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“ONCE THERE IS LIFE, THERE’S HOPE”: COPING AND COMFORTING STRATEGIES IN SELECTED YORUBA PROVERBS

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ABSTRACT

Yoruba proverbs are characterized by expressions aimed at praising, rebuking, encouraging and assuring. Extant studies on Yoruba proverbs have studied themes, literary devices, and psychological constructs, religious and cultural nuances, with a paucity of studies on how Yoruba proverbs can serve as comforting tools for people in bad situations. Therefore, this study was designed to identify and discuss self-comforting strategies in selected Yoruba proverbs, with the view to identifying the discourse issues in the proverbs, as well as the discursive strategies used to project comfort in the proverbs and their functions. Relevance Theory, complemented by Obohwemu’s Self-Comforting and Coping Theory were employed as the theoretical leaning for the study. Thirty proverbs were gathered and eighteen purposively selected owing to their possession of the themes of self-comfort and resilience. The findings of the study revealed four discourse issues of fate acceptance, resilience and fortitude, human vulnerability, and life lessons which index five comforting and coping strategies of emotional reframing, cognitive distraction, self-encouragement, mindful anticipation, and goal adjustment. The study concludes that Yoruba proverbs are handy instruments for psychological support, balancing and therapy in distressing circumstances.

KEYWORDS: *Yoruba proverbs, Relevance Theory, Self-comforting and coping scale*

INTRODUCTION

Proverbs occupy a central place in Yoruba oral tradition, serving as repositories of collective wisdom, values and life philosophies. It is regarded as the vehicle for which words are driven. They function not only as tools for communication, but also as instruments for reflection, guidance and emotional regulation. Such expressions embody self-comforting strategies that help individuals and communities to maintain emotional balance and resilience in the face of life’s adversities. Adeyemi (2008) asserts that proverbs are a potent instrument for the transmission of cultural, philosophical, social, and moral values. Proverbs also help in clarifying things further where direct interpretations/or meaning appear to be difficult to communicate or understand. Adeyemi (2005) puts it that the expression *owe lesin oro, oro lesin owe; ti oro ba sonu, owe la nfi wa*”, shows that proverb is not only the vehicle of truth expression, but also one that index dominant occupation and other practices which reflect day-to-day living. It could also be in coded way of communicating if per chance, some people are to be kept in the dark. With that, only the people with in-depth knowledge can infer what is not said from the said. This aligns with Ebim’s (2024) position that proverbs are capsules of knowledge embodying both surface and deep meaning structures. He affirms that they are an arsenal of linguistic fireworks which constitute a safeguard for elders to deploy important messages, judgments, and counsels. Among the numerous purposes, Yoruba proverbs often provide psychological relief and mental reassurance in moments of distress, loss, or uncertainty.

The Yoruba language is a Niger-Congo language spoken in West Africa. The number of speakers of Yoruba was estimated at around 40million in 2012 according to Wikipedia (Irinoye, et al. 2017:175). Ogunsiji & Olaseinde (2018) state that the Yoruba people can be found almost everywhere in Nigeria and diaspora, being conditioned by factors such as trade, industry,

marriage, employment. Oyo, Osun, Ogun, Ondo, Ekiti, Lagos and large parts of Kwara and Kogi are considered as home base of the Yoruba people. The language is spoken, among other people in other nations, apart from Nigeria, such as in Nigeria, Benin, Togo, and in communities in other parts of Africa, Europe and the Americas (Irinoye, et al. 2017). The Yoruba, one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria, possess a rich repertoire of proverbs that mirror the complexities of human experience. People pass through varying degrees of life challenges, ranging from disappointment, failure, chronic sickness, poverty, to death. These situations take toll on people's psychological and emotional wellbeing, and some Yoruba proverbs are handy to offer comfort and means of coping to sufferers. Embedded within these sayings are strategies for coping with pain, disappointment, or failure, ranging from acceptance and patience to hope and self-motivation. For example, there are proverbs that emphasise fate, endurance, and optimism, revealing the people's philosophical understanding that emotional strength is an essential resource needed for both personal and communal survival. Through these proverbial insights, the Yoruba worldview projects a deep connection between language, culture, and psychological well-being.

Self comfort and coping strategies are essential psychological mechanisms that enable individuals to manage stress, adversity and trauma. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) identified problem-focused, emotion-focused or avoidance-oriented as the coping strategies individuals employ in mitigating stress. Effective self-comfort techniques, such as mindfulness, cognitive restructuring, and seeking social support promote emotional resilience and enhance mental wellbeing even in the face of adversity and stress (Neff, 2011). Through adopting adaptive coping strategies, individuals can better regulate their emotions, reduce anxiety and depression, and improve overall psychological functioning. More so, self-comforting practices have been productive in fostering a positive self-image and increasing life satisfaction. This underscores the importance of integrating self-comfort and coping skills into daily life, as life is full of ups and downs.

This study therefore examines selected Yoruba proverbs to identify and discuss the dominant themes and discursive strategies in projecting self-comfort. By exploring their linguistic, cultural, and psychological dimensions, this study aims to reveal how Yoruba proverbs function as subtle therapeutic tools within Yoruba communication. This study is expedient as it contributes to ongoing scholarly discussions on indigenous knowledge systems, and the intersection between language, culture and psychology.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have been carried out on proverbs from different perspectives. Hussein (2005) analysed how African proverbs make a social and ethno-cultural construction of masculinity and femininity. He affirmed that African proverbs create and perpetuate gendered culture; and via Post-modern theory or power relationships, the different gender stereotypes were explicated. The study revealed that African proverbs reinforce perceived inferiority and submissiveness of the female gender, projecting the negative portrayal of femininity. Hussein's study considered African proverbs in general, Yoruba proverbs, the current study's focus, form a prototype of these.

Odebunmi, Oloyede and Adetunji (2010) investigated the pragmatic acts proverbs perform in Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*. Using Mey's theoretical framework, the fifty-seven identified proverbs perform the praxis of encouraging, assuring, scolding, justifying, persuading, challenging, praising, and warning. This study is similar to the current one as it examines proverbs and their functions, but different in that the current one seeks to examine the therapeutic importance of Yoruba proverbs, not in any literary text, but applied to real-life cases.

On Yoruba proverbs, Francis, Akanmu and Mayadenu (2023) did a critical assessment of proverbs which serve warning and advisory functions in Yoruba routine communication to facilitate peace and unity within the community. Through Yankah's (1989) theory of Proverb Praxis, the study's findings revealed that warning proverbs shape desirable traits, foster credible character development, and maintain harmonious social structure within Yoruba culture; warning

proverbs perform the role of exemplifying esteemed values and strategies for growth in the African (Yoruba) purview. Their study, just like the present study, examined Yoruba proverbs, though streamlined to warning and advisory ones; the present one considers proverbs centred on comforting and coping strategies and other psychological indices, during or after an adverse moment.

Similarly, Ademowo and Balogun (2014) researched into the roles of Yoruba proverbs in conflict management so as to enhance peaceful human co-existence. The content analysis of the selected proverbs made reference to the themes of warning, cooperation and diversity, and the findings expose the usefulness of proverbs in terms of conflict management, conflict resolution and development of a peace-loving mind. This study stands in synch with the current study based on the focus- Yoruba proverbs; though the current one seeks to do more by examining the coping and comforting strategies in Yoruba proverbs, which serve therapeutic purposes.

A comparative analysis was also carried out by Abua Ebim (2022) between Yoruba and Mbube PEOPLE of Nigeria on the use of proverbs. Through the theoretical tools of Hallidayan Interpersonal function and Eugene Nida's Theory of Equivalency in translating proverbs into English, the findings reveal the functions of proverbs as behaviour regulators and moral template upon which socio-cultural values are built. This study examined Yoruba proverbs like the present study, though the focus dissociates.

The reviewed literature have contributed to the study on proverbs, whether in the general sense or specifically, the Yoruba proverb. Themes, forms and functions of these proverbs have been identified and discussed with a view to the socio-cultural functions performed in the society. However, none of the studies considered how proverbs serve as veritable tool for comfort and coping strategies during hard times for individuals. This inquiry is expedient because proverbs not only warn, advise or instruct, but also establish human vulnerabilities to life challenges, and offer comfort and strategies to cope during those hard times in terms of self-encouragement and emotional reframing for healing purposes. This study will be beneficial to researchers on African oral literature/traditions, especially on Yoruba proverb usage, and of course everyone on how to utilise the instrumentality of Yoruba proverbs for therapeutic purpose during adversity.

THEORETICAL LEANING

Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson's Relevance Theory (1986, 1995), complemented by Ken Obohwemu's Self-Comforting and Coping Theory (2025) served as the framework for the study. Each of them will be discussed below, establishing the justification for their selection for the study.

Relevance Theory

Relevance Theory is proposed by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson (1986, 1995) as a framework in Pragmatics that explains how people interpret meaning in communication. It expounds that human communication is guided by the search for relevance which explains how listeners naturally look for the most meaningful and contextually appropriate interpretation of what a speaker says. Built on H. P. Grice's theory, Relevance Theory explains how language users infer implied meanings (implicatures) beyond the literal words used in a conversation. It suggests that communication transcends only the explicit information, but also the implicit ones. This implies that both what is directly stated and that which is meant but not said are germane to the understanding of an utterance. Listeners use context, background knowledge, experience, and expectations to interpret messages in the most relevant way with the least mental effort.

Relevance Theory was selected as a framework for the current study owing to its capacity to interpret words and expressions, derive meanings from texts, and how ambiguity, irony or metaphor function in communication, and in this regard, the selected Yoruba proverbs. It is also a good fit for the study as it links language, cognition and context to emphasise that meaning is not fixed in words alone, but emerges through language users' effort to find relevance in communication.

Self-Comforting and Coping Theory

The Self-Comforting and Coping Theory was developed by Obohwenmu Ken in 2025 after introducing the Self-Comforting and Coping Scale to highlight the scale's potential as a valuable measure for assessing self-comforting behaviours, their role in resilience, mental health, and wellbeing, as well as understand their contributions to adaptive coping strategies. Obohwenmu emphasized that coping with stress and adversity is germane to people's psychological wellbeing, and that several researches have focused on self-comforting behaviours which are considered vital components of adaptation. He confirmed that existing measures, such as the Brief COPE (Carver et al., 1989) and the Self-Compassion Scale (Neff, 2003) provide important insights into coping and emotional regulation, but that the SCCS peculiarly addresses the domain of self-comforting behaviors which is underexplored. He thus affirmed that no prior tool adequately captures the particular ways individuals soothe and comfort themselves during distress, explaining that the SCCS aims to measure the tendencies individuals' have to engage in self-comforting behaviors and coping strategies when they are faced with stress, distress and/or adversity. The scale evaluates various dimensions of self-comforting, such as self-kindness, emotional regulation, and resilience, as well as coping mechanisms like problem-solving, seeking social support, and cognitive restructuring.

The SCCS and SCCT captures 13 domains, namely: Perceived Stress, Positive Affect (Self-Encouragement), Self-Compassion, Negative Affect, Coping Strategies, Learning from Failure, Cognitive Reframing, Mindfulness and Acceptance, Goal Adjustment, Personal Rituals, Visualization and Future Planning, Reflection and Journaling, and General Wellbeing. The scale and theory identified self-comforting activities, such as positive self-encouragement, cognitive reframing, and mindfulness and self-comforting behaviors, including practices of self-compassion, goal adjustment, and seeking emotional support.

The SCCS is especially valuable and applicable in clinical, educational, and organizational settings. Clinicians can utilise it to distinguish between adaptive and maladaptive self-comforting behaviours, enabling targeted interventions for anxiety, depression, or trauma-related disorders. Researchers can explore determinants and outcomes of these behaviours, deepening our understanding of their role in resilience, wellbeing, and mental health. Additionally, educators and organizational leaders may apply the scale to identify and promote effective coping strategies, helping to reduce burnout and enhance emotional wellbeing in students and employees.

METHODOLOGY

Thirty Yoruba proverbs were gathered from a pool of Yoruba proverbs available in literature, but after thorough evaluation, eighteen purposively selected, owing to their content orientation to the themes of self-comfort and resilience and to avoid unnecessary repetition of ideas. The proverbs were translated into English and subjected to linguistic analysis with insights from Relevance Theory and Self-Comforting and Coping Theory. These theories have the affordances capable of teasing out the discourse issues and discourse strategies for self-comfort in the Yoruba proverbs selected as data. This is to examine the relevance of the proverbs to offer comfort in distressing situations, and aid access to the knowledge of the therapeutic relevance of Yoruba proverbs.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The findings of the study revealed four discourse issues of fate acceptance, resilience and fortitude, human vulnerability, and life lessons. These discourse issues are inherent in the proverbs for realizing five strategies of emotional reframing, cognitive distraction, self-compassion, mindful anticipation, and goal adjustment which serve the function of understanding growth and emotional strength during or after a distressing situation. The discourse strategies in relation to the discourse issues will be discussed via the theoretical frameworks of Relevance Theory and Self-Comforting and Coping Theory.

Discourse Strategies and Issues

a. Emotional reframing

Emotional reframing refers to the process of changing the way one interprets or responds to an emotional experience by viewing it from a different, more positive or constructive perspective. It involves shifting focus from negative emotions such as fear, anger, or sadness to alternative interpretations that promote calmness, acceptance, or resilience. It helps individuals reinterpret challenging situations in ways that restore balance, hope, or self-comfort. The discourse strategy of emotional reframing indexes the discourse issues of fate acceptance, resilience and fortitude, as well as human vulnerability. Essentially, it is a self-comforting strategy for transforming distressing experiences into opportunities for understanding growth and emotional strength. Two proverbs to show this are presented below:

Datum 1:

Bí a kò bá şubú, a kì í mọ ẹrù-ú dì. [If one has not fallen, one does not learn how best to pack one's load.]

Meaning: One learns only after one has erred.

Datum 2:

Òjò pamí, òjò pa ère-è mi; òjò ò pa ẹwà ara-à mi dànù. [The rain may beat me, and the rain may beat my statue; the rain cannot wash away my good looks.]

Meaning: Adversity will not get the better of me.

For data 1 and 2, a background case study of an individual who failed at an endeavor, maybe business, academic or career, can be used. Failure is an experience that saddens the mind and tamper with emotional stability. However, such an individual may use the proverbs to acknowledge and accept the failure as a form of fate (fate acceptance), establishing the implications of the inevitability of some life challenges, and showing vulnerability of humans to 'falling' and 'being beaten by rain' in datum 1 and 2 respectively. The metaphors in the proverbs imply failure, which serve as cognitive indexing to life distressful moments which can drain emotional stability. The second parts of the two proverbs, however indicate the reframing of emotions of the distressed to seeing the positivity out of the difficult situation. This aligns with one of the domains of SCCT- Learning from failure as datum 1 underscores the lesson of 'knowing how to pack one's load' after falling; and datum 2 changes the focus of being beaten by the rain to still maintaining one's beauty. This shows resilience and fortitude as coping strategies in moments of adversity.

b. Cognitive distraction

Cognitive distraction involves an intentional act of shifting one's mental focus away from distressing thoughts or emotions toward neutral or positive stimuli to reduce emotional intensity. This strategy helps to interrupt negative thought pattern that result from a distressing situation or sadness, allowing the mind to regain a sense of control and calmness. This is done by recalling pleasant memories and giving assurance of future victories. By creating a temporary mental distance from emotional pain, cognitive distraction enables individuals to regulate their mood, think more clearly, and approach challenging situations with greater emotional stability. This strategy resonates the discourse issue of resilience and fortitude, and life lessons. Four proverbs to portray this strategy are presented below:

Datum 3:

Omi ló dànù, agbè ò fọ.

[It is the water that is spilled; the water gourd is not broken.]

Meaning: A proverb usually used to console parents who have lost a child, or a woman who just delivered a baby and the baby died: the child is likened to the water, and the mother to the vessel.

Datum 4:

Èminrin níjẹni, ò tó iyà. [Being bothered by sandflies is no misfortune.]

Meaning: Whatever one's problems, they can always be worse.)

Datum 5:

Bí a bá ńpa èpo oşè, şe ní ńmáaá sanra sí i. [The more one peels the bark of the baobab, the fatter it becomes.]

Meaning: The more a certain person is misused, the more successful he or she becomes.)

Datum 6:

Ìkòkò tí yó jẹ ata, idí rẹ á gbóná. [The pot that wishes to eat pepper [stew] will first endure a scalded bottom.]

Meaning: Good things come only after great labor or suffering.)

Datum 3 can be applied to a situation where a woman delivers a stillbirth. A cognitive distraction is thus presented as a strategy to intentionally shift one's mental focus from the incident to a neutral one. The 'water' and 'vessel' are metaphors representing the child and mother respectively. The proverb offers a mental shift from the already poured out water, to the vessel which can still hold more water in the future. For data 4, 5 and 6, a case study of a man who has been having disappointments, say martially, can be used to analyse the proverbs. A cognitive distraction from the disappointment is presented to disemphasise the magnitude of the disappointment, to say that it can be worse than what is being currently experienced. For datum 5, the distraction is even a shift from the hurt to the resilience and fortitude being inbuilt through the disappointment. Datum 6 thereafter assures of future victory which the sufferer should focus on, using the metaphorical illustration of a stew pot being put on fire to enjoy the sweet stew, akin to gold which must pass through fire before being attractive. These proverbs align with SCCT domains of coping strategies, cognitive reframing, reflection, as well as visualization- as the individual's attention is made to shift to picturing a pot which has to be scalded to accommodate stew; the bark of a baobab tree being peeled; and the water and vessel metaphors. These proverbs establish relevance as both implicit and explicit meanings inherent in them can be adequately used to cope in trying times.

c. Self-encouragement

This involves using positive self-talks and affirmations to counter negative emotions and foster resilience. It is a coping strategy that helps individuals to remind themselves of their strengths, past successes, and ability to overcome challenges. During moments of distress, self-encouragement provides hope, confidence, and self-compassion, invariably reducing the feelings of helplessness or despair. By nurturing a supportive inner dialogue, self-encouragement fosters emotional balance and empowers individuals to maintain stability and motivation in the face of adversity. This strategy underscores the discourse issues of resilience and fortitude, and human vulnerability. Three proverbs to support this view are given below.

Datum 7:

Bí ó pẹ tíí, akólòlò á pe baba.

[However long it may take, the stammerer will eventually say, "Father."]

Meaning: With perseverance, the most difficult task will eventually be accomplished.)

Datum 8:

Bí ọwọ kò sin ilẹ, tí kò sin ẹnu, ayo ní ńjẹ.

[If the hand does not cease going down and going to the mouth, satiation results.]

Meaning: If one keeps at a task, it will eventually be accomplished.)

Datum 9:

Eşin kî í dani kî á má tún gùn ún.

[Do not refrain from mounting a horse that has thrown you.]

Meaning: A failure should not stop you from making further attempts.)

The proverbs establish human vulnerability to being faced with one challenge or the other, but still offers some comfort in dealing with life uncertainties. Data 7 and 8 focuses on an individual who has been failing at a task. Just as mentioned earlier, failure is one of the terrible experiences a human can have, especially a recurring one. The proverbs in them, however, reinforces the discourse issues of resilience to say that anyone who perseveres and does not give up will eventually experience success. The metaphorical illustration of a stammerer was presented in datum 7, someone who finds it difficult to talk, but still at the end will say the intended. Also in datum 8, the picture of a hand going up and down comes to mind, serving as a cognitive index to diligence and perseverance at performing a task. The direct and indirect speech acts in the proverbs portray the strategy of self-encouragement at doing whatever task. The SCCT domains of visualization, self-compassion, positive affect, mindfulness and coping strategies are evident in the proverbs to establish the strategy of self-encouragement in trying times. Datum 9 then moves on to present a person who has failed at a task, but being encouraged to make further attempts. This strategy of self-encouragement is essentially therapeutic and it gives emotional balancing.

d. Mindful anticipation

Mindful anticipation implies a conscious acknowledgement of the present challenges, possible future difficulties, but maintaining a positive attitude for a future endeavor. It plays a crucial role in coping with adversity by helping individuals to prepare for potential challenges with awareness, calmness and positivity. It encourages positive thinking without becoming overwhelmed by the fear of the unknown. Through mindful anticipation, apprehension is turned into readiness, as people learn to face uncertainty with minimal fear enabling thoughtful response, rather than impulsive reactions. The strategy reinforces the discourse issues of fate acceptance, resilience and fortitude, human vulnerability, and life lessons. Proverbs to portray this are presented below.

Datum 11:

Áyè kî í há adiẹ kó má dèé idí àba-a re.

[The space is never so tight that a chicken will not be able to reach its incubating nest.]

Meaning: No obstacle should keep one from one's duty.

Datum 12:

Bí ojú kò pọn ni bí osùn, a kii he ohun pupa bí idẹ.

[If one's eyes do not become as red as camwood stain, one does not come by something as red as brass.]

Meaning: Unless one endures some hardship, one does not reap great benefits.)

Datum 13:

Bí a kò bá jiyà tó kún agbọn; a ò lè jẹ oore tó kún ahá.

[If one does not experience enough suffering to fill a basket, one cannot enjoy enough good to fill a cup.]

Meaning: Suffering precedes pleasures.

Datum 14:

Ìşẹ tó şẹ ọmọ lógún ọdún, iyà tó jẹ ọmọ lẹgbọn oşù, bí kò pa ọmọ, a sin lẹhìn ọmọ.

[The poverty that has plagued a child for twenty years, the suffering that has been the fate of a child for thirty months, if it does not kill the child should leave the child in peace.]

Meaning: Perseverance puts an eventual end to all suffering.

Datum 15: *Ti emi ba wa, ireti mbe.*

[Once there is life, there is hope.]

Meaning: A living person still has hope for change.

The coping and comforting strategy of mindful anticipation is evident in data 11 to 15. They signal the acceptance of fate for the adversity that has befallen such individual; establish human's acknowledgment of the inevitability of challenges; encourages perseverance from the learnt lessons of life and anticipates a better tomorrow notwithstanding today's trials. Datum 11-13 present Visualization Domain of the SCCT where the linguistic items 'hen', 'incubating nest', 'camwood', 'brass', 'basket', 'cup' have both implicit and explicit meanings inferred from the proverbs. The background knowledge of the local hen striving to reach its incubating nest was presented in datum 11 to signal personal strive and struggles; with an anticipation of a successful end. The same thing with datum 12 which uses the camwood and brass to illustrate enduring hardships so as to anticipate reaping great rewards. The same applies to datum 13 which relates to having a 'basketful of suffering' as a pre-requisite for the anticipation for a cupful of goodness. However, datum 14 depicts a long-time poverty and suffering, which if it did not kill the child, the sufferer can anticipate eventual bliss. All these proverbs could be considered summed up in datum 15- when there is life, there is hope. This is a comforting and coping strategy for individuals in trying moments to anticipate better life after that tormenting moment. This illustrates mindfulness as well as positive effect for understanding growth and enabling emotional stability.

e. Goal adjustment

This refers to the process of reassessing and (re)modifying one's aspirations, plans, goals and priorities in response to life challenges or setbacks. Individuals, in a bid to comfort themselves after a distressing situation, resort to this strategy so as to forestall similar future occurrence. When adversity disrupts original goals, individuals who can flexibly adjust their aims are better able to maintain motivation and emotional well-being. This could be done by redefining success, setting new objectives, changing plans or finding alternative paths. This coping strategy aids problem-solving skills and it prevents frustration and feelings of failure that often accompany unattainable goals, promoting acceptance, growth and renewed hope.

Datum 16:

Bí iná kò bá tán láşo, eješ kii tán lé èékánná.

[If lice are not completely gone from one's clothing, one's nails will not be free of blood.]

Meaning: If the causes of one's problems are not removed, the problems will persist.

Datum 17:

İşę nşę o ò n rojú; tani yó fùn ún o ni oògùn-un re?

[Destitution grips you and you sit scowling; who will give you the antidote?]

Meaning: One should take practical steps to solve one's problem rather than sit around moping.)

Datum 18:

Bí iwájú ò bá şeé lş sí, ešin a şeé padà sí.

[If one cannot go forward, one will be able to retreat.]

Meaning: If a goal proves impossible of achievement, one can at least abandon it.

The strategy of goal adjustment is equally germane in trying to cope in difficult times. Yoruba proverbs offer this strategy to accept fate, but learn life lessons in order to grow and make future headway. Here, the discourse issues of fate acceptance, resilience and fortitude, life lesson and human vulnerability are evident. Datum 16 presents the mental picture of lice infesting a clothing, and the nails one use to pluck them off the clothing. The metaphor has implications for individuals going through problems, for instance someone who has failed an exam several times, using the proverb to keep fighting and working at possible solutions, meaning that one keeps charting ways to solve the problem, adjusting and readjusting as it demands. Datum 17 uses a rhetorical question tool to appeal to the sufferer's conscience of not scowling and brooding over his problems, but seeking solutions, as no one has the (metaphorical) antidote for poverty. Datum 18 thus provided a cause to re-route, to chart a new course, finding alternative path, all in a bid to adjust to the new reality. These illustrate Domains of Perceived stress, Self-Compassion, Negative affect, Coping strategies, Learning from failure, Goal adjustment and Personal rituals, all geared towards self-comfort and coping during adversity.

Implications

It is evident that humans are vulnerable to life challenges at a point or the other, and these challenges can have an adverse effect on individual's mental and emotional wellness. The Yoruba proverbs which have been selected, analysed and discussed via Relevance Theory and Self-comforting and Coping Theory have depicted the inevitability of turbulent moments in life, reinforcing the discourse issues of fate acceptance, resilience and fortitude, human vulnerability, and life lessons. These proverbs have implications on the sufferer as they offer strategies for emotional reframing, cognitive distraction, self-encouragement, mindful anticipation and goal adjustment. These provide individuals with means of coping with the present circumstance and offering comfort in those times. The proverbs acknowledge challenges, but that individuals should not just sit and brood, but cope through this moment to understand growth and anticipate a blissful future.

Conclusion

This study examined Yoruba proverbs which offer comfort during adversity. It established the functional relevance of Yoruba proverbs to situations people pass through, offering encouragement and support even as life teaches some (hard) lessons. Relevance Theory by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson. (1986, 1995), and Self-Comforting and Coping Theory by Obohwe (2025) served as the theoretical tools for analysis through which four discourse issues of fate acceptance, resilience and fortitude, human vulnerability and life lessons were identified. The comforting and coping strategies of emotional reframing, cognitive distraction, self-encouragement, mindful anticipation and goal adjustment (all Psychological variables) were also identified and discussed. The study asserts that proverbs employ metaphor to convey implicit and explicit information hinged on context and background knowledge. It aligns with Ademoye and Balogun's (2014) stance that Yoruba proverbs not only sensitize people to conform to norms, but also teach a method of expressing life. This expression of life also captures response to difficult situations which the proverbs offer. It also agrees with Adeyemi (2008) that proverbs teach method of expression of the realities of life with aesthetic flavor. This establishes the facts seen in the proverbs that humans are vulnerable to certain life challenges, but also cushion that reality with comforting and coping strategies to forge ahead despite life's uncertainties. Also, Abua Ebim (2022) assert that proverbs contribute immensely to character reformation, value reorientation and social redemption; this the current study also associates with as people in difficult seasons need reorientation to further chart their ways forward in life. Conclusively, Yoruba proverbs employ metaphors to project implicit and explicit information on how to cope and comfort oneself and others during life inevitable difficult times.

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