

# A Social Pragmatic Study of Selected Women Sex-Related Yorùbá Proverbs Translated in English

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Article information	Abstract
DOI : 10.25077/jds.2.1.1-15.2025 Correspondence : <a href="mailto:onipedefestusmos@gmail.com">onipedefestusmos@gmail.com</a>	<p>Language performs important social functions. Language serves as a means of passing along a people’s culture from one generation to the next. The Yoruba people are well renowned for having a strong oral tradition and cultural inheritance, particularly with regard to the use of proverbs. Studies have also looked into how Yoruba proverbs contribute to the contradictions in gender roles in the region. Research has also examined the ways in which gender roles in the area are contradicted by Yoruba proverbs. The majority of research on Yoruba proverbs has been on their semantic structures, categories, and uses in interpersonal and conflict resolution communication. The goal of this research is to better understand the situations in which women’s gender is inaccurately portrayed by looking at the ideologies that underlie the poor representations of women in proverbs and the most prevalent illocutionary actions used to spread these unfavourable impressions. The Yorùbá proverbs (Olawole, 1998, Olojede, 2012, Olasupo et al. 2012, Owomoyela, 2005, Ademowo and Balogun, 2015, interview) were culled down to a selection of nineteen proverbs. Because proverbs are contextualised in Yoruba culture, the study incorporates context, which is a component of Lawal’s pragmatic theory from 2012. The six philosophical background levels and the Yoruba worldview are taken into consideration when analysing the work. These include the levels of context, language, psychology, cosmology, sociology, and society. The findings demonstrated that instances of illocutionary behaviour included confirming, warning, claiming, saying, forecasting, admonishing, and judging. When males feel they have harmed their female counterparts, they use proverbs to accentuate their views. This is the overall context in which these sayings are used. These sayings are meant to dissuade women from having original thought processes. Declarative illocutionary acts are a common indicator of male dominance over female counterparts. As a result, proverbs that originate from Yoruba cultural concepts reinforce the derogatory portrayal of women.</p>
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## INTRODUCTION

Proverbs are a useful tool while giving a speech in public and can assist clarify any argument’s murky areas. A unique affinity for language, imagery, and the use of compressed and suggestive phraseology to convey abstract concepts is evident in many African civilizations (Finnegan, 1970, p. 390). Language would be like a body without a soul, or a skeleton without flesh, if proverbs didn’t exist. They are employed to help explain complex ideas or concepts in simpler terms. In Africa as well as other regions of the world, proverbs are used by people to make their communication more clear and semantically sound.

Women have always been marginalised in Yorubá society, and this has continued until the present era. Furthermore, women’s marginalisation is evident in every aspect of their existence. Yorùbá women are restricted to the roles of domesticity, marriage, and motherhood and are subject to the dominance and power of men (Marjorie, 2009, p.13). In Nigeria, men are the ones assigned to the most important roles. In Nigerian politics, the only position available to women is deputy governor (Ogun State is a good example). It is also seen at Yorùbá Monastery, where women are only allowed to hold positions of regent

authority until a new monarch is crowned. By now, we should be inquisitive enough to investigate why women's gender is portrayed negatively in a culture dominated by men and how the Yorùbá proverbs deal with this problem. Consequently, this study incorporates several Yorùbá proverbs to demonstrate the linguistic and social milieu in which gender proverbs related to women are utilised. One such saying is Awo egungun lobinrin le se, awo gelede lobinrin le mo, t'obinrin ba fo ju doro, oro agbee, which indicates that women are limited to membership in the covert cults of Gelede and Masquerade; should they venture to participate in Oro's religion, Oro would eat them alive. This means that there is a certain role exclusively reserved for men, while the minor ones are reserved for women counterparts.

Proverbs are intelligent, philosophical statements that highlight the knowledge of the Yorùbá people of West Africa, particularly those in southwest Nigeria. The significance of Proverbs transcends their literal sense (Sotunde, 2009a). The proverb is orally transmitted from one generation to the next. According to Onyemelukwe (2004, p. 14), proverbs are "...a popular expression which succinctly conveys truth and wisdom with a view to teach, praise, commend, advice, correct, indict, warn, rebuke or castigate a person, or denounce, reprimand or condemn an undesirable act, behaviour or a vice." She also carefully analyses six randomly selected proverbs from Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* using a functional linguistics method. Her analysis focuses on how the interlocutors' statements are understood in their immediate and larger contexts. According to her opinion, proverbial language mirrors the ethnic group's culture, values, and ideas since it is used by users in the mimetic world. Without a doubt, this is the study's position.

Proverbs address every facet of the human experience and are said to mirror a people's worldview, or philosophy of life, according to Surakat (2000). The nature and/or context of a given people's wise sayings are determined by a number of social, psychological, and ecological elements, even though proverbs have a universal shape. Proverbs are the horses that words ride, according to the Yoruba, and proverbs are utilised to find and retrieve missing words. Put differently, proverbs explain statements by delving deeper than their obvious form and content. A common feature of proverbs is their meticulous construction, which employs a range of linguistic techniques to bolster the fundamental ideas they wish to express.

Gender refers to separation of society into biological, occupational, and social roles is another way to put it. These include participation in a variety of domestic and public life activities, politics, community management, reproduction, and production (Aina 2006, p.1). Feminist discourses in the West claim that this global understanding of women and gender exists. However, other scholars with an African background have challenged this idea, arguing that gender is a socio-cultural construct whose meaning cannot be understood outside of certain cultural circumstances. In this sense, Oyewunmi's thesis is intriguingly relevant. According to her, the main task of African gender studies is to reconsider the two fundamental categories of woman and gender, avoiding the application of Western feminist meanings and conceptions in the process of trying to understand African realities.

The gender difference in Africa is the reason why males regard themselves as the dominant gender. Whether by social constructionism or biological determinism, the Yorùbá society of today is patriarchal and favours masculinity over femininity. Thus, feminists have been able to carry out multidimensional, intersectional activities (Olofintuade, 2017; Akinpelu 2021; Akinbobola, 2019). Generally, a Yorùbá woman is a source of remarkable prestige that arouses envy, privilege, esteem, and admiration. This research attempts to contribute to the conversation on gender dynamics in Yorùbá society by examining the way women are portrayed in those proverbs. It also seeks to examine feminist ideology amid Africa's massive uptake of Western gender identities. By looking at how indigenous Yorùbá culture marginalized the women.

Adegbola (2021) uses Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and Feminine Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) to analyse how women are metaphorically portrayed in Yoruba proverbs and the ideological implications of these representations. The results show that society has a poor perception of women. Similar to this, Adekunle and Mordi (2021) used feminine lexis as the database to analyse 20

Yoruba proverbs about female characteristics in sociocultural contexts. In addition to the referential and contextual theories of meaning, pragmatic theories of inference and context are used to analyse the data. The results show that Yoruba proverbs are used to depict the personalities of Yoruba women in cultural development, as well as to instruct, warn, or chastise them and to display the qualities of Yoruba women. Yakubu (2012) examines Yorùbá proverbs related to women's temperament. The findings revealed that those proverbs are created by men to marginalize women counterparts.

In Asiyabola's 2007 study, Yorùbá proverbs pertaining to women are translated into English and analysed utilising a methodical, structural, and conservative language approach. According to the study's findings, proverbs are useful reminders for both men and women. In contrast, Yusuf (1998) examines gender bias and cumulative sexism in Yoruba and English proverbs. According to the findings, Yoruba is most likely sexist in English and shares many traits with sexists in England. Other scholarly works on Yoruba proverbs include Bámgbóšé (1968), Olábodé (1981), Òjó-Adé (1983), Olátúnjí (1984), Yusuf (1994), Adébowálé (1994, 2011), Raji-Oyelade (1999), Olátejú (1999), Adékeye (2001), Agbájé (2005), Oṣṣoba (2005), Sheba (2006); Adélékè (2009), Adéjumo (2009), Adéyemí (2009), Olújinní (2012), and Òjó (2015).

This study used Lawal's (2012) Aspects of Pragmatic Theory. At the linguistic level, utterances are produced. Language has deeply ingrained phonological, morphological, syntactic, lexical, and semantic features. The linguistic level is followed in a hierarchical order by the social, psychological, linguistic, and cosmological levels. The six levels are supplemented with symmetrical competency divides and compelling scenarios. Stated differently, each layer found in the contexts (first column) aligns with the talents (second column). After the linguistic layer, situational context, and competency, Omoniyi Friday-Otun (2016, p. 61) states that this level also relates to the subject of discourse and the elements of real events, such as tangible items, people, and places. The personal beliefs, attitudes, and mood background of the language user define the psychological context and competency, which constitutes the third layer of this paradigm. The interpersonal ties between interlocutors are discussed at the fourth level, also referred to as the "social" level. The highest level, "cosmological," denotes the world or certain features of it along with some universally accepted truths, and it represents the user's worldview. The following level, referred to as "sociological," is focused on the historical and sociocultural conditions that shape how a language is used. The third level of the theory covers implicature, presupposition, politeness formula, MCBs, and CP. What can be assumed about the speaker's aim by the listener is determined by these ideas. Moreover, the paradigm presupposes that contexts, abilities, and prior knowledge confine the roles that utterances—or texts, when written—can perform. In a similar vein, the fourth column breaks down speech acts into three levels: perlocution, illocution, and locution, and explains their importance. Data analysis makes advantage of the several illocution divisions that were previously discussed.

The reviewed literature makes it clear that Yoruba proverbs (translated into English) have not been subjected to socio-pragmatic examination. The compositions Oboko (2020) and Balogun (2010) are the closest to the ongoing investigation. Balogun (2010) provides literary evidence of Yoruba women's fights for gender parity and the previously described proverbial oppression of the feminine gender, from a philosophical standpoint. Unlike the previous study, this one translated Yoruba proverbs pertaining to women's gender into English to examine how Yoruba cultural beliefs inform the portrayal of women's gender and the context and ideology that support it. The investigation was conducted from six contextual levels: cosmological, sociological, social, psychological, situational, and linguistic.

This research aims to: 1) characterise the contexts in which women's gender is negatively portrayed; 2) explore the ideologies underlying the negative portrayal of women in the proverbs; and 3) investigate the illocutionary acts that are primarily employed in portraying the negative images of women.

## METHODOLOGY

This study uses the qualitative method since it will help to clarify the functions of the data through

analysis. The proverbs were chosen from twenty English translations of Yorùbà proverbs (Owomoyela, 2005; Olasupo et al., 2012; Kolawale, 1998, Olojede, 2012; Ademowo and Balogun, 2015, and interview). Because proverbs are contextualised in Yoruba culture, the study incorporates context, which is a component of Lawal's pragmatic theory from 2012. The following are the methods employed to collect the data: I. perusing published works; ii. carrying out interviews. The researcher read aloud the proverbs' English translations while conducting participant observation. The English translations of the proverbs are looked at after classifying the illocutionary acts into categories such as direct, indirect, assertive, directive, commissive, evaluative, and statement.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Text 1

Yoruba: "Ile t'obinrin tin se atoto arere, igi arere ni hu nibe."

English Translation: "Any family that gives women the freedom to speak up will notice that the wild Arere tree is growing abnormally inside their home.." (Kolawole, 1998, p. 19)

#### Illocutionary Acts

Direct: Assertive (warning)

Indirect: Verdictive (predicting)

#### Contexts

- a. Linguistics: In Yoruba land, a woman's tendency to be talkative and inquisitive will lead to leadership issues regarding family rule, as the metaphor of the "arere" tree is supposed to generate difficulties.
- b. Situational: A woman who is allowed to take control of the family will surely cause trouble.
- c. Psychological: Whoever knows that if a woman is allowed to be outspoken and inquisitive should know that in such a family orderliness is a taboo.
- d. Sociological: Yoruba land does not allow a woman to take charge of the family matter let alone talk of leading the society. If this is allowed, nobody needs to complain.
- e. Cosmological: In every part of Yoruba land, to maintain orderliness is not to give leadership positions to women.

According to the first source mentioned above, the adage questions women's leadership authority. Women are compared to arere trees; as arere is notorious for stirring up trouble, trying to put women in positions of leadership will only lead to further problems. This is seen in the way women behave since there will be issues if they are permitted in Yoruba nation. Again, women remain underrepresented in important leadership positions in the majority of African nations.

### Text 2

Yoruba: "Obinrin l'eke, obinrin l'odale."

English Translation: It's a woman who spreads rumours and betrays others. (Interview)

#### Illocutionary Acts

Direct: Assertive (stating)

Indirect: Directive (claiming)

#### Contexts

- a. Linguistic: There can never be traitors if women are not leading. Besides, deceit and treachery come only if a woman is elected as a leader.
- b. Situational: In a patriarchal Yoruba land, women are recognized as traitors if elected into an envious position.
- c. Psychological: Every leader needs not to be a traitor, women known for deceit and treachery are not supposed to be given leadership roles.

- d. Social: Giving power to women is like revealing the secret in society.
- e. Cosmological: The courage of a leader is assessed through his/her ability to keep secrets.

The proverb makes it rather evident that women are notorious for gossiping and revealing secrets, while text 2 highlights the need of maintaining secrets. Some of the initiates' secrets will come to light if a lady like her is permitted to hold leadership positions in society. This adage also makes it quite evident that women in Africa, and particularly in Yoruba territory, are incapable of holding high positions.

### Text 3

Yoruba: "Obinrin o sée finú hàn."

English Translation: "It is inappropriate to reveal one's secrets to a woman.." (Interview)

#### Illocutionary Acts

Direct: Assertive (warning)

Indirect: Directive (stating)

#### Contexts

- a. Linguistic: A sign of the stomach is found in Yoruba culture. It's a way to maintain confidentiality. It conveys authenticity, faith, loyalty, and dependability. The proverb's mention of women then highlights how incapable they are of maintaining secrecy.
- b. Situational: Whenever there is a vacancy for a leadership position in Africa, one of the requirements for it is the ability to keep secrets. Therefore, using women as a leader is taboo.
- c. Psychological: In carrying out any leadership role, it is advisable to choose those who can keep secrets. Hence, making a woman qualified for this position will be an open secret.
- d. Sociological: The best candidate for a leadership position is a man; not a woman.
- e. Cosmological: According to the Yoruba, men are supposed to keep authority to themselves and use women as objects of enslavement.

Men use the phrase "women aren't worthy of keeping secrets" to indicate that shared leadership roles in society are appropriate. It is evident that the only thing that keeps women out of important leadership roles in any Yoruba society is that they are not good with secrets.

### Text 4

Yoruba: "A benu mimu bi obe"

English Translation: "Her mouth is as piercing as the blades." (Interview)

#### Illocutionary Acts

Direct: Asserting (stating)

Indirect: Directive (claiming)

#### Contexts

- a. Linguistic: Knives are used in text 4 as a sharp object used in cutting things. Hence, comparing women's lips with knives shows that women are known for loquaciousness.
- b. Situational: A woman who cannot guide her lips or tongues is not qualified to lead because she will talk nonsense.
- c. Psychological: If one cannot control one's lips/tongues, one cannot be in a leadership position.
- d. Sociological: In Yoruba land, a woman cannot control her utterances and if such a woman is elected or appointed to lead, her unguarded utterance will collapse the society.
- e. Cosmological: In life, women are expected to guide their lips in order not to utter words or expressions that will lead to disorderliness in society.

Unguarded lips are attributed to women. The Yoruba men believe that women can talk about

unnecessary things and this attribute shows that electing them to play a leadership role in society is a means of inviting trouble.

### **Text 5**

Yoruba: “Obinrin-ín ẗẹ ilú, ó tú.”

English Translation: “A town is founded by a woman, and it disperses.” (Owomoyela: 2005, p. 377)

#### Illocutionary Acts

Direct: Assertive (warning)

Indirect: Verdictive (predicting)

#### Contexts

- a. Linguistic: The role of founding a town is not part of women’s behaviour. Women are not capable of making progress in the society. If you want development in society, don’t try to give the responsibility to a woman.
- b. Situational: Women are not part of the people capable of making progress in the society.
- c. Psychological: Any society that gives leadership roles to a woman is at risk of retrogressing.
- d. Sociological: In an attempt to make progress or develop a society, women are not recognized.
- e. Cosmological: Yoruba men believed that they were the only ones who could create a formidable society.

The context of text 4 shows that men see women as second-class citizens in the affairs of leadership. They believe that women cannot make progress when given leadership roles. And this mentality is entrenched in the proverbs which are transmitted from one generation to another.

### **Text 6**

Yoruba: “Eniyan ti ko gbon ni i bobiriin mule. Ijo obinrin ba mawo lo baje. E ma je ka finu han f’obinrin; ibi ti oju re o to, enu re debe.”

English Translation: “A woman’s mouth will speak; we should refrain from disclosing our secrets to her.” ” (Interview)

#### Illocutionary Acts

a. Direct: Assertive (warning)

b. Indirect: Verdictive (predictive)

#### Contexts

- a. Linguistic: The Yoruba people (males) believe that confiding in a woman is like revealing one’s secrets.
- b. Situational: It means that any confidential matter or secrets cannot be exposed to women.
- c. Psychological: Any man who wants to keep the secrets of his magical power should not confide in a woman.
- d. Sociological: Every important position in Yoruba land has its secret and it should not be given to women who are known to be open.
- e. Cosmological: A woman who is known for not keeping secrets is not supposed to occupy any post in society.

The capacity for secrecy is considered a necessary quality for a leader in African society, particularly in Yoruba country. The Yoruba males think that women are too talkative to be in positions of leadership because they think that if a woman is given a position, the details of every position will be revealed. Because such a lady will ultimately be the insider who exposes him to his enemies, the proverb prohibits any guy from trying to reveal all of his secrets to women.

### **Text 7**

Yoruba: “Awo egungun lobinrin le se, awo gelede lobinrin le mo, t’obinrin ba fo ju doro, oro agbee”  
English Translation: “Women could only belong to the hidden cults of Masquerade and Gelede; if they dared to join Oro’s, Oro would devour them. (Olasupo et al 2012, p. 14)

#### Illocutionary Acts

Direct: Assertive (warning)

Indirect: Verdictive (predicting)

#### Contexts

- a. Linguistic: In Yoruba land, masquerade and gèlèdè are the preserve of women while orò is only restricted to the male counterpart.
- b. Situational: It shows that there are certain duties or roles in society that both men and women can partake in, but the other one (orò) is only meant for men.
- c. Psychological: Any woman who goes outside the roles or duties meant for her will be found missing in society.
- d. Sociological: The Yoruba believe that out of all deities, oro is not visible to women. If any woman dares to see it, it means that she is ready to see the repercussions.
- e. Cosmological: Yoruba society has certain requirements that disqualify women from occupying leadership positions.

It is evident that African leadership positions are restricted by the mention of masquerade and gèlèdè as the only deities into whom women can be introduced. “Will it be possible for somebody who cannot be initiated into a cult of or be made a leader?” is the question that crosses one’s mind. The answer will be negative because women who belong to this cult will be assigned specific roles. Furthermore, if this cult is exclusive to men, it proves that women in Africa are not capable of holding influential roles.

### **Text 8**

Yoruba: “B’obinrin ba gbon lagbon ju, penpe laso oko re mo.”

English Translation: “Undersized clothing worn by a spouse is a sign of his wife’s extreme cunning..”  
(Interview)

#### Illocutionary Acts

Direct: Assertive (stating)

Indirect: Statement (admonishing)

#### Contexts

- a. Linguistic: In Yoruba land, a man’s undersized clothes is attributed to his wife’s excessive spending.
- b. Situational: It shows that when a man is not making it in life, it is the fault of his wife.
- c. Psychological: The expectation of a married man in society is to be successful.
- d. Sociological: The goodluck and badluck of a man are attributed to his wife.
- e. Cosmological: Women are seen as objects of affliction to men.

According to the reading of text 8, married women’s lives are portrayed in a poor light. This indicates that the adage obscures the beneficial contributions made by women to society and primarily highlights their negative aspects. The underlying belief of this adage is that women’s overwhelming cleverness will advance civilization if they are given major roles.

### **Text 9**

Yoruba: “Etí lobinrín fi ñgbo ohùn oro.”

English Translation: “A woman can only perceive Orò’s voice with her ears.”(Owomoyela, 2005, p. 64)

### Illocutionary Acts

Direct: Asserting (stating)

Indirect: Verdictive (affirming)

### Contexts

- a. Linguistic: The use of *orò* in the proverb represents a restriction or limitation.
- b. Situational: Only men are allowed to join the oro cult; not women
- c. Psychological: Certain positions are reserved for only men in Yoruba land
- d. Sociological: Prominent leadership position in Yoruba land is the preserve of men.
- e. Cosmological: The proverb is in favour of allocating important posts to males alone.

The proverb's use of *orò*, a type of divinity in Yoruba country, is metaphorically meant to indicate limitations, implying that women are not allowed to hold prominent roles in society. Given that women are blind or visually impaired, it follows that they should not be permitted to hold positions of significant leadership.

### **Text 10**

Yoruba: "Oju kan ladaa ni"

English Translation: "There is only one sharp edge on a cutlass." (Interview)

### Illocutionary Acts

Direct: Assertive (warning)

Indirect: Directive (stating)

### Contexts

- a. Linguistic: The symbol of cutlass stands for two-timing. Cutlass has two sharp edges.
- b. Situational: A wife is expected to be faithful to her husband.
- c. Psychological: Any woman found two-timing is considered an infidel to her husband
- d. Sociological: In Yoruba society, only women are accused of two-timing.
- e. Cosmological: The truthfulness of leadership lies on the leaders. Therefore, a woman found of two-timing cannot be considered a leader in Yoruba land.

The metaphor of faithfulness found in the description of a cutlass as having one edge. According to Yoruba culture, it is not customary for a married lady to have extramarital affairs with other men. The Yoruba proverb "A kì moko tán ká tún mo àlè rẹ̀"—which states that it is improper to know both the rightful spouse and the concubine at the same time—is supported by this. The adage prohibits women from having extramarital affairs or fornications. It is evident that although while the adage forbids adultery between men and women, it has no effect on men engaging in it. It implies that although women have the potential to be appointed as leaders, their male colleagues prevent them from doing so.

### **Text 11**

Yoruba: "Obinrin tó gégi nígbó Oro, ó gé àgémo."

English Translation: "A woman who harvests wood in the Orò grove has taken her last cut."  
(Owomoyela, 2005, p. 182)

### Illocutionary Acts

Direct: Assertive (warning)

Indirect: Verdictive (predicting)

### Contexts

- a. Linguistic: Cutting wood in the groove of Oro means the person is dead.

- b. Situational: It is always good to know one's limit. Do not go beyond your level.
- c. Psychological: In Yoruba land, women are warned not to go beyond their limits.
- d. Sociological: In Yoruba culture, women are not allowed to see *oro*.

The metaphor of *oro*, which denotes the element that women are not allowed to have, appears in text 11. There is a societal belief that prohibits women from seeing other people. Should a lady do so, she is deceased. This adage makes it clear that what's good for one is usually good for all. Women face death as a punishment for seeing *oro*, while men see it with no consequences. Additionally, it demonstrates how men marginalise women in leadership roles.

### **Text 12**

Yoruba: "Okunrin ti ko ku, obinrin re ni ko ti i paa."

English Translation: "A man's wife hasn't killed him yet if he isn't already dead.." (Interview)

#### Illocutionary Acts

Direct: Assertive (stating)

Indirect: Directive (claiming)

#### Contexts

- a. Linguistic: There cannot be a husband's death
- b. Situational: No man died without the involvement of the wife.
- c. Psychological: It is the cultural belief to accuse women of their husband's death.
- d. Social : The cause of a husband is traceable to the wife.
- e. Cosmological : A man's sudden death or long life lies with the wife.

In a way, text 12 is an indictment of women. The Yoruba people hold that a man's marriage determines his level of success. If the wife is wicked, the husband will always be unlucky. As a result, the adage portrays women as murderers. The adage makes it quite evident that a man who has not yet passed away does so because his wife is not prepared to end his life. In Yoruba society, women are falsely accused of crimes they did not commit.

### **Text 13**

Yoruba: "Eni ti o da aso obinrin bora, werepe lo da bora."

English Translation: "The agonising itching of werepe fruits is applied to everyone who covers themselves with a woman's clothing". (Interview)

#### Illocutionary Acts

Direct: Asserting (stating)

Indirect: Directive (predicting)

#### Contexts

- a. Linguistic: In the Yoruba sociocultural milieu, it is improper for a man to cover himself with a woman wrapper.
- b. Situational: There are restrictions or cultural beliefs men need to uphold.
- c. Psychological: Acting contrary to one's status will raise questions, doubt and suspicion in the minds of the people.
- d. Social: It is not good for one to live below societal expectations.
- e. In Yoruba land, men are cautioned to be careful of doing certain things.

Text 13 presents the cultural beliefs of the Yoruba. The men believe that women are instruments of destroying men's magical power or charms. Women believe that if a man covers himself with a woman's clothes, there is a tendency for such an act to render him powerless. The reference to *werepe* (a kind of

plant that makes one to itch his or her body if it touches him/her). Women are compared werepe to show how wicked they are. The image of a woman in this proverb is negative just because they are seen as ones that add problems to man. Therefore, both women's clothes and werepe are symbols of torture.

The Yoruba people's cultural beliefs are presented in text 13. The men think that women are tools used to undermine the charms or magical abilities of men. Women think a man is more likely to become helpless if he wraps himself with a woman's clothing. The allusion to werepe, a type of plant that causes itching when it comes into contact with the skin. To demonstrate how wicked women are, they are compared to werepe. This adage paints a bad picture of women because they are thought to cause more issues for men. As a result, werepe and women's clothing are both associated with torture.

#### **Text 14**

Yoruba: "O o ni obirin n'ile, o ni o o fe aje, se o o fe iya re ni?"

English Translation: "You claim you don't want to marry a witch, but you don't have a wife at home. Would you marry your mother instead?" (Interview)

#### Illocutionary Acts

Direct: Assertive (stating)

Indirect: Directive (claiming)

#### Contexts

- a. Linguistic: The use of the word 'witch' conjures the image of torture.
- b. Psychological: A man who marries a woman should not complain of torture.
- c. Social: A man's relationship with a woman cannot escape torture.
- d. Cosmological: Since a man cannot marry his mother, he will surely get a wife.

In Yoruba land, a mature man is expected to get married. People believe that a man cannot marry his mother. And once he gets married, they believe that women are witches. Here, the image of a witch is attributed to women and it connotes torment.

#### **Text 15**

Yoruba: "A dá sí ní lórùn obìnrin isònu tí í tún aṣọ ró lójú bàbá ọkọ"

English Translation: "The only woman that dresses in front of her father-in-law is promiscuous." (Interview)

#### Illocutionary Acts

Direct: Assertive (affirming)

Indirect: Directive (claiming)

#### Contexts

- a. Linguistic: If a woman is found exposing her sensitive private parts, it shows her promiscuousness.
- b. Situational: Infidelity on the part of a woman is not allowed in Yoruba land.
- c. Psychological: A woman who does not behave well is nothing but an infidel
- d. Social: There is a limitation to the kind of relationship women can exhibit in society.
- e. Cosmological: Appearance shows the manner.

In one society, what is accepted is frowned upon in another. Adorable clothing is not encouraged in Yoruba culture. In addition, a woman's infidelity is revealed when she displays her father-in-law her intimate area. This proverb so paints women as being disloyal to their husbands.

#### **Text 16**

Yoruba: "Obinrin tó gégi nígbó Oro, ó gé àgémo."

English Translation: “Cutting wood in the Orò grove is a last resort for a woman.”. (Owomoyela, 2005, p. 182)

### Illocutionary Acts

Direct: Assertive (stating)  
Indirect: Directive (warning)

### Contexts

- a. Linguistic: The metaphor of oro symbolizes restriction. No woman cuts. wood in the groove of oro
- b. Situational: Women are forbidden from taking prominent positions.
- c. Psychological: The inability of women to be recognised in leadership positions in Yoruba land is a barrier to them.
- d. Social: Women have no interaction with oro. Men are the only that have access to oro cult.
- e. Cosmological: In Yoruba culture, women are not permitted to know the secrets of oro. If any woman sees oro, there will be her end on earth.

As was previously said, women are not allowed to join oro cults. This demonstrates how males view themselves as superior to women, and how they apply this mindset when it comes to assigning men to prominent positions in society.

### **Text 17**

Yoruba: “Bí obinrín bá máa dán èké wo, a da aṣọ dúdú bora.”

English Translation: “A woman dresses in black attire when she wants to get into mischief. .”  
(Owomoyela, 2005, p. 242)

### Illocutionary Acts

Direct: Asserting (stating)  
Indirect: Claiming (affirming)

### Contexts

- a. Linguistic: In Yoruba land, black cloth is pregnant with meaning. The black cloth is associated with mischief.
- b. Situational: In terms of classification, women are seen as bad omen in Yoruba culture because of their mischievous behaviour.
- c. Psychological: No man recognizes the important roles of women in society because they are given bad recommendations.
- d. Social: Every member of society does not believe in having a true relationship with women, most especially the male counterparts
- e. Cosmological: Women are not known for good things. They are misrepresented in society.

The usage of black fabric in text 17 conveys a bad impression of women in Yoruba territory. The naughty actions of women are symbolised by the black cloth. Men believe they are superior to women when it comes to leading them in their homes and in society at large.

### **Text 18**

Yoruba: “Awo burúkú lobinrin lè ṣe, obinrin lálè meḡà, meḡeḡeḡà ò mọra wọn.”

English Translation: “Women are only capable of ferocious secrecy: a lady may have six male concubines, none of whom is acquainted with the other five”. (Olojede, 2012, p. 8)

### Illocutionary Acts

Direct: Asserting (stating)  
Indirect: Judging (claiming)

### Contexts

- a. Linguistic: Women are rated best in keeping vicious secrecy. Therefore, they are good at conspiracy.
- b. Situational: Women are not to be consulted if a secret is to be kept.
- c. Psychological: If a man reveals secrets to a woman, he should be expecting disappointment.
- d. Social: Interpersonal relationships between men and women can only be maintained if important secrets are not exposed to women.
- e. Cosmological: Women are known for keeping unfaithful relationships.

Text 18 illustrates how women can be dishonest while interacting with men. According to the saying, women are adept at maintaining more than six concubines when it comes to having extramarital affairs. It should be mentioned at this point that men participate in the same illicit sexual activity, but they do it to assert their control over women. Women and society as a whole do not accuse them. To the detriment of women, they perceive it as a way to assert their supremacy. All things considered, women are branded with derogatory terms like promiscuous, unfaithful, and infidelity.

### **Text 19**

Yoruba: “Gbogbo obinrin ló ñgbése, èyí tó bá ẹ̀ tie láṣejù laráyé ñpè láṣewó.”

English Translation: “Only women who lack self-control are labelled as harlots; all other women are unfaithful.” (Owomoyela, 2005, p. 170)

### Illocutionary Acts

Direct: Asserting (stating)

Indirect: Verdictive (claiming)

### Contexts

- a. Linguistic: Every married woman is known to be unfaithful; those who show much interest in it are called harlots.
- b. Situational: When men are jealous of their wives, they call them bad names.
- c. Psychological: Whether a woman engages in an illegal sexual affair or not, if she misbehaves, she can be called any name.
- d. Social: Women’s interaction with the opposite sex has limitations. If she goes beyond it, she will be christened with bad names.
- e. Cosmological: In Yoruba land, women are portrayed by men as unfaithful.

According to how paragraph 19 is interpreted, the adage claims that women have adulterous relationships. Men think that when it comes to sexual relations, women should not receive any loyalty at all. This adage merely affirms the superiority of men over women.

**Table 1: Proverbs and their Illocutionary Acts**

S/N	Proverbs	Illocutionary Acts
1	Any family that gives women the freedom to speak up will notice that the wild Arere tree is growing abnormally inside their home	predictive
2	It’s a woman who spreads rumours and betrays others	claiming
3	It is inappropriate to reveal one’s secrets to a woman	stating
4	Her mouth is as piercing as the blades	claiming
5	A town is founded by a woman, and it disperses	predictive
6	A woman’s mouth will speak; we should refrain from disclosing our secrets to her	predictive
7	Women could only belong to the hidden cults of Masquerade and Gelede; if they dared to join Oro’s, Oro would devour them	predictive
8	Undersized clothing worn by a spouse is a sign of his wife’s extreme cunning	admonishing

9	A woman can only perceive Orò's voice with her ears	affirming
10	There is only one sharp edge on a cutlass	stating
11	A woman who harvests wood in the Orò grove has taken her last cut	predictive
12	A man's wife hasn't killed him yet if he isn't already dead.	claiming
13	The agonising itching of werepe fruits is applied to everyone who covers themselves with a woman's clothing	predictive
14	You claim you don't want to marry a witch, but you don't have a wife at home. Would you marry your mother instead?	predictive
15	The only woman that dresses in front of her father-in-law is promiscuous	claiming
16	Cutting wood in the Orò grove is a last resort for a woman	warning
17	A woman dresses in black attire when she wants to get into mischief	affirming
18	Women are only capable of ferocious secrecy: a lady may have six male concubines, none of whom is acquainted with the other five	judging
19	Only women who lack self-control are labelled as harlots; all other women are unfaithful	claiming

The English translations of Yoruba proverbs include an overview of illocutionary deeds in Table 1. The results showed that affirming, cautioning, claiming, saying, predicting, admonishing, and judging were examples of illocutionary activities. All told, the situations in which these proverbs are employed are those in which men feel they have hurt their female colleagues and turn to sayings to emphasise their points. These proverbs are used with the intention of convincing women not to think creatively. Male dominance over female counterpart is demonstrated by the prevalence of illocutionary acts of declaring. Thus, proverbs derived from Yoruba cultural ideas support the negative representation of women's gender.

## CONCLUSION

The socio-pragmatic study of Yoruba proverbs has shown that these sayings are not created out of thin air; rather, they are shaped by ordinary ideas that are encountered by people living in Yoruba country. This means that a person must comprehend the Yoruba worldview, which is made up of the belief systems, culture, and tradition, in order to fully comprehend and relate to Yoruba proverbs. Because Lawal's socio-pragmatic theory has been shown to be accurate in the context of Yoruba proverbs and its relationship to Yoruba societal norms and worldview, this work further verifies it. Thus, this study has been successful in determining the degree of context and proverb fusion. It has highlighted the important relationship that exists between the shared contextual ideas and background knowledge of the proverbs interlocutors and how that relationship affects how proverbs are understood and interpreted when they are spoken. Yoruba is a distinctive language, and people who speak it have similar worldviews shaped by shared values, hobbies, and main concerns (hunting, farming, and warfare). This study has demonstrated how their use of proverbs is influenced by their interests, values, and—most importantly—preoccupations. As a result, it maintains that analysing proverbs without taking into account the culture, values, and social environment of its users will lead to erroneous or incomplete conclusions.

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