastination within Yoruba culture. Its stylistic devices and pragmatic functions contribute to its effectiveness as a tool for imparting cultural values and practical wisdom.

Data 4: "*Ode toba siyemeji lode npa*"

*Literal Meaning: A hedging animal betrays itself to the hunter's gun.

The proverb uses metaphorical language comparing indecisiveness to a hedging animal. This figurative language makes the message more vivid and memorable. It adds depth to the warning by drawing a parallel between human behaviour and the behaviour of animals. The proverb is concise and rhythmic. The proverb repeats the idea of indecisiveness leading to exposure to danger, reinforcing the central message. This repetition emphasizes the importance of decisiveness and the consequences of indecision. The stylistic features of metaphor, rhythm, and repetition contribute to the proverb's effectiveness.

Understanding the cultural context of Yoruba society is crucial for fully grasping the meaning of the proverb. Yoruba culture places value on decisiveness and taking a clear stance, making this proverb particularly relevant within that cultural framework. The proverb serves a social function by guiding proper behaviour in critical situations. It warns against indecisiveness and encourages proactive decision-making, which aligns with societal expectations of assertiveness and accountability. The proverb can be applied to various real-life situations, such as decision-making in personal relationships or career choices. The pragmatic function lies in providing cultural guidance and practical wisdom for coping with life's challenges.

Data 5: "*Eni to duro ko kiyesara*"

*Literal Meaning: He who stands should beware of falling.

This proverb utilizes metaphorical language, comparing standing to maintaining a position or stance and falling to failure or downfall. Metaphors make the message more vivid and impactful. "He who stands should beware of falling." The proverb employs a parallel structure, with the first part stating a condition ("He who stands") and the second part providing a consequence ("should beware of falling"). This parallelism reinforces the cause-and-effect relationship between maintaining a position and the risk of failure. The stylistic features of metaphor, parallelism, and conciseness contribute to the proverb's effectiveness in conveying its message

The proverb serves to heighten awareness of the risks inherent in maintaining a position or stance. By cautioning individuals to beware of falling, it encourages them to assess the potential consequences of their actions and remain vigilant against complacency or overconfidence. It encourages humility by emphasizing the need to acknowledge one's vulnerabilities and limitations. Its pragmatic function lies in promoting risk awareness, humility, and self-awareness among individuals.

Data 6: "*Enikan kii wodo tan ko maa kigbe otutu*"

*Literal Meaning: He who steps into the river should not bemoan cold.

This proverb employs analogy by comparing stepping into a river to making certain decisions or taking certain actions. Parallelism is used to draw a line between familiar experiences (feeling cold in a river) and the consequences of one's actions. The proverb establishes a clear cause-and-effect relationship between stepping into the river and feeling cold. This causal relationship emphasizes the inevitability of certain consequences and discourages complaining about them after the act. It states a direct result of an action and highlights personal accountability. The stylistic features of analogy, causal relationship, and pithiness contribute to the vividness of the proverb's message.

The proverb underscores the importance of personal responsibility and accountability for one's actions. By cautioning against complaining about foreseeable consequences, it encourages individuals to accept the outcomes of their decisions and take responsibility for them. The proverb promotes resilience and adaptability by urging individuals to accept and cope with the inevitable outcomes of their choices. Functionally, the proverb serves as a cautionary reminder for individuals to consider the potential consequences of their actions before taking them. The pragmatic function of the proverb lies in promoting personal responsibility, resilience, and strategic decision-making among individuals.

Data 7: "*Eni ba dale a ba ile lo.*"

*Literal Meaning: "He who betrays will surely die of betrayal".

The proverb makes use of a parallel structure by repeating the pronoun "he who" followed by a verb phrase "betrays" and a consequence "will surely die of betrayal". This parallelism emphasizes the cause-and-effect relationship between the action of betrayal and its consequences, "Eni ba dale a ba ile lo." The repetition of the word "betrayal" in both the action

"ba dale" and the consequence "ba le lo" reinforces the message and emphasizes the severity of the warning. This repetition adds rhetorical weight to the proverb. The use of the word "surely" in "will surely die of betrayal" conveys a sense of inevitability and finality. This certainty strengthens the warning by implying that the consequences of betrayal are unavoidable and absolute. The stylistic features of parallelism, repetition, and emphasis contribute to understanding the proverb's message,

The proverb conveys a moral lesson about the principle of retribution. It advocates that betraying others will ultimately lead to facing similar betrayals in return. In Yoruba culture, betrayal is viewed as a serious offence that disrupts social harmony and damages trust. The proverb reflects cultural values of honesty, integrity, and loyalty while warning against behaviours that undermine these values. The pragmatic function lies in promoting the karmic principle of retribution, reinforcing cultural values of honesty and integrity, and serving as a deterrent against betrayal.

Data 8: "*Eni bani baba nigbejoo niija ija igboro*"

*Literal Meaning: He, who does not have a backing, does not go about looking for trouble

The proverb employs a parallel structure by repeating the phrase "does not" followed by a verb "have" and "go about" and a consequence "looking for trouble". This parallelism emphasizes the cause-and-effect relationship between lacking support and avoiding trouble. The use of negation "does not have" and "does not go about" adds emphasis to the message by highlighting what one should avoid. It reinforces the idea of caution and restraint in certain situations. The proverb provides a clear and specific scenario -not having support- to illustrate the broader lesson about avoiding trouble. The stylistic features of parallelism, negation, and specificity contribute to the proverb's effectiveness in conveying its message,

The proverb offers practical advice for risk management by advising individuals to assess their limitations before engaging in confrontational actions. It promotes a strategic approach to decision-making by encouraging individuals to prioritize self-preservation and avoid unnecessary conflict. In Yoruba culture, there is recognition of the importance of social support networks and alliances in navigating life's challenges. By highlighting the importance of having support or backing, it encourages individuals to consider the potential consequences of their actions on themselves and others. The pragmatic function lies in promoting strategic thinking, and risk management, and reinforcing cultural values of prudence and discretion.-

Data 9: "*Falana gbo tie, tara eni laa gbo*"

*Literal Meaning: Falana should learn to mind his own business...

The proverb utilizes imperative sentence and parallel structure to accentuate the verb phrase "should learn to" followed by two contrasting actions "mind his own business" and "dabbling into what does not concern him". This parallelism highlights the contrast between appropriate behaviour -minding one's own business- and inappropriate behaviour -meddling in others' affairs-. The use of imperative verbs "should learn to" emphasizes the directive nature of the advice, urging Falana and others to heed the warning and adjust their behaviour accordingly. The stylistic features of direct address, parallelism, and imperative form contribute to the proverb's effectiveness in conveying its message.

Meddling in others' affairs can lead to unwanted conflicts and disruptions. The proverb serves as a pragmatic reminder to prioritize one's concerns and responsibilities, thereby avoiding unnecessary entanglements and maintaining harmony in relationships. In many cultures, including Yoruba culture, there is a recognized social norm surrounding the concept of minding one's own business. The proverb reflects this cultural value by offering practical guidance for navigating social interactions and relationships, conflict avoidance, and adherence to social norms surrounding privacy and discretion.

Data 10: "*Jakunmo kii rinde osan, eni abii ire kii rinri oru.*"

*Literal Meaning: A well-bred personality should avoid wandering in the night.

The proverb makes use of a parallel structure by comparing the prohibition for Jakunmo to wander in daylight with the expectation for a well-bred individual to avoid wandering at night. This parallelism emphasizes the similarity between the two situations and reinforces the directive to adhere to societal norms. The proverb uses metaphorical language to convey its message. It compares the prohibition for Jakunmo to roam during the day with the expectation for a well-mannered individual to avoid being out at night, illustrating the broader lesson about appropriate behaviour. The repetition of the "r" sound in "rinde" and "rinru" creates a rhythmic quality in the proverb to reinforce its message. The stylistic features of parallelism, metaphorical language, and alliteration contribute to the proverb's effectiveness in conveying its message,

The proverb reflects cultural norms and expectations surrounding appropriate behaviour and conduct. It underscores the importance of propriety, decorum, and respectability in society. By promoting adherence to societal norms and expectations, the proverb contributes to the maintenance of social order and harmony within communities. It encourages individuals to consider how their actions are perceived by others.

Data 11: *"Moja mosa laa mo Akikanju loju ogun"*

*Literal Meaning: A valiant should know when to fight and when to retreat.

The proverb presents a contrast between fighting and retreating, emphasizing the importance of knowing when to engage in battle and when to withdraw. This contrast highlights the complexity of decision-making in challenging situations and underscores the need for strategic thinking. The proverb uses metaphorical language by comparing the actions of a valiant individual to the strategies employed in warfare. This metaphorical comparison makes the message more vivid and emphatic. Parallel structure is utilized in repeating the phrase "know when to" followed by a verb ("fight" and "retreat"). This parallelism reinforces the directive nature of the proverb and emphasizes the importance of both actions.

The proverb functions as a directive, offering advice on how to approach challenging situations with wisdom and foresight. It emphasizes the importance of strategic thinking and decision-making, particularly in situations involving conflict or adversity. The proverb reflects cultural values surrounding bravery, courage, and strategic thinking. While valour and bravery are esteemed, the proverb also acknowledges the importance of intelligence and discernment in navigating conflicts. By emphasizing the need to know when to fight and when to retreat, the proverb offers practical guidance for conflict resolution. It encourages individuals to assess situations rationally and make decisions based on the likely outcomes, rather than acting impulsively or recklessly.

Data 12: *"Ori bibé kó ni oògùn ori fífó."*

*Literal Meaning: Decapitation is not the antidote for headache.

The proverb uses metaphorical language by comparing the extreme act of decapitation to the relatively minor issue of a headache. This metaphorical comparison makes the message more vivid as well as emphasizing the absurdity of using an extreme solution for a minor problem. The proverb presents a contrast between decapitation and headache, highlighting the disparity

between the severity of the problem and the proposed solution. This contrast underscores the message of proportionality and restraint in problem-solving. The repetition of the "o" sound in "Orí bíbẹ̀ kọ̀" and "oògùn orí" adds a rhythmic quality to the proverb.

The proverb functions as a warning or piece of advice, cautioning against the use of extreme measures to solve problems. The proverb offers a pragmatic perspective on problem-solving, advocating for a rational and proportionate approach. Highlighting the absurdity of using decapitation to treat a headache, it underscores the importance of considering the severity of the problem and selecting an appropriate response.

Data 13: "*Tóró tó n̄sìşẹ̀ sà̀n ju şilè kan tó jókòó sí ojú kan lọ.*"

*Literal Meaning: A three-penny coin that is busy working is better than one shilling that sits in one place doing nothing.

The proverb employs metaphorical language by comparing the diligent three-penny coin to the idle one-shilling. This metaphorical comparison highlights the contrast between industriousness and idleness. The proverb presents a contrast between the active three-penny coin and the inactive one-shilling, emphasizing the superiority of proactive behaviour over inactivity. This contrast underscores the importance of industriousness and productivity. The repetition of the "s" sound in "tó n̄sìşẹ̀ sà̀n ju şilè" adds a rhythmic quality to the proverb and reinforces its message.

The proverb reflects a universal value found in many cultures about the virtue of hard work and the importance of being proactive and industrious. It encourages individuals to adopt a strong work ethic and take appropriate initiative. From a pragmatic perspective, the proverb encourages individuals to adopt a proactive mindset and approach to life. It promotes the idea that taking initiative and engaging in productive activity can lead to positive outcomes and personal fulfillment.

Data 14 "*Omo araye npatewo fefon efon nyo, efon ko mo pe oun fiku sire*"

*Literal Meaning: People clap for the mosquito and it rejoices, oblivious that it is toying with death.

The proverb uses metaphor by comparing individuals receiving praise to a mosquito being clapped for. This metaphorical comparison vividly illustrates the idea that individuals may receive superficial or misguided recognition for actions that are ultimately harmful. The

proverb utilizes irony by highlighting the contradiction between receiving praise and the potential harm it may bring. While the mosquito rejoices at the applause, it remains unaware of the danger it faces, creating a sense of irony in the situation. The proverb incorporates vivid imagery, particularly with the image of clapping for a mosquito. This imagery adds depth to the metaphor and makes the message more impactful.

The proverb serves as a cautionary tale, warning individuals to be discerning and critical thinkers, recognizing that not all praise or recognition is beneficial. From a pragmatic perspective, the proverb offers practical advice for navigating social interactions and avoiding deception or manipulation. It prompts listeners to be wary of superficial gestures of approval and to critically assess the intentions behind them. By highlighting the irony of clapping for a mosquito, the proverb encourages listeners to be critical thinkers and reflect on the importance of perceiving the true nature of situations and recognizing when praise may be misleading or insincere.

Data 15 “*Ti baba ba binu ti o somo sinu eeru, tbinu baba ba tan tbinu eeru oba tan nko*”

*Literal Meaning: If a father gets so angry as to throw his kid into a raid of army ants, by the time he calms down, the ants may not be.

The proverb utilizes metaphor by comparing the consequences of acting in anger to the scenario of a father throwing his child into a swarm of ants. This metaphor vividly illustrates the potential harm caused by impulsive actions fueled by anger. The proverb incorporates vivid imagery, particularly with the image of army ants. This imagery adds depth to the metaphor and makes the message more impactful. The proverb utilizes hyperbole or exaggeration to emphasize the severity of the consequences of acting impulsively in anger. By describing an extreme scenario, the proverb highlights the irreversibility of impulsive actions.

The proverb serves as a cautionary tale, warning listeners about the dangers of allowing anger to cloud judgment. It urges individuals to pause and reflect before acting impulsively. From a pragmatic perspective, the proverb offers practical guidance for managing emotions and making sound decisions. It advocates for emotional restraint and the importance of exercising caution in decision-making, particularly when emotions run high.

Data 16 “*Ijalo kole wosoko fun omiran sugbon ole bosoko fomiran*”

*Literal Meaning: The soldier ants are certainly not as big as a giant, but if disregarded, they may easily disrobe anyone.

The proverb employs metaphor by comparing the threat posed by soldier ants to that of a giant. This metaphor vividly illustrates the idea that seemingly minor issues or adversaries can escalate into significant problems if neglected or overlooked. The proverb presents a contrast between the size of soldier ants and that of a giant, highlighting the disparity between the perceived threat and its potential consequences. This contrast underscores the importance of vigilance and proactive action in addressing potential challenges. The proverb incorporates vivid imagery, particularly with the image of soldier ants disrobing someone. This imagery adds depth to the metaphor and makes the message more vivid.

The proverb serves as a warning against complacency and underestimation. It emphasizes the need for vigilance, attentiveness, and proactive action in addressing potential threats or challenges, regardless of their initial size or apparent insignificance. From a pragmatic point of view, the proverb offers practical advice for risk management and problem-solving. It emphasizes the importance of foresight and proactive action in identifying and addressing potential threats or challenges, even if they initially appear minor.

Data 17 *“Ti ogiri oba lanu alangba kole woho ogiri”*

*Literal Meaning: If there are no crevices in the wall, the lizard cannot penetrate it.

The proverb makes use of metaphor to vividly illustrate the negative consequences arising from underlying vulnerabilities or weaknesses. The proverb incorporates imagery, particularly with the image of a lizard attempting to penetrate a wall. This imagery adds depth to the metaphor and makes the message more memorable and impactful. The proverb explores the concept of cause and effect by suggesting that negative consequences or problems arise when there are weaknesses or vulnerabilities in a system or situation. This idea underscores the importance of addressing root causes to prevent problems effectively.

From a pragmatic perspective, the proverb offers practical advice for problem-solving and decision-making. It emphasizes the importance of identifying and addressing underlying weaknesses or vulnerabilities to prevent or mitigate undesirable outcomes. The proverb underscores the importance of prevention in avoiding negative consequences.

Data 18 *“Ile ti aba fi ito mo, eri ni yio woo”*

*Literal Meaning: A house built with saliva will collapse under dew drops.

The proverb makes use of metaphor to compare structures built on deceit to a house constructed with saliva collapsing under dew drops. This metaphor vividly illustrates the idea that anything built on dishonesty or deceit is inherently unstable and likely to fail. The proverb incorporates imagery, particularly, the image of a house collapsing under dew drops. This imagery adds vigor to the metaphor and makes the message impactful.

The proverb utilizes symbolism by representing structures built on deceit as unstable and likely to fail. This symbolism underscores the importance of honesty and integrity in all actions and relationships. From a pragmatic perspective, the proverb offers practical wisdom about the importance of honesty and emphasises the value of personal integrity and truthfulness.

Data 19 “*Ti iku ile oba pani, tode o lee pani*”

*Literal Meaning: If there are no enemies within, those without can do us no harm.

The proverb utilizes metaphor to vividly demonstrate the idea that internal discord or weaknesses pose a greater danger than external threats. The proverb presents an antithesis by contrasting the dangers posed by internal conflicts or weaknesses with the lesser threat posed by external enemies. This contrast emphasizes the importance of addressing internal challenges proactively. The proverb exhibits parallelism in its structure, with the repeated use of "no enemies within" and "those without" to emphasize the comparison between internal and external threats.

From a pragmatic perspective, the proverb offers cautionary advice about the dangers of neglecting internal conflicts or weaknesses. The proverb offers practical wisdom about the importance of addressing internal conflicts and weaknesses to strengthen resilience against external threats. It encourages a proactive and self-reflective approach to conflict resolution and defense, promoting unity and resilience in the face of adversity.

The analysis of the selected proverbs above, explicates the pivotal role of warning proverbs in shaping desirable character traits, fostering credible character development, and upholding a harmonious societal structure within Yoruba culture. These proverbs act as guiding principles, shedding light on various human situations and offering timely admonitions to navigate challenges effectively. They exemplify the cherished values and strategies for personal growth inherent in African societies, particularly within the Yoruba community.

Conclusion

In conclusion, proverbs serve as invaluable tools for cultivating peaceful coexistence and fostering unity among individuals. Through the examination of these proverbs, a deeper comprehension of Yoruba cultural values emerges, underscoring their central role in nurturing a cohesive and harmonious human community.

Scholars are encouraged to explore additional functions of existing proverbs and contemplate their integration and sustenance of their usage in enriching routine communication, preserving cultural heritage, and transmitting the inherent communicative competencies to future generations.

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