

**A Paremiological Analysis of Traditional Yoruba
Proverbs with Sex Metaphor and the New Media
Postproverbials**

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Abstract

This study attempts to carry out a comparative analysis of traditional Yoruba proverbs with sex metaphors and the New Media Postproverbials with focus on their structures, contents and context. Through interview, traditional Yoruba proverbs with sex metaphors were collated while the new media especially Facebook was used to source for the new media postproverbials. The proverbs are translated into Standard English and subjected to critical and comparative analyses. This research will adopt Eclectic Theory in the analysis of the proverbs. Therefore, theories such as Remi Raji-Oyelade's Postproverbial Theory, alongside other theories such as Postmodernism, Formalism and Deconstruction will be employed. The traditional Yoruba proverbs with sex metaphors maintain attributes such as terseness, brevity, clarity of language and communicate meanings. Whereas, the New Media Postproverbials deconstruct the structure of the traditional proverbs; they extol vulgarism, humour and playfulness. The research will strengthen existing

knowledge and build a strong foundation on the potentials of the new media in the creation and transmission of traditional proverbs with sex metaphors, new proverbs and postproverbials. The research is expected to advance the frontier of knowledge in the field of paremiological study as it relates to the traditional proverbs with sex metaphor and the postproverbials across the oral tradition and the new media, especially the social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter

Keywords: Traditional Yoruba proverbs, sex metaphors, New Media Postproverbials, Postmodernism, Formalism, Deconstruction

Introduction

Several researches have been conducted on traditional proverbs such as those conducted by Ruth Finnegan (1970), Wolfgang Mieder (1985) among others with particular interest in the meanings of the proverbs and their socio-cultural influence in the society as a mean of warning, moralising, caution, among others. Ademowo and Balogun (2015) also worked on the traditional Yoruba proverbs with sex images and their postproverbial construction. Fadare (2019) researched into the Postproverbials construction of Ify-Asia Chiemeziem who playfully deconstructed some known traditional proverbs coated with sex-related imagery. What is different in Ify-Asia proverbs is that most of her proverbs are created out of her own ingenuities adding credence to the fact that new proverbs can be created by intelligent people and experts in languages. However, what is left undone is to see the traditional Yoruba proverbs with sex related metaphor as well as their postproverbial construction as they are used and received on the social media. Hence, this research is an advance version of what Ademowo 2015 and Fadare 2019 have achieved. It will also extend further the experimentation of Remi Raji-Oyelade Postproverbial Theory to the use of both traditional Yoruba proverbs with sex metaphor and their postproverbial

constructions on Social Media especially, Whatsapp, Twitter (now X) and Facebook..

Wolfgang Milder defined proverb as a “short generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals and traditional views in a metaphorical fixed and memorable form which is handed down from generation to generation” (1985:113). Gbemisola Adeoti in his submission contends that, “One attribute of a proverb [...] is its economy of words while making plenty sense like poetry and riddle.” (2019:85). Proverbs are the repository of people's wisdom and belief system. Among the Yoruba people, in Nigeria, West Africa, elders are the custodians of proverbs which are always used to beautify speech, give warning, offer advice, among others.

The traditional Yoruba societies frown at obscenity and vulgarity which reflect on their proverbs where words that are associated with sex organs are rarely used or referred to. This explains why euphemistic words such as “Nkan omokunrin” (the thing of manhood) or “Opaabe” (the staff of the underneath) are used instead of “oko” the Yoruba word for penis. For the female sex organ, the word “obo” is a taboo and is rarely mentioned; rather, euphemistic words such as “Odo Abe” (Underneath stream) or “Iyamapo” (the mother of Mapo) are used to make reference to it, (Ademowo and Balogun, 2015, Fadare, 2019).

My discussion and intellectual engagement with Prof. Remy Oriaku, gave more insights into the nature of sex proverbs within the purview of the traditional society, According to Oriaku:

Proverbs give depth/weight to communication. Sex is a very useful metaphor being something everyone knows and can relate with. More significantly, its being mentioned in communication triggers the thoughts and memories of the audiences thus expanding the discourse in traditional African society (pre-modern age), only adults (especially male) used

proverbs in mixed gatherings. Younger people could use proverbs or discuss sex only among their peers of the same sex. In mixed audiences (male and female) it was taboo and seen as evidence of bad upbringing. (Remy Oriaku, 2024,)

The above submission by Oriaku further adds credence to the fact that proverbs with sex metaphors among the Yorubas are used covertly and not overtly. Also, women rarely make use of proverbs in a mixed gathering except women that are perceived to be men due to their advanced age. The focus of this present research work is to advance the frontier of research work on Yoruba proverbs with sex metaphors beyond the previous efforts of Owomoyela, (1972), Ojoade, (1982), Ademowo and Balogun (2015) and Fadare, (2019). The nexus of the research is to carry out a comparative analysis of traditional Yoruba proverbs with sex metaphors and the new media postproverbials as advanced by RemiRaji-Oyelade (2012 and 2013). In traditional Yoruba proverbs with sex metaphors, the emphasis is always placed on the message not the vulgar words involved.

However, in postproverbials, the emphasis is shifted to the jokes elements and not the didactic import of the proverb. Ademowo and Balogun (2015:12) are of the opinion that, “proverbs and its use are so enticing to the extent that users with gifts of creativity who are familiar with their techniques may attempt to create new ones.” This explains why most new media proverbs are new proverbs that are created out of the user's ingenuity. Examples of this abound in Ify Asia Chiemezem's New Media Proverbs. For instance, “A good friend is like a gallant penis, it stands up for you in the time of need.” (Chiemezem's Facebook, 2017). This postproverbial is a deconstruction of the proverb, “A friend in need is a friend indeed.” From these two proverbs it can be deduced that in terms of structure, postproverbials share similar structure with the traditional proverbs. Ademowo and Balogun observed that the nexus

between the traditional Yoruba sex-related proverbs and their postproverbials construction is that in traditional proverbs emphasis is always given to the core message of the proverbs, whereas, in their postproverbial construction, emphasis is shifted to the sex images or sex organs mentioned in the proverb resulting in what Raji-Oyelade referred to as “blasphemy playfulness.” Ademowo and Balogun making reference to Nwoga (1979) identified three forms of meanings that can be generated from a proverb thus: the text or literal meaning; the generalised, moral and cultural principles philosophical meaning, and; the meaning generated from the proverb when it is being used in context. (Ademowo and Balogun, 12)

However, while the traditional proverbs deal with serious matters, postproverbials dwell on what Raji-Oyelade (2013:8) called “blasphemy playfulness.” Raji-Oyelade further stated that postproverbials are, “migrant texts in the traditional performance moving from people to people and getting transformed in the moment of travel” (2013:16). This research will be interested in how Yoruba proverbs with sex metaphors are used compared with the new media postproverbials with particular interest on their structures, contents and context under which they are used as they migrate from one place to the other through the words of mouth and the new media.

The previous efforts on sex proverbs can be traced to a symposium organized by The American Folklore Society on obscenity in Philadelphia, (USA) on 28 December, 1960. The essence of the conference was to collate all forms of Folklore including those that contain obscenity and vulgar words. Owomoyela's position on sex proverbs is patriarchal as he wants women to “...accommodate the men's libertine talks ... with humour and demuness” (1972:752). Ojoade works on “African Sexual Proverbs: Some Yoruba Examples.” The examples provided by Ojoade are relevant to this project e.g. “Bi oloko nla ndoni, gbigbin laagbin” (When one is being fucked with big penis,

one must groan), (1983:4). Ademowo and Balogun (2015) in their article entitled “Postproverbial Constructions and Selected Sex-Related Yoruba Proverbs and Proverbial Expressions” make a comparative analysis of sex-related traditional Yoruba proverbs and their Postproverbial versions. Ademowo and Balogun paper takes into cognizance the Postproverbial trends in relation to the deconstruction of the sex-related Yoruba proverbs. Fadare (2019) works on the new media postproverbials with focus on Ify Asia Chiemeziem's New Media Proverbs. What is left undone is the influence of the new media in the projection of proverbs with sex metaphors and how they are transformed into postproverbials through the new media. Therefore, this research will focus on the structure, content and context of proverbs with sex metaphors both in the traditional Yoruba setting, the new proverbs and the new media postproverbials. This research is important on different grounds; it will strengthen the previous works on Yoruba sex proverbs, focus on the creation of new proverbs and the significance of new media (technology) in the creation and transmission of postproverbials.

As earlier indicated, an eclectic approach will be adopted as theoretical framework. Therefore, the theories that will be employed in analyzing the selected proverbs will range from: Postproverbial Theory, Structuralism, Postmodernism and Deconstruction. The theories will take care of different aspects of the analysis.

Structuralism is a theory associated with the works of the French philosopher, Ferdinand de Saussure. Other scholars of Structuralism are: Levi-Strauss and Roland Barthes. Saussure in his work *Courses in General Linguistics* (1916) argued that all the system of naming is arbitrary and that:

... a concept is not intrinsically linked to a particular signifier. The meaning is determined by collective behavior of convention and is fixed by rules. Hence,

language is a system of signs and meaning itself is relational, produced by interaction of various signifiers and signified within that system. (Habib, 2005: 632)

The implication of the above is that applying structuralism in analyzing the proverbs will expand the meanings of the proverbs beyond the facial or denotative level since most of the selected proverbs are vulgar in outlook but with deep-rooted didactic values.

Another theory relevant to this study is deconstruction as expounded by Jacques Derrida. Deconstruction is a theory that based its thoughts on the concept of logocentrism which is simply defined as "...any system of thought which is founded on the stability and the authority of the *logos*, the divine word" (Habib, 650). The aspect of deconstruction that is relevant to our discussion in this study is the position of Derrida which states that the meaning of a signifier can only be found in the signified and this can continue ad infinitum, therefore, there will be an unending and continuous chain of signifiers. Therefore, when we speak, we no longer speak ordinary language but speak in metaphor. This suggests that all forms of languages are metaphoric in nature including the languages of Mathematics and Sciences (Habib, 651). Since all languages are metaphoric, it suggests that language is open to multiple interpretations as we are going to find out in our analysis.

In addition, aspects of formalism will be engaged to analyse the poetic devices used in the proverbs. Formalism is a literary theory that is based on the formal structure of a text. It places emphasis on the formal properties that constitute a text than the contextual meanings embedded in the text. Formalism places emphasis on the literary tropes that are used for literary embellishment while downplaying the underlying contents of the text. In the words of Habib (2005); Formalism places "...emphasis on form parenthesizes concern for the representational imitative

and cognitive aspects of Literature." (602). Formalism focuses more on the literary tropes that are used in a text and how the writer deviates from the norms and promotes foregrounding.

The last theory co-opted to analyse the text is Postmodernism. According to Peter Barry, Postmodernism is a literary theory that deconstructs most of the major tenets of modernism. Postmodernism is in "...favour of experimental forms of various kinds" (61). Postmodernism also glorifies vulgarism and meaninglessness which are some of the attributes of new proverbs and new media postproverbials.

Proverbs that serve as data for this research were collated orally and electronically. About seventeen Yoruba proverbs with sex symbols and twelve new media postproverbials were collated for this research. Traditional Yoruba proverbs with sex symbols were collated through interview. The new media (social media), especially Facebook was used to collate postproverbials. The proverbs were translated into Standard English and subjected to critical and comparative analyses. The analyses took cognizance of the structure, content and context under which the proverbs were used. The focus was placed on how the traditional Yoruba sex proverbs are formed and used and how the traditional proverbs are deconstructed in their postproverbial versions as it is common on the social media today.

Proverbs with sex proverbs were collated through interview and interaction with the native Yoruba native speakers. Parts of the field work also included internet surfing.

Traditional Yoruba Proverbs with Sex Metaphor

In traditional Yoruba society, proverbs that have sex motifs are used mostly by male adults and aged women who have passed to be men in the community as a result of their age. Apart from the male adults and the aged women, the native surgeon known as "Oloola" are fond of using the proverbs as they wish. Also, the drummers could also use their talking drums to voice-out some of

the proverbs at appropriate time. The drummers “Ayan” and the native surgeons “Oloola” are known as “asa” (those who cannot be ashamed) and as a result, they are not restricted by the society to use such sex proverbs.

However, children of all ages (especially those that are not married or those that are still under the tutelage of their parents) are restricted from using such proverbs. Also, the children are only expected to take the lesson of the proverbs which can only be realized at the connotative level rather than laughing at the vulgarity of the proverbs. In fact, it is uncouth attitude for children to laugh when any of these proverbs is being used. It needs to be noted that these proverbs are not used for the sake of their vulgarity. Far from it, the proverbs when analyzed from the perspective of the context within which they could be used, it would be realized that they are used to teach, instruct, condemn and correct social vices rather than for vulgar purpose.

Also, in traditional Yoruba society, children are not allowed to mention the real name of the genital organs of both male and female. The words are Oko (Penis) and Obo (Vagina). It is a taboo especially to mention 'Obo' – the female genital organ. Instead euphemistic words such as: 'Opa' (Staff), is being used to refer to Oko (Penis) while euphemistic words such as: 'Idi' (buttock), 'Odo-abe' (the underneath stream), 'Iyamapo' (the mother of mapo), 'gulutu' (dune), etc are used instead to refer to “Obo”. The female genital organ has more euphemistic names to refer to it because it is a taboo to mention it.

The researcher was stunned to discover some of these proverbs. At least about eighty – percent of them had never been mentioned to his hearing. This shows that the proverbs are deliberately hidden in the repertoire of the elders to enhance social control and avoid vulgarity.

Selected Yoruba Proverbs with Sex Metaphor: A Critique Proverb 1

An fotun teni, an fosin tu sokoto, ale tun la o se tohun

Translation

One is spreading the mat with the left hand and untying the girdle of the trouser with the right hand. Yet the lover (sex partner) felt unattended to.

Analysis:

This proverb can be used to calm someone in haste. The proverb is an indication that the usher is attending to the needs of the addressee which the later has not recognized nor appreciated. It can be used by an elderly person to calm a young person down because restlessness is always associated with youth. Among the Yoruba patriarchy, a man has the right to engage in extra marital affair. It is only the woman that is involved that would be persecuted if caught. A man could move around and be boast of his infidelity in front of his wives but it is only a woman that is “asewo” (prostitute) that will be castigated if caught. This proverb is patriarchal inclined.

Proverb 2

Eje ki obo o gbe Atari wo, ko mo ise ti esinsin nse

Translation

Let the vagina occupy the frontal part of the head to ascertain the harshness of the flies.

Analysis:

The proverb is used to underscore the significance of the privileged position someone is occupying. Nature has created everything and put them in their rightful places. It can be used to rebuke a child from an affluent family who is misusing his/her opportunities. The proverb also suggests that unless you imagine yourself being in the position someone is occupying (especially an unpalatable position or situation), one would not appreciate the

privileged position one is occupying or the opportunities one have. There is a reason you are experiencing what you are going through now.

Proverb 3

Ijo ajoju tii muni ri oko eegun.

Translation

It is overzealous dance of the masquerade that reveals its penis to the public.

Analysis:

This proverb is a warning forbidden a person from being over-zealous in whatever he/she is doing. We should have self restraint and control in whatever we are doing. The proverb is a caution against extremism. The masquerades are regarded as the representatives of the ancestral fathers of the clan visiting the living. They are to be sacred and adored by the people with awe. Therefore, they need to be secretive and maintain their sacredness instead of exposing their secret of the underworld to the profane. The proverb is therefore calling for caution and self restraints.

Proverb 4

Jolobo o ro, eni a do nikako.

Translation

Let the owner of the vagina complain, it is she that is sexed that should be agitated.

Analysis:

Proverb six is Yoruba version of the saying that: “you cannot cry more than the bereaved”. This proverb is a warning against hypocrisy. It holds that it is hypocritical to feel more concern than someone who is directly affected by an incident. We should not fight other people's war for them or feel more concerned than someone affected by an incident. In some instances people who feel grieved over other people's issues are doing so to achieve a personal targeted objective.

Proverb 5

Asese dobo majesin, to ba de oko, yoo fi oko dan akerengbe wo.
A young man who experiences sex for the first time will try his penis on a gourd at the farm.

Analysis:

The proverb can be used to restrict someone who is green in a field to tread gently. The word “majesin” (young person) makes it to be specific. It is used to warn young people to be mindful of their acts and to be cautious. We should not be too thrilled by a new life experience. Experience will tell us more about a fresh experience that we so much cherish today including their attendant consequences. It is also instructive to take note of the words “oko” (penis) and oko (farm). The pun used in the original proverb is lost to translation.

Proverb 6

Eeyan re Abebi Oke-Amu, tiwon ndo iyaale re to busekun.

Translation

Abebi, a wayward woman, native of Oke-Amu the one who cries because her husband is having sex with her senior co-wife.

Analysis:

This is a patriarchal inclined proverb which is used to justify polygamous marriage. Any woman who cries because her husband is having sex with another woman is seen as being stupidly jealous, jelly-minded and effeminate. The proverb is set in Oke-Amu, a town in Itesiwaju Local Government, Oyo State. It is about eighteen kilometer from Iseyin and about ninety kilometers away from Ibadan, the state capital. The proverb is likely to have its variants in other parts of Yoruba land. Proverb of this kind is used to justify polygamous and the rights of a man to have more than one wife and any woman that refuses to accept this is branded as being wayward and an iconoclast detrimental to patriarchal hegemony.

Proverb 7

Ma domi, mado orogun un mi, obo ara eni la a fowo mu.

Translation

Don't sex me, don't sex my co-wife; your power of resistance is limited to your vagina.

Analysis:

This proverb is equally gender sensitive. It is a proverb that looks down on women's resistance to polygamy. It can also be used to warn someone not to set his/her own moral standard as a cover-all for all other persons. The proverb encourages independence of thought by individual. The fact that you do not like something does not mean that others should resist it. The proverb at a more connotative level is teaching us to respect what other people cherish and have mutual respect for them.

Proverb 8

Oju lando obo were o yato.

Translation

Sex is in the face of a beholder; otherwise the vagina of a mad woman does not taste different.

Analysis:

The proverb may be used to persuade someone that what he/she has (and think that it is inferior or sub-standard) is normal or perfect. It may also be used to persuade someone to see their present condition not unusual. It can also be used to suppress the arrogance of a proud and beautiful woman to stop being unnecessary proud because what she thinks she has, that is special, is not any way different from that of the others, in reality. Therefore, the proverb can be used to caution, advise or persuade someone to accept a particularly condition as it were.

Proverb 9

Oku obo ti o pa Mala to bimoti o soo ni idun.

Translation

It is excessive love of vagina (sex) that makes "mala" (a species of bush-rat) named its child "clitoris".

Analysis:

The proverb is a justification for the fact that it is what someone loves that he/she will give priority. It also warns that someone's death is attached to what he/she likes. He who loves sex will eventually dies of venereal disease. In sum, the proverb is a warning against social vices that someone is known for or closely associated with because the person's death will be closely related or attached to what he/she likes doing.

Proverb 10

O doboleekan o gbaa labara, eekan ti oo doo mo niyan.

Translation

You have sex once and slap the vagina your chance of having sex again is closed.

Analysis:

This proverb is a caution against discarding something that is no longer useful to us at a time because such a thing will be useful to us some other time. For instance, the proverb may be used for a debtor who after repaying his/her debts started abusing the creditor; after all, the money he owes him/her has been paid. If such a thing is done, then, the debtor should know that his/her chance of borrowing money from such creditor, in future is closed.

Proverb 11

Lati abiya la o timobi irun obo yooti to.

Translation

The quantity of vagina hair can be determined by the amount of hair on the arm-pit.

Analysis:

Someone's appearance or the manner of relating with people determined the kind of family background the person comes from. Also, someone's personality can be determined through his/her speech or behaviour. Also, the way someone behaves while in state of penury can be used to determine the way the person will behave when he/she becomes wealthy. The proverb can be used to tell someone off that the promise he/she is making is empty going by his/her present attitude.

Proverb 12

Iku oko tii muni ri adikala epon.

Translation

It is the death of one's husband that exposes one to a saggy crotch.

Analysis:

Among the Yorubas, a woman is seen as part of the property owned by her husband to be shared after death. Therefore, a widow is not allowed to be left alone after the death of her husband. After the death of a woman's husband, she will be exposed to another form of crotch different from the one she is used to. In most cases, it will be a saggy one. The words "adikala epon". Saggy crotch is used in a derogatory manner to describe the idea of wife inheritance as unpalatable experience to women. This proverb speaks in favour of women; therefore it is commonly used by aged women to describe an unacceptable and unfavourable situation that happens to them due to the demise of their husband. The proverb can be used to suggest that someone's predicament is brought about because of certain predestined or natural occurrence that happened before. For instance, someone's inability to pay house-rent, children's school fees, may expose the person to insult from landlord, school management or creditors.

Proverb 13

Ai soro yanro to mu Babalowo do obo aaro.

Translation

It is lack of clarification of statement which makes the diviner have early morning sex.

Analysis:

Without explaining the root or source of this proverb, its contextual meaning will be meaningless. The diviners (Babalawos) have an instrument of divination called "ibo". This object will be given to the client who has come to find out what the future holds for him/her. It should be noted that it is women that mostly patronize these diviners or Babalawo. So, one day, a woman who consults a diviner is asked to open the "ibo" and because of the lack of clarification, the woman thinks the diviner mentions obo (vagina) therefore; she open her legs and the diviner has sex with her. Hence, lack of clarification between "Ibo" and "obo" leads to the early morning sex between the diviner and the female client. It needs to be noted that the confusion is caused by the fact that Yoruba language is a tonal language and the two words sound alike. The proverb is also a warning that we should be clear while making a statement in order not to mislead or confuse people.

Proverb 14

Obo gba oko oni ko gba aye; se o teni sun sibe ni?

Translation

The vagina occupies the penis, yet you complain of inadequate space; do you want to spread mat and sleep there?

Analysis:

This proverb is a warning against excess. It kicks against being wasteful. It also has moral value. One should be satisfied with the little one has and one should avoid stupendous or extravagant life. Anything that is in excess is a waste and one should guide against it. We should strive to have what will satisfy our immediate need or be enough for our needs and not striving towards acquiring what we do not need thereby subjecting ourselves to undeserved stress.

Proverb 15

Loju oloko lobo joju, patako ni folobo.

It is the owner of penis that cherishes vagina, for its owner, it is a mere stool (chair).

Analysis:

This proverb can be used to show that what someone has but not cherish is a valuable object to someone else's. For instance, cow dung is a waste material for a shepherd but it can be used by crop farmers as fertilizer. If one is not cherished by him/herself or people around him or her definitely, some other people will cherish him. On the other way round, what some people cherish mean nothing for those who have it in abundance.

Proverb 16

Obinrin pantete ogoji oke wolu o loun o lowo lowo, tabe re yinko?

Translation

A woman enters the town with eight hundred thousand (naira) yet, she complains of not having money, what of the one she keeps underneath her genital?

Analysis:

This proverb should not be linked with prostitution. However, it should be examined from a more connotative perspective. The proverb holds that everybody is endowed by nature and until you begin to appreciate what you are endowed with you will continue complaining of lacking what is within the grip of your possession. It is instructive to note the word “naira” in parenthesis is used to appeal to the modern sense. Originally it could be cowries but the exact money is not mentioned. What is important is that “Oke” in Yoruba is twenty thousand and “Ogoji” is forty. Hence, “OgojiOke” will be twenty thousand multiply by forty which is eight thousand. Therefore, someone cannot be in possession of such a huge amount of wealth and still complains of being poor.

Proverb 17

Eyi a niki apon o bo kobo, o ni oun n lee bo ile oba Moro.

What we ask the bachelor to fix, he has failed to fix it, and instead, he is concerned with the fixing of king Moro's palace.

Analysis:

This proverb is making allusion to an impotent person. Among the Yorubas, an impotent person is looked down upon and they are always ostracized except in some few cases when the person concerned leads successful life through hard-working, creativity or personal ingenuity. Therefore, the proverb holds the view that one cannot be concerned about fixing a king's house without giving priority to his own needs. What they ask the spouse to 'fix' here is a euphemistic word for copulation. A man is asked to 'fix' (copulate) with his wife, instead he is busy 'fixing' (renovating) someone else's house. The proverb can also be used to suggest misplacement of priority.

The New (Media) Proverbs with Sex Imagery and Postproverbials.

The new media especially the social media has created a fertile ground for the creation and dissemination of proverbs with sex imageries both traditional proverbs and the new proverbs or postproverbials. Let us take a look at some of the proverbs:

Proverb 18:

Ido kudo laado iyawo oku orun, bi koba wo fun un, ko lo ree ba oko re lorun

(Ropo Ewenla Facebook page, January 27, 2024)

Translation

A widow that is subjected to an excruciating sexual abuse cannot complain of sexual abuse; the worst she can do as a protest is to commit suicide and join her husband in the world beyond.

Analysis

This is a misogynist patriarchal proverb which composition demeans the reputation of a widow and humanity generally. This proverb sees widows as common public property that can be abused and maltreated. At the deeper level, what the proverb is stating is that people will respect you and your properties when you are alive but will abuse and put them into a wrong use when you are late.

Proverb 19

Arewa tiko mo oko o ko, bope boya, ara re a ko oko
(Ropo Ewenla Facebook page, January 25, 2024)

Translation

A beautiful damsel that has not learnt how to reject penis, sooner than later, her body will reject it (penis)

Analysis

This proverb is stating that no matter how enjoyable something is, we should engage in it with moderation. Such things as sex, drinking, smoking, etc should not be abused because, if abused, they will cause bodily harms in the future especially at the old age.

Proverb 20

“Ara Aye o tii ri obo do, ara orun n yo oko”
(Ropo Ewenla Facebook page, January 17, 2024)

Translation

The livings have not got a taste of having sex; it's the dead people that are bringing out their penis.

Analysis

This proverb is about issue of scarcity and needs. In Economics, it is argued that human wants/needs are insatiable but the means to satisfy them are scarce. This proverb is stating the obvious that in case of scarcity, preference should be given to a class of people

that are in utmost need first before considering others that can do without it.

Proverb 21

“No matter how big the backside of a fat woman is, does not scare away the clothes that cover it”
(Facebook page, Mallam Yusuf Amoke, July 6, 2023)

Analysis

This proverb that was harvested from Facebook can be likened to the Yoruba proverb: “Ara kii tobi, ki alara o ma lee gbe” (Someone's body cannot be too big so much that the owner of the body will not be able to lift it.). This proverb can be used to state that our problem cannot be bigger than us. We should always summon courage to confront life challenges with courage and strength.

Proverb 22

“The size of a breast does not determine the quantity of the milk”
(Facebook page, Mallam Yusuf Amoke, July 4, 2023).

Analysis

This is a proverb that further justifies appearance and reality. Things do not usually turn out exactly the way they appear to us. We should also note that not all that shines is gold. It is a proverb that warns us against raising high hope on an issue because things may not turn out exactly the way we perceive them to be eventually. Therefore, we should not raise high hope on an anticipated matter in order not to be disappointed.

Proverb 23:

“The private part of an old man is not children's playing ground”
(Facebook page, Mallam Yusuf Amoke, July 8, 2023)

Analysis

This proverb is a proverb of caution teaching us about the limit to the exercise of our freedom and rights. Old men are known to be calm, gentle and friendly but that does not mean that a child

should exceed its limit by playing with the old man private parts.

Proverb 24

“A penis that fear the inside of the vagina cannot father a child”

Analysis

This proverb is related to a Yoruba proverb: “Eni ti yoo je oyin, kii woe nu aake” (He who wants to enjoy the sweetness of honey, won't stare at the mouth of his axe.). The meaning of this proverb is that someone who wants to be successful would not hesitate to summon courage to face challenges. Nothing in life comes with ease. Life is full of difficulties and only those that are brave can weather it and become successful in life.

Going further, proverbs 18-24 can be regarded as traditional proverbs with sex metaphors propagated via the new media/social media especially Facebook. They satisfy all the attributes of traditional proverbs. However, we need to study the below proverbs and see the differences.

Proverb 25

“When a woman stops singing while bathing, just know that she's washing her centre of gravity”

(Facebook, Ghana Proverb, African Proverb page, Ichie Innocent, December 5, 2020)

Analysis

Although this proverb is tagged Ghana proverb just to achieve authenticity, it is more of a new proverb created for its humorous intent. Proverbs of this kind are used to generate traffic and are used for their entertainment value rather than didactic value. Centre of gravity as used in the proverb is a new creation borrowed from the knowledge of Physics.

Proverb 26

“A man that cannot suck his wife's vagina cannot lead an army.”

(Ariba proverb: Ify Asia Chiemeziem, November 23, 2020, Facebook.)

Analysis

The above proverb by Chiemeziem is a new proverb with sex metaphor. The Facebook usher is the creator of the proverb itself and the proverb is a not a deconstruction of any existing proverb that can make it to be categorized as postproverbial. This adds up to the fact that new proverbs can be created as previously argued. This proverb just like proverb 25 is a new proverb used for entertainment purpose and not for their didactic values.

Proverb 27:

“Big breast na blessing for papa and pikin”

(Ondo proverb, Ify Asia Chiemeziem Facebook Page, September 25, 2020)

Standard English

Having a big breast by a woman is a blessing for both the father and the child

Analysis

This proverb by Chiemeziem is another example of new media proverb. This proverb is created new to entertain the netizens. By making reference to Ondo as the owner of the proverb, the writer is aimed at adding authenticity to the proverb. The proverb is most appreciated by its hilarity.

Proverb 28:

“A man that says his wife's will not rest, his penis will not rest too”

(Edo proverb, Ify Asia Chiemeziem Facebook Page, September 25, 2020)

Analysis

This proverb is a perfect example of new media postproverbial. This proverb tries to deconstruct a popular proverb in Yoruba that says that: “Omo ti oni Iya oun konii sun, oun naa koni fi oju le oorun” (A child that says his mother will not sleep, he will remain awake too till dawn.) This traditional proverb was deconstructed by Chiemeziem by adding sexual metaphor to the proverb in order to attract audience to her page. The netizens

prefer to read posts that have sexual motif and that is exactly what Chiemeziem tries to achieve in the above deconstruction of the traditional proverb.

Proverb 29

“It is with caution that hot vagina is licked”

(Igbo proverb, Ify Asia Chiemeziem Facebook Page, September 25, 2020)

Analysis

This proverb is a distortion of the Yoruba proverb: “Obe gbigbona nfe suuru” (It is with caution that we lick hot soup) or “Pele pele lan pa ankuuru pele.” (It is with caution that one eliminates the delicate sting of Amukuru- a kind of bug or insect that when it stings leaves blood on the skin.) Chiemeziem intentionally replaces the hot soup with hot vagina in order to infuse the sex metaphor into the proverb.

In summary, in this sub-section, three categories of proverbs are discussed. Proverbs 18 to 23 are pure traditional proverbs that are used via the social media. The second sets of proverb used in this section are examples of new proverbs used on the social media while proverbs 28 and 29 are examples of deconstructed proverbs also known as postproverbials used on social media.

Conclusion

The focus of the paper is the analysis of selected Yoruba proverbs that have sex motifs. In the course of compiling these proverbs, it is discovered that some of the proverb are capable of losing their “sexual” images if the proverbs are to be translated figuratively. The paper carries out a critique of the context within which the proverbs could be used. Some of the proverbs instruct the young ones while some of them are sexist proverbs that are used to uphold patriarchal hegemony and dominance. The central thematic thrust of the proverbs include: the proverbs can be used as caution, it can be used to admonish someone to have self-

restraint and encourage hardworking. The proverbs also project the world views of the Yorubas on their ethical codes and the moral standards that are expected from a member of the society. In conclusion, the proverbs are not meant for vulgarity of sheer entertainment but they are used to maintain socio-control in the community.

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