African Proverbs for Cultural Education: A Step towards Digital Archiving

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Abstract

African proverbs, considered as the most ubiquitous genre of folklore, are instructional vehicles through which the cultural values in African societies are imparted to generations. This phenomenology study was carried out to offer a roadmap for categorising and interpreting African proverbs using the Ethnopragmatic method while investigating the possibility of developing a user-friendly mobile app for it. Face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions, telephone and skype interviews were used as data collection instruments for the study. Eighty-eight respondents sampled using the purposive and snowball sampling techniques were recruited for the study from three African countries. The findings revealed that creating a user-friendly mobile app on African proverbs holds great potential in assisting in their digital documentation and preservation for posterity. Moreover, the scholarly categorisation and interpretation of African proverbs were seen as crucial to the preservation of this indispensable genre. The study recommends that African governments, ministries of education, cultural institutions and media houses must assist research efforts aimed at cultural preservation and propagation of the philosophical insights in African proverbs.

Keywords: African proverbs; African culture; Cultural preservation; Digital archive; Indigenous knowledge systems.

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Introduction

Indigenous knowledge is the time-tested knowledge enshrined in the cultural practices of indigenous people based on their life experiences and observations in their natural environment (Kim et al., 2017). The validity of the knowledge is based on the successes in its application passed on orally from the older generation to the younger generation (Adom, 2016a; Xacara & Succi, 2008). Discussion on the acceptance of indigenous knowledge as a great resource for development took place at the first Global Knowledge Conference held in Toronto in June 1997. This initiative led to the birth of the Indigenous Knowledge for Development Programme of the World Bank in 1998. The UN Declaration on Indigenous Peoples, in June 2006, called for the 'the respect for indigenous knowledge, cultures and traditional practices' as they were seen as a great contributor to sustainable development (UNDRIP, 2007). Indigenous knowledge has in many respects demonstrated its relevance in the development of nations in various sectors (Ajani et al., 2013). Indigenous knowledge provides a deeper understanding of cultures, thereby ensuring cultural syncretism and unity (Ogbebor, 2011).

Moreover, it aids in the nurturing of relevant skills and values that could lead to a sustainable future (Nkosi, 2016; Battiste, 2002). One of the indigenous knowledge systems rooted in African philosophy is proverb. Proverb is a concise, wise phrase of human thought and experience, quoted to express a wise judgment, a didactic teaching, and a meaningful warning (Adom, 2016b; Tchimboto, 2015; Peterson & Coltrane, 2003). They have poetic characteristics (Finnegan, 2012), setting them apart from other oratory devices. They contain cherished beliefs and truths (Schipper, 2003). They are repositories of the rich memories and accumulative knowledge of a society that bear characteristics of their culture that may have evolved (Dipio, 2019). They depict the culturally-specific accepted truths about society's accepted ways of living (Gyan et al., 2020). Proverbs are used in embellishing speech to avoid what Nketia terms 'hackneyed expressions' (Nketia, 1958: 21). Proverbs help in the acquisition of behavioural principles underpinned in traditional moral and wisdom expressions required for the growth and development of societies (Fayemi, 2009). Also, proverbs play very significant roles in the education and socialisation of youth (Onofrei & Iancu, 2015; Serote, 1998), as they are used as vehicles in interpreting the cultural beliefs and values in society (Gyan et al., 2020). Proverbs have didactic, moral, philosophical, humorous and therapeutic functions (Tchimboto, 2015; Hanzen, 2007). More importantly, proverbs are symbolic expressions to preserve and disseminate a society's rich history and culture (Omoera & Inegbeboh, 2013; Amate, 2011).

Unfortunately, today, many indigenous knowledge systems, such as proverbs, are at risk of becoming extinct because of the rapid changing of the natural environments and the fast pace of economic, political, and cultural changes. Indigenous knowledge in Africa is characterised by its oral nature. As a social form of knowledge of a society's cultural history, the proverb genre is communicated orally and risks disappearing once the older generation passes away (Dutta, 2019). Also, proverbs as part of indigenous knowledge systems of society risks being distorted, exoticised (Ryan, 2016) and are severely eroded (Turin, 2013). This would eventually lead to the loss of cultural heritage, practices, and genres such as proverbs cherished as ancestral knowledge in Africa (Brown & Nicholas, 2012). There have been great concerns to pay attention to the preservation of proverbs for posterity among scholars recently (Sraku-Lartey et al., 2017). The United Nations has recently added the protection of both the tangible and intangible aspects of cultural heritage preservation to the sustainable development goals as a step in making the world better by 2030 (United Nations, 2018). To assist in preventing adulteration and/or extinction of proverbs, Taha (2011) conducted a study to document the Dongolawi Nubian proverbs. Though paper documentation of proverbs is good, taking advantage of the emerging digital technologies for the documentation of proverbs is a worthy course. Hunter (2005) recognises the urgent need to study and evaluate existing indigenous knowledge systems concerning emerging

digital technologies. Digitisation of indigenous knowledge such as storytelling has recently been carried out for some rural communities in Eastern India (Dutta, 2019). Swanepoel (2008) posits that digitisation initiatives (metadata, database architecture and software) are driven by two most important motives: preservation and enhanced access. Mobile applications are currently used as a fundamental means for communication and delivery of knowledge (Drill, 2012). Unfortunately, the existing mobile applications for African proverbs are not categorised, and their philosophical meanings are not scholarly. Therefore, there is an urgent need to develop a roadmap that shows how to develop a user-friendly mobile application to preserve African proverbs as part of the digitisation of African indigenous knowledge for posterity. This roadmap has to show the thematic categorisation of African proverbs for easy access. This study discusses various approaches used for unearthing the philosophical meanings of African proverbs from the text, cultural context/background and wise import using the Ethnopragmatic method (Goddard, 2006). The research objectives for the study were to:

 1. Identify and categorise African proverbs under relevant thematic areas for easy access and knowledge discovery.
2. Analyse African proverbs using the ethnopragmatic method to unravel their philosophical meanings.
3. Investigate the potentials of developing a mobile application for the digital archiving of African proverbs.

Preservation of Proverbs: Towards Digitization

The proverb genre is an integral part of folk literature. Since time immemorial, proverbs have effectively recorded the past, glorified leaders, and taught morals and traditions to young people through oral means. However, examining the ways of preserving folk literature has yielded controversial views. While some scholars like Hu (2007) feels strongly that preserving folk literature reduces its value and goes against its chief characteristics of orality, others feel folk literature can be preserved in some form without polluting it, such as using digital strategies (Hunter, 2005). African societies have preserved cultural memories and indigenous knowledge systems in many ways, chiefly through oratory, music and dance, and using art objects. Proverbs are products of individual and collective spoken memory (Urbano, 2008) and are orally preserved. Oral tradition as a means of preserving proverbs is not sustainable due to the ability of oral tradition to be polluted by the younger generation (Thulla, 2019). Karafin (2007) and Omeluzor et al. (2014) suggest that information professionals could harness digital technologies such as video recording and filming and mobile applications to preserve African cultural heritage, of which proverbs form a great part. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIBO), UNESCO and the World Forum on the Protection of Folklore have noted that trained folklorists can collect, document and analyse indigenous knowledge systems. After that, digital preservation could be used to preserve them as done by the Taiwanese Folklore Museum (Chan et al., 2008). Digital preservation strategies are similar in objective to preserving archival documents in libraries (Borghoff et al., 2005). While attempting to embark on digital preservation of indigenous knowledge systems such as proverbs, it is crucial to categorise them under meaningful themes while comprehensively presenting their philosophical and contextual explanations (Mieder, 2004; Lauhakangas, 2015; Alves, 2006).

Mobile Applications and Their Relevance in Knowledge Dissemination

Mobile devices have revolutionised the world of communication and dissemination of information and content through smartphones advancement. The mobile device advancement to the smartphone with innovative features like applications and computer functionalities. Mobile applications (apps) are currently used in developed and developing countries as a fundamental means for communication, delivery of knowledge, information and contents and building associations (Drill, 2012). Undoubtedly, social media apps are the most used software application in mobile devices, in this case, smartphones.

Mobile apps can be seen as software applications designed for mobile devices (smartphones) with an improved feature to allow users to carry their own personalised functions and tasks (Ebrahim et al., 2015; Inukollu et al., 2014; Adom, 2018). Liu and He (2015) believed that mobile apps improve knowledge used by Chinese students in learning English. Many aspects of the lives of humans, especially on the Africa continent, are witnessing the radical changes brought by mobile apps. For example, Kandagor et al.'s (2018) study shows that agricultural ideas and information are accessible to farmers through mobile apps. The researchers further stated that mobile apps continually provide bidirectional information flow and real-time feedback. Mobile apps are used for educational purposes and knowledge sharing (Ebrahim et al., 2015). There are different kinds of mobile apps like educational, finance, shopping, news, language, and others that offer users and organisations many benefits and purposes.

Then, the advent of mobile apps has improved the diffusion rate of real-time knowledge across the African continent, presenting users with continuous access to unlimited resources (contents). Significantly, the old and young generations can share information and content among them in real-time. According to Stieglitz et al. (2015), mobile apps is significant for business and individuals because it improves productivity, functionality and exchange of ideas and knowledge. The relevance of mobile apps for individuals and businesses is overwhelming and encouraging because they can provide real-time information anytime and anywhere and are cost effective. Stieglitz et al. (2015) further state that it cost nothing or less to have mobile apps. Based on the current uniqueness and opportunities created by mobile apps, a lot more can be done with the platform, like introducing African proverbs and idioms. The introduction will indeed innovate African proverbs and make them readily accessible by the general public across the globe and bring it into use. Also, it will improve the usage and prevent it from extinction. In summary, mobile apps can be used as a means for the preservation and promotion of African proverbs.

Research Method

The study utilised the qualitative research approach (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013) whereby textual data (Fraenkel et al., 2012) on African proverbs such as their categorisations and meanings were garnered from study participants. The phenomenological study design was implemented for the study to heighten the understanding of African proverbs (Smith & Osborn, 2008) from the insiders' perspectives (Kensit, 2000) and the lived experiences (Maypole & Gray, 2001) of the study participants from lengthy engagements. The respondents were purposively selected because they were deemed as having the characteristics required in offering the correct data for the study (Leedy & Ormrod as cited in du Plessis & Gerrie, 2012). Snowball sampling assisted in helping the researchers in reaching other respondents who could furnish the required data for the study (Naderifar et al., 2017) through referrals from the existing recruited participants (Salganik & Heckathorn, 2004). The study was carried out in three countries in Africa where the researchers hailed from (Figure 1). These included Ghana (Kumawu and Anyinam-Kokofu in the Ashanti Region of Ghana), Sierra Leone (Makarie, Rochain and Rokupr in the Northern Province) and Nigeria (Ogbomoso in the Oyo State, South-Western Nigeria).

Figure 1. Study areas for the study

These study areas were selected because they afforded easy data collection for the study since the researchers were residents and/or had contacts in those communities. The data garnered from the 88 sampled respondents were enough to reach data saturation.

Table 1. Sample description and sample size

Sample Description	Size
Spokespersons in the traditional cabinets	4
Advisors to chiefs	4
Elders in the traditional cabinets	9
Elderly residents in the study areas	24
Religious Leaders	5
IK Experts	6
Youth (18-30 years)	30
Village Griots	6
TOTAL	88

The study engaged significant number of elderly residents who are very knowledgeable in African proverbs. We made this decision because, as Tchimboto (2015) avers, it is only when people acquire or grow up within a specific culture and language that they can properly understand and use their proverbs. The researchers deployed various data collection instruments with the aim of triangulating the data to ensure validity. Thus, personal interviews (Fraenkel et al., 2012), focus group discussions (Nyumba et al., 2018), telephone interviews (Carr & Worth, 2001) and Skype interviews (Iacono et al., 2016) were carried out to collect the data from the 88 sampled respondents. The procedural steps in the interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2008; Fade, 2004) guided the data analysis for the study. However, the proverbs' interpretations were made using the ethnopragmatic method. The ethnopragmatic method that constructs meaning in the context of lived experience and its cultural variations (Traimond, 2015) was used for analysing the African proverbs. We concur with Tchimboto's (2015) view that proverbs are products of the lived experiences of people of a particular culture. As such, digging into the cultural context would aid in eliciting the actual meanings of the proverbs (Table 2). Failure to consider the cultural context, such as the people concerned, what called for its formulation would affect its relevance and eventual meaning. These 'situational aspects' of the proverbs give knowledge of the occasions and the purpose of their use (Finnegan, 2012).

Table 2. The Ethnopragmatic Method

Text	Cultural context	Philosophical message
Construction (Paremiological text)	Suggestions from stories, events, environmental state, or cherished values (lived experiences) in a specific society.	Meanings represented must reflect an interpretation that takes cognisance of the text and cultural context of the African proverb.
The level of signifier (denotative/connotative)		

Results and Discussion

The result of this study was divided into three subsections, i.e. (1) Identification and categorisation of African proverbs, (2) Analysis of African proverbs using the Ethnopragmatic Method, and (3) Investigate the potentials of developing a mobile application for the digital archiving of African proverbs.

Sub Section 1: Identification and Categorisation of African Proverbs under Relevant Thematic Areas for Easy Access and Knowledge Discovery

A total of 3, 653 proverbs have been identified and collected from the study participants. Though many of the proverbs were said for the researchers to document and record, many others were discreetly recorded from the conversations with the old sages in the study areas, whose speeches were flung with proverbs (Gbolonyo, 2009; Gadzekpo, 2013). Many of the proverbs garnered and recorded according to the older participants were orally instructed by their parents, elders in the traditional court as they went for community gatherings and some in their elementary schools.

I became very eloquent in proverbs because from infancy, my father, who was a spokesperson to the Asantehene (King of the Asantes) taught me every day. I also learnt some of the proverbs from the conversations he had with the elders in the community when they visited him and many others at community gatherings (SP-KU-PI, Personal Communication, 16/10/2018).

When I was in school, a subject titled 'Civic for Self-Government' was full of environmental education, which was mainly through the use of proverbs. We were made to discuss and reason on the moral

imports of the proverbs for environmental education. As such, hardly did any student engage in unfriendly environmental practices (SP-AN-PI, Personal Communication, 9/11/2018).

This underscores the relevance of using African proverbs as indispensable tools for teaching (Leite et al., 2019; Onofrei & Iancu, 2015). Gadzekpo (2013) and Adom (2018) recommended that that schools factor into their curriculum, the imports in the African proverbs for subjects related to social life, culture and the environment to imbibe in the students, conservation values for the protection of the natural environment. The categorisation of the African proverbs on the mobile application would make it easy in studying them. Those who were exposed to the existing mobile App online said:

The mobile apps on African proverbs online are good, but they are scattered in themes, and if you want to learn and apply a particular proverb on a particular topic, it's difficult. If a mobile app with the categories is developed, it would make it easy to learn the African proverbs and apply them accordingly (Y-FGD (SL), Personal Communication, 14/1/2019).

The study participants interviewed gave the following classifications for the African proverbs (Table 3). They asserted that these categories for the African proverbs would make it easy for people to learn them. This section illustrates two of the categories of the African proverbs to enlighten readers of how each of the categories will be presented on the proposed mobile application. These are financial management proverbs and nature resource management proverbs.

Table 3. Categorisation of the African Proverbs
Financial Management Proverbs
Nature Resource Management Proverbs
Leadership Proverbs
Development Proverbs
Motivational Proverbs
Religious Proverbs
Health Proverbs
Relationship Proverbs

The importance of classifying proverbs under specific themes as suggested by participants is highlighted by Taha (2011). He instead categorised proverbs under themes such as proverbs for advising and warning, proverbs on cooperation, proverbs on marriage and family and so forth. Yet, some of the themes for his classification is somehow confusing. For instance, one of the themes he suggested is 'proverbs used for advising and warning'. This theme is problematic because all proverbs aim at offering advice and/or warnings against the exhibition of unproductive behavioural traits. Therefore, instead of such categorisation, we suggest context-driven categorisation of proverbs based on the various aspects of life as suggested by the study participants (Table 3). This categorisation is endorsed by Alves (2006) and Funk (2002). They opined that it is essential to categorise proverbs for easy reference under topics such as agriculture, climate, water, etc. However, unlike these scholars, these categorisations (Table 3) offer more broad and all-encompassing themes under the various spheres of life.

Financial Management Proverbs

These are African proverbs that educate on how to efficiently manage the financial resources of individuals. The time-tested experiences of the African forebears in managing their monies were tactfully incorporated in these concise, wise sayings so that the future generations could learn from the wisdom enshrined in the proverbs. Some of the proverbs under this category have been presented below.

Money Has Wings

Money is metaphorically compared to a flying creature with wings. This proverb figuratively gives money wings. The metaphoric comparison between money and flying creatures suggests that the community members might have been exposed to the living conditions of birds in their communities either due to their good relationship with birds in their homestead or by their hunting activities. That notwithstanding, the philosophical import of this proverb is that when one carelessly spends or poorly manage his or her wealth. S/he would lose it, herein, meaning the 'money would fly'. Thus, it admonishes the need to manage the monies accrued from their business operations judiciously.

Money Does Not Announce How It Is Earned but Whereas Properly Earned Money Appreciates, Improperly Earned Money Depreciates

This proverb unravels the difficulty of knowing the true source of earned money. Granted, rich people give somewhat justifiable means of acquiring their wealth when queried. Yet, there are various ways of accumulating wealth. Some are through genuine hard work, while others are through physical or spiritual foul means such as killing for ritual money and earning riches through theft or corruption. However, Africa believes that it would appreciate and become perpetual when money is earned through suitable means.

On the other hand, Africa believes that it would undoubtedly depreciate when money is made through wrong or foul means. The one who engaged in it would be punished by the deities. This proverb is rooted in the cosmology of Africa that the deities would reward persons who led exemplary lives and earned their wealth through diligence and hard work. Whereas those who led lives of moral decadence and used foul means in enriching themselves would be punished by the deities resulting in the loss of the riches. This proverb warns against the desire to earn riches using foul means in African society. It extols hard work and moral chasteness as the pinnacles of a successful life. It frowns on the shortcut to earning riches through ritual or fraudulent activities.

Before A Bird Flies Off, I Have Counted the Eggs in Its Belly

This proverb portrays the insight of very skilled hunters who can tell whether a bird is pregnant and is housing eggs in the belly. This indigenous knowledge of the hunters might be born out of their vast experience in studying bird culture in their natural habitats. Thus, this proverb was formulated from the harmonious relationship between birds and humans. It unveils the foresight of the hunter in knowing of the pregnancy of birds' months before they lay the eggs. This foreknowledge is key in the planning of sustainable business enterprises. Thus, it educates persons who want to start business ventures to think it through well through strategic planning, management and organisation. This is crucial for the perpetual sustenance of the business enterprise. Therefore, businesses must be planned well before funds are invested, otherwise, those funds will be lost.

Nature Resource Management Proverbs

Nature resource management proverbs are concise, wise sayings propounded by the African forebears in educating community members on the importance of using nature's resources sustainably. According to Diaconu (2017), these proverbs offer practical wisdom on climate, nature, and the weather. They reveal the dangers of engaging in unfriendly environmental practices such as the indiscriminate felling of trees, unsustainable hunting practices and others that destroy the buoyancy of the various habitats of ecosystems of biological diversities in nature. Examples of proverbs under this category have been discussed below.

A Single Tree Cannot Stand the Might of a Strong Wind or Storm

Through experiential farming practices, Africans have noticed that a few remnants of trees cannot protect the forests and human settlements around them from strong wind or storm. Yet, thick forests can withstand all forms of environmental reprisals. This proverb underscores the relevance of desisting from the wanton cutting down trees in the natural environment. Granted, trees would definitely be cut down for human use, such as architectural structures. Yet, the felling down of the trees must be done judiciously. Only mature trees are supposed to be fell, and new seedlings are planted to replace them. Thus, through sustainable forest management practices perpetrated by this African proverb, the flora diversities are maintained.

It Is Better to Think of Eating Daily than Eating All You Have at Once
Living sustainably with the future generation in mind has been a constant feature in African communities' moral laws and ethics. Thus, when food is procured in the domestic home, measures are continually used sustainably. Some of the food is kept for use in the subsequent days. This is a common practice in many domestic homes in Africa, as there is a belief that the ancestors do come home at night to feast. The analogy between food and sustainability is here applied to biodiversity and sustainability. This African proverb admonishes members of the society to sustainably use the biodiversity resources nature not just for the present generation but for the future generation. The African forebears judiciously used the biodiversity resources out of selflessness with the future generation in mind. This proverb encourages the present generation to eschew all forms of selfishness and greed that often lead people to engage in unsustainable environmental practices.

The Sun Will Shine for the Dead Log Which Is Wet to Turn into Fuel Wood

Soaked dead logs, at first sight, might seem useless. Yet, when the water in it dries off due to the heat of the sun, it becomes relevant as fuelwood. Similarly, the plantation of young seedlings of flora species may not be given the required attention. However, when it grows, its relevance is acknowledged. The proverb highlights the importance of reforestation and afforestation practices as forest recovery strategies. Though nursery plantation may be a challenging and slow process without immediate foreseeable returns, it holds great potentials in the future for maintaining the flora diversities in a region.

Sub Section 2: Analysis of African Proverbs Using the Ethnopragmatic Method to Unravel Their Philosophical Meanings

In this section, some of the African proverbs collected for the study have been analysed using the ethnopragmatic method. The meanings of the African proverbs were constructed using a contextual analysis of the lived experiences and culture of the ethnic society where they were formulated (Traimond, 2015). The study participants saw an in-depth analytical approach to the deciphering of proverbs as an essential factor in disseminating knowledge on African proverbs to assist learners in

brainstorming their meanings. The youths interviewed admitted that if the mobile App for African proverbs provided meanings of the proverbs or clues for understanding them, it would have benefitted the most. The IK experts interviewed also said that it is good to assist the young members of society with the meanings of the proverbs. Nkosi (2016) agreed that for African proverbs to effectively play their didactic roles, their meanings and pedagogical values must be known. Mieder (2004) suggested that the meanings of proverbs are often dependent on their distinctive contexts.

More importantly, since African proverbs are intertwined with worldviews and values (Peterson & Coltrane, 2003), the elderly in the society are often their knowledge bearers. Finnegan (2012) admits that allusions related to proverbs are not obvious. Still, meanings are garnered when the stories and personalities in that culture are known. Therefore, with broad interactions with the elderly respondents and other knowledge bearers in the study areas and an extensive analysis of archives on African proverbs, an attempt was made to establish the criteria for interpreting the African proverbs on the proposed mobile App.

Example 1:

Akan Proverb: *Awotwe ank) dwa a ne nnwoma k)* – If Awotwe cannot attend a durbar (society gathering), his letter does.

Text construction: It is concise and simple, indicating it has a strong paremiological feature. This proverb follows what Finnegan (2012) refers to as the 'If…then…formula', which he classed as part of the miscellaneous forms of the proverb genre.

Level of Signifier: The text in the first half is denotative because its referring to a known person attending an event in the society. The second half is connotative because a 'letter' cannot literally attend a function in the society.

Cultural Context: This proverb is linked with a true-life event that happened during the rule of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's (Ghana's first President). A renowned scholar called Awotwe from Cape Coast in Ghana whose viewpoints were held in high esteem and sort before any decision was made in society gatherings. When he cannot attend, he writes his views on the agenda to be discussed and dispatch it to be read at the gathering.

Philosophical Message: If Awotwe was a learned person valued in Ghanaian society. Therefore, it instructs the youth to take their education serious and aim at becoming renowned scholars like their ancestor Awotwe. Scholars in the society must impact/contribute meaningfully to decision-making issues in their respective societies. It admonishes society to place a high premium on education for their members, especially the young ones.

Example 2:

Akan Proverb: *Kwakye ade efe a yede sika na eye* (If Kwakye's possessions are worth admiring, you should know that they are products of his hard-earned money)

Text construction: This proverb is also not complex but constructed in high brevity. This shows that it has a high level of paremiological characteristics.

Level of Signifier: The first part of the proverb is denotative because its referring to a live and famous person in the society. The second part is connotative because a 'letter' cannot literally attend a function in the society.

Cultural Context: Kwakye was a famous, hardworking businessman who built beautiful estates, companies and purchased luxury cars (Smiling Benz) in the then Asante Kingdom. Kwakye, through his numerous companies, employed many of his countrymen, thereby reducing the unemployment ratio in his region.

Philosophical Message: The proverb was formulated to remind society members to exhibit the spirit of hard work demonstrated by Kwakye in any productive activity to register success. Being an icon of hard work, society members, through this proverb, are encouraged to mimic the diligence he attaches to work.

Example 3:

Sierra Leone (Temne) Proverb: Kagbukekatapkaɔnɛsɔ nɛs (You start running by going little by little).

Text construction: This proverb is constructed using simple sentence structure in great conciseness. This means that it is high in its paremiology.

Level of Signifier: The proverb begins with a denotative expression common to life. Running is part of life and in the athletic fraternity. It often starts slowly and then becomes intensified.

Cultural context: Farming is the main occupation among the Temne people, and it's a difficult task. This Temne proverb is usually said when faced with a difficult task or work, like starting the farming session. But they believe that heinous tasks can be completed diligently and in smaller parts.

Philosophical Message: The Temne people say this to either encourage hard work or advice against laziness. Thus, procrastination is a bad trait that must be shunned by society.

Sub Section 3: The Potentials of Developing A Mobile Application of African Proverbs Under Specific Thematic Areas with Their Philosophical Meanings for Cultural Education

The study participants gave excellent remarks on the potentials in developing a mobile application for African proverbs. The elderly respondents were very excited about this initiative. They told the researchers in a focus group discussion:

'Many proverbs praised the exhibition of good traits and frowned on bad behavioural attitudes. Easy access to the proverbs on mobile phones will be very good. It will help the youth who are fascinated about mobile phones' (ELD-KU-PI, Personal Communication, 16/11/2018).

'...having the proverbs on mobile phones will bring them closer to our youth, and this would impact their lives positively as they did for us' (ELD-OG-FGD, Personal Communication, 5/12/2018).

Other elderly respondents raised concerns about the adulteration of many of the proverbs that their forebears instructed orally.

Therefore, the elders said that 'documenting the unadulterated African proverbs digitally on mobile applications will be a better means of archiving and preserving the proverbs' (ELD-MAK-PI, Personal Communication, 16/11/2018).

This implies that because the proverb genre is a product from individual and collective memory (Urbano, 2008) and passed onto generations orally (Xacara & Succi, 2008), the study participants were optimistic that the digital preservation of them using mobile applications would ensure that they are

conserved in their original forms for posterity purposes. The religious leaders were much concerned about the high moral decadence in African society. Thus, they reiterated that the good gems of counsel in the African proverbs on a mobile app would help society members reflect on their moral values. As a didactic tool (Onofrei & Iancu, 2015), African proverbs are repositories of the accepted moral standards in the African society and reflections of the worldviews and values of the African culture (Peterson & Coltrane, 2003; Gyan et al., 2020). They could be used as a premise for the moral education (Hanzen, 2007; Nkosi, 2016) of all societal members, especially, the youth as suggested by the study participants.

Conclusion

The study has shown the tremendous benefits of preserving and propagating the philosophical insights latent in African proverbs. Also, the categorisation of themes on African proverbs would ease the difficulty in their identification, study and application. The thematic areas expressed were financial management, natural resource management, leadership, development, motivational, religious, health and relationship proverbs. The non-existence of meanings of African proverbs provided by some mobile applications makes it difficult to learn the proverbs. Therefore, the ethnopragmatic method of constructing meanings that consider the text, cultural context and the import of the wise message of proverbs ensure credibility and validity of meanings assigned to the African proverbs. This is because it gives the situational aspects of the proverbs by showcasing their cultural and historical contexts. Moreover, developing a mobile application of African proverbs under thematic areas with philosophical meanings holds the potential to ensure easy access to African proverbs, especially by the youth. The study has shown that mobile App acts as a better digital repository and instruction platform for African proverbs preventing various forms of adulteration in textual formation and interpretation. Future studies that aim at exploring user-friendly mobile applications that can best represent African proverbs in thematic format (language, country of origin, theme), present its text construction, cultural context, level of signifier, and philosophical message. Such exploratory studies in the field of digital archiving using mobile applications in representing the African proverbs in a more comprehensive format as suggested via the study would make it easy for the proverbs to be used for cultural education.

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