

The Socio-Linguistic Analysis of Tonga Proverbs in Selected Districts in Southern Province of Zambia: A Gender Perspective

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Abstract

This study looks into a number of Tonga proverbs that seem to be gender biased in the way women or men and their roles are portrayed. Data were collected from published source in Tonga entitled; Twaambyo Twa muchitonga (Proverbs in Tonga) by Nkamu ya Mukanzubo (1997) for grades 8 to 9 and 10 to 12 respectively. Other proverbs were collected from interviews from Kanchindu of Sinazongwe district and Macha and Mapanza of Choma district of Southern province in Zambia. Introspection was also used for those that were fluent and knowledgeable in Tonga proverbs. The theoretical framework was drawn from the contextual and dominance theories which encompassed masculinity and femininity.

The selected proverbs were grouped in eight themes, namely; (1) Man as protector of the home, (2) woman as immoral, (3) advice on marriage, (4) woman as the custodian of the home, (5) the unreliability of a woman, (6) the beauty and physical appearance of a woman, (7) woman as industrious and (8) advice on men and boys in relation to women. In this paper, the authors argued that in the selected Tonga proverbs, women are portrayed as derogated and uplifted while men are just uplifted. The findings were that most proverbs showed that Tonga women were evil, promiscuous, unreliable and a beauty for a man. The authors concluded that the changing world view of women was bringing more positive social roles of women. But the societal traditions and norms had not yet changed. In this instance, the change of attitude and expectation would require extensive education about the potential of women in order to counter the demeaning traditional views and values. The authors recommended that stake holders should be availed with financial and material resources to collect and document the Zambian proverbs to boost the knowledge of the people. Proverbs that teach tolerance, honesty hard work and individual worth should be encouraged. Future researchers should explore how gender neutral Tonga proverbs affect society beside the gender biased ones.

Keywords: Tonga proverbs, gender bias, Socio-linguistic, Masculinity, femininity.

Introduction

The Tonga, in relation to other African peoples, possessed a rich folklore tradition composed of mostly tales, proverbs, often referred to as maxims or folk wisdoms, riddles, euphemisms and poetry. Of these verbal arts, proverbs were by far the most frequent used in a number of ways for different purposes. In their daily

communication, Tonga often resorted to proverbs as one of the vital and most effective strategy they had devised to optimise the effectiveness of speech. Due to proverbs being frequently used in normal every day speech situations, the Tonga, like any other African community, assigned great importance to proverbs. Commenting on the importance of proverbs in African cultures, Stewart, (1997: ix), quoted by Mutunda, (2016) postulated, “The ability to use proverbs effectively in speech and conversations is essential to attaining positions of leadership and respect in some African societies.” Many proverbs attested to importance of this trait. The Yoruba of Nigeria claim, “A wise man who knows proverbs reconciles difficulties”.

The authors examined how women were represented in Tonga proverbs and how men were praised or uplifted. We also tried to find out how the socio-linguistic analysis of proverbs brought out the gender biased proverbs and their roles portrayed in this literary genre. We opened the discussion with giving a brief background of the Tonga society so as to shed more light on the people in the focus of this study. The second section circled around the theoretical review of proverbs on which the study was anchored. Some major definitions of the proverb, its functions, characteristics and gender bias were discussed. Then, the last section highlighted the findings from the study with its emerging themes that were identified. Finally, a concluding was provided.

Background

Language reflected society and society was reflected by language, hence there was always a relationship between language and society as it was a by-product of society. According to Ssetuba, (2002), proverbs were regarded as noble genres of African oral traditions that enjoyed the prestige of a custodian of people’s wisdom and philosophy of life. They also warned and advised the people in that society as they were culturally based. An Igbo proverb in Nigeria says, “a proverb is a broth of speech or it was palm oil with which words are eaten”, (Achebe, 1958), meaning that words soothe the heart as people used them. The quote highlighted the significance of proverb use in African societies. In Africa, the wisdom and sophistication of one’s speech was, traditionally, measured by mastery and appropriate use of proverbs especially in public interactions. In African societies that were rich and dependent on good oracles to transmit societal information, proverbs played a vital role in reflecting peoples’ cultures and traditions and were hence entrusted with one of the most important functions of teaching and transmitting ethnic traditions and moral values across generations. Lawal et al, (1997:637), stated that the ability to sum up ideas and experiences in captivating and succinct expressions had always been considered as a sign of native intelligence, linguistic competence and cultural erudition. Proverbs show that language is a channel of conveying not

only information but also expressions in terms of motives, attitudes and values. Tonga proverbs were, just like all other proverbs in Africa and world over, advisory, rebuking, warning, judiciary, reconciliatory and didactic in nature. “Proverbs were the analytic tools of thought; when thought was lost; it was proverbs that were used to search for it,” (Ssetuba 2002:1). The young and the old were the main target groups of the proverbs. This was because they needed the teachings and advice in both their trying period of adolescent stage of development and the knowledge proverbs encompassed for examination purposes. In the same way, elders were given counsel by their fellow elders when they fell out of way. A proverb could be used to remind them of the misdemeanour they were about to commit or had committed.

The study tried to find out if the assertions that Tonga proverbs showed were in line with the African and global view of the proverbs, hence, the Socio-Linguistic analysis of Tonga Proverbs: a gender perspective. The Tonga proverbs covered the areas of Tonga, Ila, Lenje, and Sala people of Southern, parts of Central and Lusaka provinces of Zambia as Simwinga, (2006) explained. Tonga was also the regional official language of the said areas.

Proverbs existed both orally and in print in the multitude of cultures and languages of the world. Whereas numerous collections already existed, several hundreds of proverbs were added every year in the whole world. Their uniqueness in nature generated great interest for various studies. In general, most studies consisted of paremiography, which was the commonest practice in the study of proverbs. Common in these studies was the classification and categorisation of proverbs based on discourse functions conversational meanings and uses of proverbs. Tonga proverbs were not an exception as they also added new ones to the existing ones when people used them (Mieder, 2008).

Some proverbs, however, seemed to show gender bias. They tended to make the male folk look more dominant over the females. The differences in the way women and men used language had to be observed by linguists. However, no attempt had yet been made to connect these differences to social structure or cultural values of a given society, here being the Tonga society, except for Mutunda, (2016), who looked at a case study of proverbs among the Lunda in North-Western part of Zambia. There had been a good number of scholars who had written about the gender biased proverbs in West Africa and partly in East Africa but very few in Central or Southern Africa. One of these negative uses of language as manifested by Linguistic gender variation was the semantic derogation of women through the pragmatic use of the language. Among the Tonga of Southern province of Zambia, semantic derogation of women was evident in the way proverbs were used. It was this semantic derogation of women and the uplifting of males that the researchers tried to find out what lied ahead in the socio-linguistic analysis of Tonga proverbs.

TONGA LANGUAGE

This section delineated the vital cultural facts with regard to the way of life of Tonga people under investigation in line with the purpose of the study and its objectives. According to Guthrie (1948), the Tonga was classified in (M64), found in group 60 of Zone M, of the Bantu languages, where it was the fourth language with three dialects, Tonga, Toka and Leya. In his classification of Bantu languages, Tonga (40/3/1) was placed in Zone 3 where it was a language with four dialects; plateau Tonga, valley Tonga, We and Totela. It was spoken in Southern and in some parts of Central provinces, in Chibombo, Chisamba, Mumbwa and parts of Kapiri-Mposhi in Zambia. Tonga was also spoken by the Batonga group of Zimbabwe, along the shores of Lake Kariba, Gokwe North and South, Nkayi, Nyaminyani and Victoria Falls areas, (Guthrie, 1948). The present study was concerned with the Socio-linguistic analysis of Tonga proverbs: A gender perspective.

Firstly, the Tonga society was one which was matrilineal in nature. That entailed that the relationship between mother and children continued in a family from generation to generation. Kato, (1978) defined matrilineal as a relative behaviour or other characteristic that was traced through a mother's lineage. Nonetheless, the Tonga community was a society dominated by male. Although gender equality advocacy had come on board, Tonga proverbs still remained the way they were before. Though a good number of the proverbs were gender balanced, there were some that were gender biased either towards male or female. Polygamy was practiced by some men and encouraged up to date. This made the society to also have the patriarchal inclination in the way the societal duties and traditions were discharged.

Secondly, a good number of Tonga people lived in two worlds. In one, they were committed Christians who went to different denominations, such as the Anglican Church, Seventh Day Adventist Church, Roman Catholic Church, The United Church of Zambia, to mention but a few. In the other area, they believed in ancestral spirits and the use of traditional herbs where Christian circles and modern medicines could not find the solution or cure. It was debatable point, but it actually happened where many Christians lived in two worlds, (Mbiti, 1991).

In addition, Tonga people were pastoralists as well as crop farmers. They were traditional cattle keepers as well as goatherds, as the source of their well-being. They also grew a variety of crops, maize being the main one. In these agricultural activities, they used a lot of proverbs to motivate, encourage, warn, praise and rebuke each other on the value of hard and communal work. There was no segregation in giving tasks as even the small boys looked after goats and calves that remained at home or in nearby bushes. Hence, the proverb became a very valuable tool to deal with the members of the community.

These cultural facts, as Hoult, (1969) expounded, fell under four key components which had been identified in sociological literature, namely; values, which controlled the other components of culture dealt with what a society attached importance to. Norms related to patterns of behaviour designed for individual members of society in particular situations. Institutions related to the divisions of society where values and norms were applied and artefacts were the objects that were produced from the norms and values of the society. All these components were largely relativistic in nature and they illuminated a society's systems, beliefs and worldviews. So the Tonga society illuminated to these societal systems, beliefs and practices.

Towards Definition of proverbs

For many centuries past, several attempts had been made by different scholars in order to give an accurate definition of proverbs. Nonetheless, still, there was no agreed definition of the term, proverbs. This was due to proverbs varying considerably, depending on the culture of a given society. But the basic belief was that a proverb was an agreed adage, "a saying more or less in a fixed form, marked by shortness, sense and salt and distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth expressed in it," (Finnegan, 2012:283). Okpewho, (1992:226) quoted by Mutunda, (2016), suggested that a proverb was a piece of folk wisdom expressed with terseness and charm. He said, "A proverb was a metaphorical horse in popular and approved saying which carried one beyond the surface meaning of a saying to discover the truth of ideas." That meant, it was an in-depth, carefully selected provocative thought which commanded, advised, rebuked or warned a person or thing to which it was applied.

Ngalande, (2015), expounded that a proverb was a condensed form of language current among the folk that society informed itself and future generations about the values, beliefs, cultural practices and life's experiences as well as benchmarks for good conducts. Ngalande, (2015), acknowledged the thorny issues involved in studying proverbs as the definition of proverbs was not done in a clearly, comprehensively and satisfactory manner.

The New African Bible, (2011), in the book of Proverbs, explained that Africans made use of proverbs copiously in their everyday life of speech and writing. Proverbs reflected everything that was done by man and his environment. They had a unique characteristic of being timeless. They were open to every culture and taught person how to live well as a good citizen, parent, worker, teacher or artist and how to live well with God. Therefore, proverbs appealed to all the areas of human development which included the art, education, science, socio-cultural, moral and technology.

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Semantics, as part of linguistics were concerned with the study of meaning by seeking to convey and classify human experience through the language, (Babatunde, 1999:70). Pragmatics was concerned with how people recognised the language in use and the context in which it had been used, whether orally or written, (Yule, 1996a:127). There were many theories of meaning which provided frameworks from which meaning could be attributed and inferred. However, this research had to concentrate on the theories which were in line with the study of the socio-linguistic analysis of Tonga proverbs: a gender perspective.

The contextual theory was the pragmatic theory of meaning which focused on what the linguistic form was used for other than what it meant, (Oyeshile, 2000:176). According to Ogunsiji, (2000:46), the theory stated that the most vital part about a language was its social function. Essentially, the theory maintained that a word or sentence would be meaningful only if it was used appropriately in some actual context. Also, Verbitsky and Kalashnikov, (2012) regarded context as the broader meaning, as conditions of interpretation of cultural phenomena and argued that certain cognitive problems could be solved on this basis. This was in line with Tonga proverbs that followed the context in which a given proverb was used or applied.

On dominance theory, the online library, Wiley, (2015), stated that social dominance theory was stable inequality in and among groups was maintained partly through the use of disproportionate force against subordinate groups. These two theories helped the researchers to propound the semantic meaning of words used as well as the gender perspective efficiently and effectively.

Pratto and Sidanius, (2006), in their Social Dominance Theory, argued that societies that had stable economic surplus contained three qualitatively distinct systems of group based hierarchy. These included; (1) an age system, in which adults had disproportionate social power over children, (2) a gender system, in which men had disproportionate social, political, economic and military power over women and (3) an arbitrary set system, in which groups constructed on arbitrary bases, that was, on bases not linked to the human life-cycle, had differential access to things of positive and negative social value. Arbitrary set groups might be defined by social distinctions meaningfully related to power, such as (in various contexts, nationality, race, ethnicity, social class, caste, descent, religion or clan). Such social organisations might help primate societies transmit skills, knowledge and ideas while also, transmitting roles and power, (Kawanaka, 1983). This research concentrated on a gender system in which men had disproportionate social, political, economic and military power over women. This hierarchy was in line with what Tonga society upholds, the Socio-linguistic analysis of Tonga proverbs: a gender perspective. Therefore, it might be worth mentioning that quite a number of positive proverbs were ambiguous in their interpretations. They

sometimes used cosmetic words which normally appeared in commercial, military, political and social vocabulary that covered the areas of human development.

SOCIO-LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF PROVERBS

Within the framework of socio-linguistic theory, proverbs could be categorised as speech acts in that they were shaped by specific socio-cultural factors within a given community. In proverbs, Hymes, (1974:53) stated, “proverb users must know when, where, why, to whom, how and for what purpose a proverb should be used.” Daniel et al, (1987) referred socio-linguistic theory as categorising proverbs as speech acts. According to Hymes et al, (1974), in their study of Black African American communities, a speech act was a technical term used in linguistics and philosophy of languages to try to understand what really happened when somebody uttered something. The theory looked at three things namely; i) locutionary act (the basic linguistic meaning of an utterance), ii) illocutionary act (the speaker’s intended meaning or force) and iii) Per-locutionary act (the effect of the utterance on the speaker).

The definitions of socio-linguistics, as presented above, are in line with what the current study sought to investigate as clearly stated by the objectives of the study. Therefore, it was vital for a speaker of a language to know what variety to use in what situation, how to vary style according to whom she or he was addressing the proverb to. It was in this regard that the researchers selected the socio-linguistic analysis of Tonga proverbs and ascertained their involvement in proverbs of gender biased nature.

Idowu Odebode, (2015), quoted Yule, (1985), who postulated that the analysis of discourse was the analysis of language in use. Language, however, did not occur in isolation. It was used in context and social situations. That brought about the interface of pragmatics and socio-linguistics. The former being the study of language in use in context while the latter captured the study of language in use in social settings. Therefore, the preoccupation in the present study was to do a socio-linguistic analysis of Tonga proverbs: a gender perspective.

PROVERBS WITH GENDER IMPLICATIONS

Gender was a multi-faceted word which was heavily contested. Firstly, according to Ginet, (2011), gender was a key element of social relationships often loosely linked to perceived differences between sexes. Gender relations were encoded in linguistic and symbolic representations, normative concepts; social practices, institutions and social identities. Secondly, gender was a primary arena for articulating power, intersecting in complex ways with other axes of inequality, like class, race and sexuality.

Gender, in its simplest definition was defined by Austrian Development Association (ADA), (2012), as the socially constructed roles given to men and

women in a society. According to (ADA), (2012), gender was different from sex because it was not biologically determined. While one's sex did not change, gender roles could change from culture to culture and over time.

Since Tonga proverbs covered areas of Tonga, Ila, Sala, Toka-Leya and Lenje, the expressions of some of these proverbs might be different depending on the locality of the speaker but still maintaining the original sense of the proverb. It was these proverbs that were gender sensitive that necessitated the study so that social linguistic analyses on Tonga proverbs: the gender perspective, were addressed. In reference to Matee, (2000), who quoted Cameron, (1994:227), she stated that;

“... Feminists must have faith in the capacity of language to empower as well as to oppress. Linguistic resources may vary often have been denied us and used against us, but there is nothing immutable about this or any other form of racism.”

The linguistic resources here were the Chitonga proverbs. In using proverbs to interpret the norms and cultural beliefs and practices, it gave an impetus for the researchers to look at the proverbs collected and analysed them as well as categorising them according to the way Tonga society tended to apply its beliefs and practices since they evolved from real life situations.

Women are oppressed throughout the world. Even in parts of the world where race and gender differences in education and other social achievements were said to have nearly disappeared, gender equality had not yet been attained, (Cohen, 1993:6). In a gendered culture, the religious, legal, political, educational and material institutions both created and reinforced expectations about how men and women should behave (Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1995). Expectations on how men and women should behave in their society drew the most fundamental distinctions made between people rooted in patriarchy. Women had been victims of gender ideology. This was the systematic set of cultural beliefs through which society constructed and wielded its gender relations and practices. This oppression was researched in line with the Tonga language so as to validate or refute the women's oppression through the use of Tonga proverbs.

Proverbs must be looked into the ideological tones they carried, as in the words of Morton, (1996:94), “to intervene in cultural practices in order to produce socially transformed cultural understandings.” In his paper, *The Politics of Queer Theory in the Post Modern Moment*, there were three types of language and gender analysis he portrayed. Firstly, men tended to communicate with confidence and air of independence to preserve their social and political status in the social hierarchy. Women on the other hand, preferred to be cooperative and less harsh to maintain high modesty which the gender related patterns of communication differences patriarchy required of them. They lacked the necessary air of competence, seriousness, directness, assertiveness, (Cameron, 1994a; Kramer & Fred, 1991). Secondly, language and gender analysis were related to overt social discrimination

against women in institutional discourse. It had been pointed out that sex-role stereotypes not only influenced the way one perceived the world, (Kelly, 1998) but also the positions in discourse one was allowed to assume. Smith, (2003), found out that women's language was uncertain or powerless. That implied that the gossiping, whispering and other aspects of women's trivial domestic discourse, (Kaplan, 1986:70), showed to a certain extent that women's language was uncertain or powerless. Thirdly, Gender and language were in the manner in which the society used language to communicate about the personality of women. It was not known to what extent Tonga proverbs went in their bias against women, hence the need to embark on the study and ascertain the extent.

Bolinge (1987), in his 'Language Rhetoric' propounded that the inertial mass of language was like the inertial mass of society. He further stated that women inherited their place as speakers inherited their words. That entailed that the language that was used in society was derogative and subjugative to women and uplifting to men. At one time, the women might stand up for their rights and revolt against the intimidation and then demand for equal footing in the society dominated by men. Hence the need to find out if Tonga proverbs had also the same line of subjugating and derogating women in the way they were used in Tonga society.

Gender bias was also a behaviour that showed favouritism towards one gender over another. Most often, it was the act of favouring men and/or boys over women and/or girls, though that was not always the case (Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Sociology, 2007). From the definitions of gender bias, it was evident that the female sex was disadvantaged over the male counterpart; hence the findings might reveal that scenario.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This report presented the findings and discussions of the proverbs which were identified as being used in the study areas of Kanchindu in Sinazongwe district and Macha and Mapanza areas of Choma district. The data collected was corresponding to the theoretical framework used in the study and findings made from the review of related literature. While collected proverbs were both neutral and biased ones, either male or female, the findings concentrated on the gender biased ones since the research categorically stated the topic as the socio-linguistic analysis of Tonga proverbs: a gender perspective. The majority of the Tonga proverbs were neutral; however, the few gender biased ones had been discussed. The findings and discussions were according to the study objectives namely; to identify proverbs in Tonga that were gender biased, to analyse the socio-linguistic functions of the identified Tonga proverbs, and to establish the extent to which socio-cultural values influenced the proverbs.

Daniel, et al., (1987), quoted by Ngalande, (2015), referred to socio-linguistic theory in categorising proverbs as speech acts. This was also stated by Oseni Zi,

(2003). They mentioned three areas to be looked into when one uttered something as; i) Locutionary act (the basic linguistic meaning of an utterance), ii) Illocutionary act (the speakers' intended meaning or force) and iii) Per-locutionary act (the effect of the utterance on the speaker), as explained earlier.

The proverbs identified were then analysed according to the three analyses including the gender bias ones as follows; "The basic linguistic meaning of the proverb, that was the linguistic elements contained in the proverb," "the literal translation into English (surface meaning)," "The actual meaning, which consisted of the deeper meaning in the proverb," and "Whether the proverb had a gender biased meaning and the effect it had on the one it was used including the ethnographic information related to the proverbs."

The listed research questions were investigated by utilisation of the views of 30 informants of different age, gender, education, occupation, ethnicity, race, caste and social status, and also, introspectively for one of the researchers was a fluent native speaker of the language. They gave proverbs that correlated with what was found in the written literature. The written literature that contained proverbs was of great help as it had some explanations concerning some identified biased proverbs. The researchers collected various proverbs texts from novels, readers, Bibles and grammar books, such as Nkamu Yamukanzubo, (1997), which had printed books on proverbs to be used in Grade 8-9 and 10-12 and other literature. Furthermore, the collected corpus was validated by using other speakers and informants through semi-structured interviews where, to some respondents, the semi-structured interview was turned into a questionnaire as those respondents did not want to be recorded.

THE EMERGING THEMES

Using the knowledge collected from the respondents, introspection and the literature review, the researchers generated and listed the collected proverbs in Tonga that were gender biased either towards male or female using emerging themes. Lisimba, (1999:47) explained, "a thematic category represented a unit of social value to be upheld as in courage and generosity." He continued saying that a social value attached to a particular category was proportionate to the number of proverbs it comprised. This applied to Tonga proverbs as well.

The derogation of femininity in the Tonga proverbs was asserted in the proverbs as existing in the proverbial expression of women as against men in the Tonga culture. It was found that there were considerable numbers of proverbs that demeaned femininity, especially those attributing undesirable character traits to women. Those were categorised through eight themes, namely; (1) man as protector of the home, (2) woman as immoral, (3) advice on marriage, (4) woman as the custodian of the home, (5) the unreliability of a woman, (6) the beauty and physical appearance of a woman, (7) woman as industrious, and (8) advice on

men and boys in relation to women. The gender neutral proverbs were left out as they were not part of the research under discussion. Since proverbs were not built from a vacuum, as Malunga, and Banda, (2004), propounded, quoted by Mutunda, (2016), but from repeated real life experiences, they were mirrors through which people looked at themselves and others through experiences of culture in that they reflected the customs, traditions, values, opinions and beliefs of a particular society, (Lee, 2015). These findings were also in line with the patriarchal society that the Tonga society subscribed to. However, not all the biased proverbs had been recorded here.

The Man as Protector of the Home

The findings of the study revealed that Tonga had proverbs that portrayed a man as the protector of the home, just like other African communities and world over (Oha, 1998). Manhood was an important aspect of Tonga society and it was valued in high esteem. This was due to the masculine dominance that the Tonga society expressed in such proverbs as:

- (1) *Mulombwana munyati*, ‘which may be translated as ‘the man is as strong as buffalo’.

In this proverb, man must not be afraid to do hard jobs which a woman is usually afraid of. The Tonga society regarded a man with highest esteem. Just as a buffalo is strong, the man must show his prowess in the way he does things and emulates a buffalo that is fearless.

This proverb had a gender bias against the women as society looked upon them as people who needed a man to help them to do challenging tasks. In the man, there is usually courage, determination, resilience and self-reliance. Society has stereotyped it like that and men and women should live by it.

- (2) *Musankwa ncoonde*, which may be translated as ‘the man is a thicket or thick bush.’

This proverb asserted that a man was strong and fearless. Just like people fear to pass through a thick bush, so, a man does not. He goes in the bush to cut poles for the house or to hunt animals for food. This meant that he should be trusted as a protector in the home. A thicket harboured a lot of dangerous animals and plants which were a danger to humans and other living things; therefore, when a man was said to be a thicket he was like that as well.

The proverb was gender biased in favour of men as it uplifted the man in the society in terms of his hard work and hard decisions that he made and being very strong. That meant, where the man was, there was protection, prosperity, strength and safety. This was in line with what Ssetuba, (2006) stated that patriarchy was social systems where much of the power rested in the hands of men who then took advantage and dominated all spheres of life both private and public.

(3) *Kozwa busu bana balalil*, which may be translated as, ‘produce food in order to feed the children’.

Work so that the family does not starve.

It was bad to sit without doing anything. It was closer to the English saying of “*Idleness does not pay*”. It is important that the parents looked after their children through the provision of the necessary basic needs. The children looked up to their parents for such provisions. Both sexes were referred to in this proverb. However, the tradition and custom stipulated that the man was the provider of food in the home and the woman was to cook the food provided by the husband. It was a reminder to the husband that he was not to sit idle but work to provide for the family. Without his hard work, then, the family would starve.

(4) *Muzingini akukomena mpatyolela mapepe*, which may be translated as ‘the cock breaks its feathers when it comes of age.

This meant that if you had a boy at home who was looking shabby and did not care how he dressed, when he changed how he dressed and cleaned his body, then people would know that he had come of age or he was joining manhood. The cock started to show its strength when it has started crowing and being closer to the hens and fighting with other cocks. This was what the boys did when they were growing into men; they tended to show their strength through wrestling or dating girls. They also showed it through doing muscular work, such as cutting poles, lifting heavy loads or giving manly instructions to the family members. This proverb showed the development of the boy into adulthood from his adolescent stage or teenage. These were the characteristics that males developed so as to impress the would-be female friends or actual lovers. It also showed that as men grew older, they grew stronger and wiser as well.

(5) *Kana kasobanya mbezo, mbukando mbokalibwenye*, which may be translated as ‘a child who plays with an adze knows that it has grown-up’.

In Tonga society, an adze was a sharp metal blade used to carve handles for axes, hoes, picks and other farm implements. It was also used to carve stools, cooking and pounding sticks and mortars, yokes, tables and other objects in the furniture line. If a child, especially a boy, was playing with an adze, the elders would conclude that the boy had known how to use it. This was also in line with the boy when he started bringing a lot of cases at home that needed payments, it meant that he trusted himself that he could pay or he knew how he would raise funds or resources to pay. So they would leave him and use a proverb that said, ‘when the child is playing with an adze, it means that it has grown up.

This proverb was gender biased towards males as they were the people that

played with carving instruments in Tonga society. So, when the proverb talked of one knowing how to handle an adze, it automatically referred to a boy who had come of age. He had become man enough to handle his own problems just as he was carefully able to use an adze to do carving. Grown up boys tended to do things on their own to show their masculinity such as reaching a stage of handling a snake without being beaten, (*Kusika acijatilo canzoka*), as Chitauka, (1967) put it. They showed brevity, courage and a sign of independence when they did such things.

These were proverbs that showed a man as being the protector of the home because the man was regarded as the head of the house and he should show his ability to protect the home through protective works at home. This was overlooking the role the woman played at home when she was sometimes the head of the house through her earning a salary or doing work that was money generating.

Woman as Immoral

This theme portrayed women as immoral. Womanhood was regarded as the one that commits adultery and not the man, hence condemning the woman when an immoral act had been committed. These proverbs that depicted woman as immoral had been outlined in Ssetuba, (2006), and Mutunda, (2016). Some of these Tonga proverbs include:

(6) *Mukaintu nkankuli kamazyu*, which may be translated as ‘a woman is a calabash of faeces.’

Faecal matter was dirt and distasteful. This meant that the actions of a woman were so distasteful that they could be compared to faeces. A woman could do anything in terms of love potions to make the man love her at the expense of other women. This would mean making the man eat a lot of dirty foods and receive a lot of dirty stories from the woman. Also, when a woman was a prostitute, she would get different men that planted dirt in her through sexual inter-course. Other Tonga speakers, following the context of use did sympathise that the planters of the dirty (men) were the ones to blame while others still said that a woman had a right to refuse when she does not want to accede to the request, and in that way, she maintained her dignity.

This proverb was also gender biased against women. It demeaned them as society looked at them to be second class citizens that were said to be worthless while uplifting the men. When a woman was in an adulterous affair, she would be more despised than the man that she did it with. This view was similar to the Jewish Religion, which condemned the woman caught in adultery, without looking at the man she committed the sin with. Jewish religion was patriarchal in nature and so was Tonga society (The New African Bible, 2011).

(7) *Maali nkapapa kamazyu*, which may be translated as ‘a polygamy is a bark of faeces’).

This proverb was similar to the proverb number 6 above which said, ‘Mukaintu nkankuli kamazyu’ (A woman is a calabash of faeces). The only difference between the two proverbs was that the former was general while the latter was particular in its approach. This was because in polygamy, there was competition among the wives for the husband. That was, with respect to who cooked, worked, and washed better, who was liked or who was better in bed with the husband. Even the number of children by gender might be a factor for competition. In this way, the wanting to be loved tempted them to find ways of attracting the attention of the husband towards them. They would do all sorts of evil in order to accomplish their selfish interests. This was also in line with the Igbo proverbs in Oha, (1998), where proverbs showed woman as immoral.

This proverb was gender biased against women as they were the ones being referred to in it. They were in polygamy and Tonga society knew what took place in polygamous marriage. This was because a good number of Tonga men were victims of polygamy and the proverb warned them to be aware of its dangers.

(8) *Nabwiinga talanduki kalonga* ‘which may be translated as ‘a bride does not cross a stream)’ c) (This looks good however, why numbering (c) as if it is another proverb when it is simply an explanation of the same proverb under discussion) This means that when a woman is married, she is supposed to live within the confines of her husband’s home. She can only go to the field, fetch water at the well, collect firewood but must be back at home for the rest of the day. Crossing the stream is going out of bounds from her matrimonial home. This may cause the husband to suspect his wife of being immoral because she is leaving her matrimonial home to go and meet with other men. (Check the font type and size that you have used here).

This was a gender biased proverb against women, as the society’s stereotype was that the woman was the custodian of the home while the man went hunting or fetched for what the family would eat. She should be at home to look after the husband, children and the home as a whole. If she began moving about, leaving her holy matrimony home, marriage could easily break. The immorality of a woman could not be pronounced without the immorality of another man or men somewhere else. But the Tonga society, being patriarchal in nature, put the blame on the woman. Because of this, the woman carried the blame of prostitution or adultery on her shoulders while the man moved freely in society.

Advice on Marriage

The theme of advice on marriage was one of the helpful themes in Tonga society and Africa as a whole, as Belfatmi, (2013), observed. The husbands and wives got pieces of advice from the elders through the use of proverbs. Some of them were positive to either male or female while others were negative. These included:

- (9) *Kununka kwambula nkumwi*, which may be translated as ‘the smell of the ‘mubula’ fruit is the same.’

Mbula or *mubula* fruits are wild fruits in Tonga land that smell moderately nice when one just passed near them and their scent was the same where ever they were found. Though they smelt moderately nice, people ate them and crushed nuts out of their hard inner seeds. This applied to men who wanted to be so promiscuous that they wanted to taste every woman they came across that the sweetness of the women were just the same. It did not matter where the woman came from or where she was found, the taste was still the same. The difference would however, be just on their sexual intercourse styles.

This was a proverb biased against women who were likened to a mubula fruit. The advice was on msen that they should not be jumping from one woman to another like a he goat, as the women were just the same. The men ought to be contented with the women they had at home and not think that those on the street were sweeter than those at home.

- (10) *Cikwangala tatunwi mpande yakwe*..which may be translated as ‘it is appropriate for the crow to have its ivory ring.’

If one was very rich, it did not matter what his appearance was, the riches were his. One did not need to look immaculate to own wealth but what he was still made him to be rich. The rich man might be married to a beautiful woman who might look inappropriate to the ugly looking rich man, but, he was still her husband.

This proverb was mostly associated with men, where appearance did not matter, but what did, were the riches they amassed. The men were the ones who were regarded as rich despite their ugly look. Some could even be wizards but people could concentrate on the riches that wizards had and even defend them in their wrong doings in the name of wanting favour from their riches, such as marrying a young beautiful wife.

- 11) *Kaulu kalaamutwe*, which may be translated as, ‘the small anthill has got a head.’

The anthill had a base but as it went up, it became smaller in form of a head, meaning the apex of the anthill. Regarding marriage, in Tonga society, and indeed other Zambian traditional societies, the suitors needed to go through the relatives of the girl to present their request and not just in the streets. The girl did not just drop from heaven but had the people looking after her or those that brought her up.

So, they needed to be approached as tradition demanded.

This was also a proverb that was gender biased towards females as they were supposed to be respected by men who wanted to ask for a single woman's hand in marriage. Men needed to go to the girl's parents as a sign of respect to the ones that brought her on earth. The bias was that of protection of the woman from just being collected from the street when she had traceable parents or guardians that could be approached for her hand in marriage. This was about marriage and the family in relation to a woman.

12) *Cikulukulu neng'anda*, which may be translated as, 'it is the old man that makes the house.'

This proverb was an advice to men who tended to forsake their first wives for the sake of the latest one in the home or community. The men in Tonga society tended to follow the English saying that said, 'A new broom sweeps clean,' but neglected the other part which said, 'but the old brush knows the corners of the house.' Though the new wife might be hyper-active in many ways, she might be inexperienced. It was that inexperience which needed the old wife. She knew the moods and character of the husband and could handle most situations very well. This proverb was gender biased towards women as they were the ones regarded as accommodative, tolerant and submissive. Tonga society expected the husband to live side by side with the first wife if he decided to marry another wife, hence, bringing in the issue of the proverb to advise him. They were the ones that made a house. They were the ones that made a home because they had the experience of what it took to be in charge of the home. The first wife was regarded as an expert in housekeeping which the man and the inexperienced new wife did not consider.

13) *Casowa sokwe, nambala bwezela*. which may be translated as, 'what the monkey has thrown away, Nambala must pick it up.'

The monkey is an animal that climbs trees, and in the trees, it eats good ripe fruits. So when it is eating up the tree, some fruit that might not be tasty to the monkey would be thrown away and other animals that were unable to climb would get what the monkey had dropped from the tree because it was useful to them. In the same way, the rich man could throw away something that might be good to a poor person and the poor person will pick it up and use it for his/her personal gain. On the other hand, a man might divorce the wife that he considered unworthy to marry but another man might find her very useful in the home and would get her for marriage. The marriage might even be better than what the woman had from the earlier one, hence what the rich person throws away; a poor person might pick it up.

This proverb had gender bias inclination to both sexes. On the gender biased proverb, the woman was the one seen as the candidate for dumping and picking up. When the rich man divorced the wife, the other man picked up the woman

because it was the man that decided to marry and not the woman. The woman had no say in a patriarchal society like Tonga society but only received the orders from the man which she followed. However, some women took opportunities where their fellow woman had been divorced by her husband to try their luck and they might end up having a comfortable marriage for they would have learnt from their friends who had been divorced.

(14) *Konalima Kaunda kanzinza, kwaalilikilwa cilakatazaya*. which may be translated as, ‘better to cultivate a field on star grass, to be in polygamy is difficult.’

In Tonga society, star grass was usually found in fields that had been cultivated for a long time. Immediately one plants seeds, the star grass would also have started creeping around the field. The star grass was difficult to completely weed out in the field and it made the growth of the crops, especially maize to be stunted. In the same vein, the proverb was talking about a woman who was not interested in polygamous marriage that though star grass caused difficulties, it would be better to have a difficult situation than in a polygamous marriage.

This proverb was also biased towards women as it talked about *kwaalilikilwa* (to be in polygamous marriage). The woman wished to remain single rather than force herself into polygamy which would be more difficult on her side. It was a choice that a woman made to free herself from polygamous marriage.

(15) *Kokwete buyo, musimbi tabuli nkolo*, which may be translated as, ‘just be married! A girl does not lack breasts.’

This was an advice to men who would like to divorce their wives that there were many men out there who were eyeing their wives. Immediately one mistreated or divorced his wife, others would come and marry her and even make her stay better than she used to stay at her former home. It advised men to be contented with what they had in their hands the breasts were the ones that attracted men towards women and hence all women had them and they attracted all men that saw and admired them.

This was a proverb biased against women; they were vulnerable in people’s eyes. The man who tortured or mistreated such a woman might regret it when she got married to a well to do man, such as a doctor or an accountant or even a well to do man in business. She might look more presentable than she used to be with the first husband.

(16) *Kona bula nyoko cikaintu kojisi*, which may be translated as, ‘better to be without a mother but having a wife.’

This proverb in Tonga society expressed the son and mother relationship that used to exist when the boy was still young up to the time he became a man. In the

absence of the mother through death or separation, one who had a wife would still find comfort in the wife. She would take care of the husband better than the mother for the mother cannot go to bed with her son, unless under satanic forces, which was a taboo. That was an extra mile a wife could walk with her own husband which the mother would not do, no matter how close she might be to the son.

This proverb was positively biased towards women since they were said to be people who cared a great deal about their husbands in their homes. If the wife would be said to be better than the mother to her husband, then, it meant that many things that the wife did could not be done by the mother. So the saying that goes, 'Better be without a mother but having a wife,' was substantiated in the sense that a wife helped the husband in so many ways and circumstances. The advice was given to a husband who tended to be closer to his mother than his wife.

(17) *Mukaintu ncisaka*, which may be translated as, 'the woman is a sack'.

A bag of mealie-meal, maize, or groundnuts, when one had used what was in the bag; a sack remained and became irrelevant. This was because what it was holding had finished. It could be used for anything one decided to do with it. That was, sit on it, dust the feet, sleep on it or throw it away. In the same way, a woman was regarded as a sack in Tonga society as Colson, (1996) explained. Her role in the society was child bearing and child caring. When those two were finished, she became useless. She might be divorced, ignored, neglected, mistreated or had to put up with a second wife. Her role depended on the man who was her husband, hence, just being called a sack.

This proverb was gender biased towards women as it degraded them to objects of manipulation and burden. They were laid at the mercy of the man, who could discipline both the wife and the children. This was demeaning to the woman who was supposed to be respected and supported by her husband. The advice on marriage presented in these proverbs was very cardinal in Tonga society, especially that most men practiced polygamy. Thus, the proverbs assisted both husband and wife/wives to settle their disputes in an amicable manner. However, the patriarchal nature of Tonga society made most proverbs to be biased against women and mostly uplifting to men. It was this scourge that feminist activists tried to correct. This correction needed also to be attached to proverbs so that the context in which they were applied would be in tandem with the societal expectations.

4. Woman as the Custodian of the Home

Women in Tonga society were highly valued as the custodians of the homes. They made sure that food was available, clothes were clean, the children and the husband were sound health wise, and thus, they were always busy. Tonga proverbs alluded to that state of women being the custodians of the home. But, their allusions seemed to be, in a way, biased towards the women in the context in which they were applied. Some of them had been exemplified below:

(18) *Bwami bwa ciluli mbwaanda*, which may be translated as, ‘the riches of the roof are the walls.’

The roof could not make a house without the walls. In the same way, it was the wife in the home that made the husband’s name and fame to grow. When the walls had cracks, the builders would say the house needed to be rebuilt because it would not last. It also applied to the home, if the wife had some instability in her day to day chores in the home, the home would shake.

This proverb was praise to the woman as the custodian of the home and the one who made sure the husband was up to date in his dealings. That was why there was an English saying that said, ‘Behind every successful man, there is a successful woman’. This meant that though the woman might have custody of the family, the one who got the praise, was the husband as the head of the house.

(19) *Kaniaania katukizya nyina*, ‘shitting, shitting makes the mother to be insulted,’ which might be translated as ‘shitting makes the mother to be insulted.’

When the children had stopped suckling, they tended to play around homes of other parents. Now, if a child was fond of shitting a lot, the one who got the insults was the mother who was said to be the owner of the child that was shitting anyhow. People would say that the mother had not taught good manners to the child who was shitting anyhow and they would utter unpalatable statements directed on the mother. Tonga society looked at the child who was naughty and the bad actions of the child were transferred to the mother. It was similar to “Mwana uutanwi utukizya nyina”, meaning, ‘A troublesome child makes the mother to be insulted.’

The proverb was gender biased towards the women who were given the blame even when they were not the ones who had done wrong. This was because the Tonga community took the one who looked after the home or family to be responsible and any challenges caused by the child must be attributed to the mother who advised and took care of the child. This was gender biased towards women.

(20) *Lyalanga lyakalya muncile*, which may be translated as, ‘the one who ate pumpkin leaves looks on.’

Some people did not say what they thought, instead, they would just show their feelings through their looks and actions. If one wanted to approach a girl or woman, he would just be making indirect speeches which might not be correctly interpreted by the woman in question. The earlier context in which it was used, as Chitauka, (1978) explained in ‘Tulengwa Twabasikale,’ where a husband was advised not to eat the fresh leaves of the pumpkins so that they could produce a lot of pumpkin fruits. But the husband ignored the advice and continued eating the leaves, saying that he did not mind the fruits. When the pumpkin fruits were ripe, the husband was salivating because of the taste of the pumpkins, hence the

proverb, “Lyalanga lyakalya muncile,” (The one who ate the pumpkin leaves is watching).

Men used this proverb when they wanted to give a compliment to a woman as a way of communication in a Tonga society. This uplifted a woman as a responsible person in the society as opposed to a man. Her heart softened upon that compliment as it happened in the past where the man still pleaded indirectly to be assisted by his wife who had the food and he did not have it at all. It was used in an elusive manner so that the woman would give in to the man’s requests.

(21) *Mbeba ntumbu tiinonzyi bula*. which may be translated as, ‘the mother rat does not sweeten its intestines.’

The rat shares its food with the young ones no matter how small. Rats usually get food from homes or fields and take it to that hole where the younger ones are and share with them. The same applied to a woman when she was given food at some place. She would either refuse to eat the food or carry it to go and eat with the children. This helped her to feel the hunger that the children might also be feeling. The hunger needed to finish at the same time with the children.

This proverb was also inclined to the women in the sense that matrilineal line held that the woman took care of the home. The man was just like a cock that fertilised the eggs and left the hen to hatch and take care of the chicks. The woman in Tonga society was like the hen that took care of the chicks. She would do her best in whatever way possible, she might do or where ever she might be, to think of feeding the family and not only herself.

(22) *Mwana uutanvwi utukizya nyina*, which may be translated as, ‘a troublesome child makes his/her mother to be insulted.’

This meant that when a child made a mistake or was troublesome, the mistakes the child made were transferred to the mother who bore the consequences. She was insulted by the society that claimed that she had failed to counsel the child even when she had been doing it. Sometimes, the husband also blamed the mother, saying, ‘look at your child’, when in fact it was their child, both husband and wife.

The proverb was biased against the women as they were regarded as the custodians of the children in a home. This made the man innocent in the eyes of the people as one who was not the custodian of the children but the woman. When something happened to one of the children, the first person to be asked was the woman for she was supposed to know what was happening to the children.

(23) *Ng’ombe nzyazyi tijisi lubilo*, which may be translated as, ‘a cow that is sucking the young has no speed.’

The cow was a very caring animal to its calf. When the other animals were rushing

for greener pasture, the cow with a calf would not rush but time the calf where it was and move slowly together with it to make sure that the calf was safe. In the same way a woman did not hurry in doing things as she was considerate of the children and even the husband she had to take care of. She had a social responsibility in as far as the family was concerned.

This was a gender biased proverb against women as they were looked upon as the custodian of the family, which included father, children and herself. Therefore, the woman was very protective and caring to the family. The society had ascribed roles for the woman which she had to follow.

In summary, the theme of ‘Women as the Custodians of the home,’ showed that women were really valued in Tonga society, as the proverbs had attested. Mostly, the proverbs here were positive on the side of the woman. However, feminists still want the freedom of the wives so that they are not just confined at home but should be free to explore the world around them as Smith, (1970) advocated. This was now being seen as paying dividend through the women’s organisations that were empowering them to be self-reliant. Working women left maids at home to do house chores while they were working at their places of work. The key point was to let society understand the gender roles and differentiate them from sex roles which would make it easier to reform the patriarchal society of the Tonga people.

5. Unreliability of Women

In Tonga society, discussions usually occur where women were portrayed as unreliable, hence unpredictable in their actions and behaviour. The society looked for ways in which it could justify their point. This was illustrated through the use of the following proverbs;

- (24) *Kapandigwa, kupa banyoko mukazyi nindavwu*, which may be translated as, ‘Kapandigwa, when giving your mother, your wife becomes a lioness’)

Kapandigwa was a person whose wife wanted her relations only. She gave abundantly to them. But when it came to giving relations to her husband, she became annoyed and aggressive like a lioness that was protecting the food for its cubs. The animals that usually chanced that food were the hyenas. To her relations, she could even give more so that they could keep for her to use in the future.

The proverb was biased towards the women for it was showing that the woman discriminated against the relatives of the man who rarely got anything from their male relative, the husband, while the relatives of the wife enjoyed very good hospitality and were free to do anything as they were highly protected by the wife of the home who happened to be their relative.

- (25) *Mukaintu ngu twayubaamwana*, which may be translated as ‘a woman is like hiding with a child.’

A woman was said to be loose-tongued just like a child and could say anything anytime without breaks. Hence the comparison with a child as it was purported to be unable to keep secrets or confidential matters. This meant that a woman was not able to keep secrets one could not hide with her if secrecy or confidentiality was to be maintained.

The proverb was biased against the woman as it insinuated that the woman was quick at revealing secrets or confidential matters. That meant, a woman could reveal anything under pressure. Thus, Tonga society weighs the woman's confidence with that of a child.

(26) *Simunvwa twabakaintu yakamukola lyoolokwa*, which may be translated as, 'he who listens to women suffers from famine during new crops.'

This proverb reminds men that they should not give too much weight or ear to what women say. Doing so would lead the man into trouble such as being attacked by hunger or getting into trouble. This was because the women were believed to be trouble makers. They were fond of gossiping and in their gossip, some lies were uttered which made the man feel lazy and reluctant to do a progressive thing.

This proverb was biased towards men who were being advised to take care of women's talk. Therefore, men needed to be careful with what they heard from the women lest they are duped. It is a proverb that advised men against the women. As result of these views, society tended to ignore women completely. They were neither consulted nor trusted even with issues which concerned them, such as control of fertility. However, with the changing world nowadays and Zambia in particular, the patriarchal portrayal of women as the weak sex, untrustworthy and worthless was slowly changing. There were women currently holding influential positions such as Doctors (from The University of Zambia), directors and Chieftainesses and government female ministers.

6. The Beauty and Physical Appearance of a Woman

In Tonga society, like other African societies, women were usually judged according to their appearance. Beautiful women, as Belfatmi, (2013) and Ssetuba, (2006), observed, were generally believed to be open-minded, more intelligent and were better accepted by society. Beauty was presumed to be the most important criterion to qualify for marriage before looking at other characteristics. Some proverbs promoted the assertion while others denied it through their applications. The examples of these proverbs included:

(27) *Kusalwa walubambo, wang'anda pe*, which may be translated as, 'you can choose a prostitute but not choosing the owner of the house.'

In this proverb, one was supposed to be a harlot while the other was supposed to be the wife or the owner of the house. When a man was choosing a prostitute, he

just looked at the beauty of the woman or her morphological make-up while when he chose a wife, the man looked at the character. This meant that when a man was looking for someone to marry, he looked at the holistic approach so that he could not be disappointed in the home and not just at the face, as the English adage says, ‘All that glitters is not gold.’

This proverb was also biased against women. That is, the men should also be cautious when going to choose a woman to marry. Beauty deceived, but work and behaviour exposed someone as her real self. When a man wanted to flirt around with girls or women, he just picked any woman around without much scrutiny because he knew it was but for a short period. To the woman in the home, it took a lot of time because the man knew that it would be a lifelong partner under any circumstances that might befall the couple. Patience, perseverance, tolerance and courage were applied. This made a character of a person.

(28) *Mubotu takabuli abula kubba walowa*, which may be translated as, ‘the pretty person has some defects. If not stealing, it is witchcraft.’

It also says, ‘All that glitters is not gold.’ A person’s beauty might cover a multitude of sins and faults. In Tonga society, a beautiful woman would attract a lot of attention but when it came to marrying her, the husbands’ relatives would find out seriously about the beautiful lady’s conduct and would use this proverb, “*Mubotu takabuli abula kubba walowa*”, to justify their point of rejection or scrutiny.

Although the proverb seemed to be general, the emphasis of the proverb was on men. That is, men should not just look at the beauty of women, for if they did, it would deceive them when they were looking for someone to marry. They must be very careful when choosing a suitor.

(29) *Musimbi ni mpande yakusama*, ‘which may be translated as ‘a girl is an ivory ring to wear.’

According to Tonga customs and traditions, they believed that a girl child was very fast at bringing riches to the father at the time of getting married. When a husband produced girls through his wife, he had faith and hope that he would have a lot of wealth because the girls would be married and would bring in wealth in form of cash or animals. But for the boys, they would take it away when they got married through paying dowry to their wives’ parents. So the parents would boast that they had wealth through naming one of the born children as ‘Nzinji Ng’ombe!’ which meant, ‘There were plenty of cattle.’ An ivory ring is expensive, so the girl child was also considered to be as expensive as the ivory ring that was worn.

This proverb of saying the girl was an ivory ring to wear was gender biased towards females as the women were compared to be objects that were to be sold and brought wealth to the father. The males were there to use what the women had

brought in through their dowry payments. That gave the husband pride since he knew that he would get rich as soon as the daughters that he had produced through his wife got married and the dowry was paid.

(30) *Ndisubilila balitala*, which may be translated as, ‘the brightness is for those that stay across the river or she is beautiful to the ones across.’

When a woman is beautiful, those nearby do not panic to look at her beauty and admire it due to the unwarranted habits that they might know. But those across the stream would be attracted and rush for a good catch, not knowing what lied under that beauty. They did not know her character but judged her from her beauty and declared her to be a good girl or woman. The proverb then, could be translated, “It is beautiful to those across the stream!” (*Ndisubilila balitala!*)

On the side of women, in a literal sense, the proverb was gender biased against them as it made the men look at the beauty of a woman as of little value since their character was associated with not how beautiful they appeared, but the closest society looked even deeper than what the external appearance showed on the woman. The neighbouring society would look at the surface value of the woman and get attracted for they did not know her habits. But those that knew her would say, ‘let them take her away we have had no dealings with her!’

To conclude the theme, women were still treasured for their beauty and people still consulted the elders and accepted their views. Those that took it their own way usually had adverse consequences and ended up regretting having taken their own way. Beauty was not the only criterion but other requirements had to be attended to.

7. Woman as Industrious

Tonga proverbs often depicted that a legendary woman of great courage and assertiveness, was one who was ready to challenge and measure up to the heights of men in being industrious. That made her be respected and admired by men and fellow women. But, usually, the respect and praise was attributed to masculinity, as Balogun, (2010) and Ssetuba, (2006) attested to it. Thus, a woman who had striven to act like a man in character and achievements was regarded as industrious.

(31) *Mukaintu muunda*, which may be translated as, ‘a woman is a field.’

The Tonga people were agricultural in nature. They knew the value of a field, that it had different kinds of produce. That produce could be in the form of maize, groundnuts, cane sugar, vegetables, fruits and other farm produce that the people could feed on. In the same way, a woman was said to be a field because she gave life to the family. She gave food, clothing, counsel and comfort to the young ones and even elders as well as the husband. So, the woman had to be respected because she gave livelihood to the family, just like the field gave a lot of things to the community.

This proverb was gender biased towards the women as they were compared to

a field which could give maize, groundnuts, sweet potatoes, vegetables, and other food stuffs that could feed the family. The woman could also give a variety of things both materially, mentally, psychologically and spiritually.

(32) *Shimbi-lombe*, which may be translated as, ‘half woman and half man or a woman who is a man.’

Shimbi was a woman and *lombe* signified a man. In Tonga society, this was a woman whose characteristics were not those of a woman in prowess and fame but portrayed those of a man. She could even beat the men in a fight or challenge them through an elders’ meeting or family gathering through better articulation of points than the men. Due to male chauvinism, society said she had gone beyond what the woman could think in terms of prowess and fame and so, she was a woman who was a man in action and thoughts; *Shimbi-Lombe*.

This proverb was gender biased against women as it insinuated that a woman could not rise to the occasion that a man rose. It was like a challenge to men and they felt she had become a man in what she said or did, despite her physical appearance that still showed her to be a woman. Her characteristics made her outstanding in the society of male dominance that she was able to be counted among men.

The woman, apart from being the custodian of the home, was also very industrious and she always liked to make ends meet so that food and comfort for the husband as well as the children was maintained. Tonga proverbs that praised the woman were very categorical and contextually used, just like the Igbo and the Yoruba were in West Africa, (Ssetuba, 2006 and Balogun, 2010). The only drawback was that the proverbs that talked about women’s prowess were very few compared to those that praised men. Thus, society must iron out the discrepancy by producing new proverbs to advantage women in speech as well.

8. Advice on men and boys

As women and girls were advised through marriage and initiation respectively, men and boys were also counselled through the gatherings where men sat to do manly jobs such as making houses, making or repairing kraals and village council gatherings. They were given the assurance of being the protectors of their families and also being the dominant sex in Tonga society through proverbs. They were given proverbs that would make them not worry much about the women but to be careful with them. These proverbs included:

(33) *Cibanda cifwa banyama ncimwi*, which may be translated as, ‘the plain where the animals are killed is one.’

Where people went to hunt in the plains, and they had a kill, they would not stop

going there because they always had some animals. That meant, it was a good hunting area and hunters could continue going to that area to hunt. In the same way, if the young man who went looking for a woman to marry and found one who was very beautiful and had a good character, other young men would also follow the same route to go and make their choices and get married because the girls worth marrying were there. Thus, the area where good girls were plenty, was a village which was like a plain with a lot of animals where people went to hunt. They would choose the girls with good characters and behaviour, in addition to their appearance, to take them for marriage.

This proverb was biased towards the women. Here, the Tonga society likened the woman to a plain where a man went for a hunting spree and he took his pick or choice as he hunted for the food of the stomach. When he succeeded in getting a kill, others would follow suit. This was because that was an area where good women of character and virtue were found; hence the people, who were men, went to have their golden chance fulfilled.

(34) *Dombe kumbila! Bubi bwadombe nkubba*, which may be translated as, ‘big boy request! The badness of a boy is stealing.’

The proverb differentiated between a big boy and a small one in its literal sense. A piece of advice being given to the grown up boys in Tonga society that they should not think that just because they had grown up, they could be taking things without permission. They needed to ask from the owners, who were the parents. It was also bad for a big boy to be found stealing. The proverb was in line with the saying in the Bible that says, “Ask and it shall be given unto you!” (Matthew 7:7).

This proverb directed itself on the young male folks that, as the custodians of wisdom and customs, they were supposed to be behaving like those who would be elders soon. They should not do things through impulse but judge their actions to suit the societal norms and customs, where a man was respected as the head of the house and not a cheap thief in the street.

(35) *Nyeele mpya ibambula mulomo*, which may be translated as, ‘the new flute hurts the mouth.’

This proverb reminds people not [to get excited when they saw something new. Do not shun the old for the new things might hurt or bruise you. The society of the Tonga knew that men who wanted new wives tended to abandon or neglect the women they have been with for years. Thus, to advise them, they gave the proverb as a warning to the men to take care of their wives that they married earlier.

This proverb was mainly inclined to the men who wanted to get latest girls or women friends in the community that they might end up being disappointed or in trouble. Thus, the proverb was biased against men as they were usually the ones

that took new girlfriends.

In summary, the eight themes identified might not be the only ones as another scholar might think of a different socio-pragmatic analysis of the Tonga proverbs using different themes but driving the same point home. This is because the Tonga language is dynamic, just like other languages are. The eight themes of gender biased proverbs had been adequately exemplified following the respondents' views and the introspection of the researcher. The proverbs had shown that gender biased proverbs had either a negative or a positive reaction to the one the proverb was used about and also to the user. The cultural norms and traditions made the society continue perpetuating them. But society is also embracing the feminist approaches of gender advocacy. This is what the advocacy needs to address, even the way proverbs are used in society.

CONCLUSION

In the gender biased proverbs of the Tonga society, it had been concluded that there were more negative gender biased proverbs against women than there were positive ones. These negative proverbs against women were used by men when they want to demean women or debase them. Because of their negativity, they were capable of influencing the woman to be submissive to the man. On the other hand, the researchers had concluded that men had been portrayed as positive, hence, uplifting their standards in society to be dominant over a woman. This needed concerted efforts of finding out how the woman could be uplifted through the use of proverbs. It had also been found out that feminist activists were trying to lobby for gender equity as envisaged in the appointments of government and parastatal companies executive officers, where women have been given higher positions. For the first time in Zambian politics, female Vice Presidents had been appointed. These appointments showed the general public's will to incorporate women in decision making positions. What remained was the cultural will to do the same through the proverbs.

Recommendations

The authors recommended that stake holders should be availed with financial and material resources to collect and document the Zambian proverbs to boost the knowledge of the people. They also recommended that proverbs that teach tolerance, honesty, hard work and individual worth should be encouraged.

The recommendation is that future researchers should explore how gender neutral Tonga proverbs affect society beside the gender biased ones.

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