

# Linguistics and Literature Review (LLR)

Volume 7 Issue 2, 2021

Journal DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32350/llr>

Issue DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32350/llr.72>

ISSN(P): 2221-6510 ISSN(E): 2409-109X

Journal Homepage: <http://journals.umt.edu.pk/llr/Home.aspx>

Article: **Depiction of Security Issues in Selected Yorùbá Proverbs**


Author(s): Arówòşęgbé, Deborah Bámídelé

Affiliation: Department of Linguistics and Languages, Adékúnlé Ajásin University, Àkùngbá-Àkókó. Ondo State, Nigeria

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32350/llr.72/05>

Article History: Received: April 26, 2021  
Revised: November 30, 2021  
Accepted: December 1, 2021

Citation: Arówòşęgbé and Deborah Bámídelé. (2021). Depiction of Security Issues in Selected Yorùbá Proverbs, *Linguistics and Literature Review* 7(2): 67–78.

Copyright Information:  This article is open access and is distributed under the terms of [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

**Journal QR**



**Article QR**



**Indexing**



A publication of the  
Department of Linguistics and Communications Institute of Liberal Arts  
University of Management and Technology Lahore, Pakistan

## Depiction of Security Issues in Selected Yorùbá Proverbs

ARÓWÓŞĒGBÉ, Deborah Bámídelé\*

Adékúnlé Ajásin University, Àkùngbá-Àkókó. Ondo State, Nigeria

### ABSTRACT

Yorùbá proverbs are a part of the wisdom lore of the Yorùbá race. The Yorùbá people value proverbs highly. They try to look for solutions to their problems in their proverbs. The prevailing criminal in Nigeria create an atmosphere of insecurity in the country. The question this paper intends to answer is whether the use of Yoruba proverbs can bring insecurity in Yorùbá land under control? To answer this question, adopting the sociology of literature, this study examined thirty security related Yorùbá proverbs collected through personal observations and published texts on Yorùbá proverbs. Our findings showed that false assumptions, bad company, and lack of foresight can bring about insecurity, while having foresight and making joint efforts can strengthen the security of Yorùbá land. The paper concludes that Yorùbá proverbs relevant to security matters can reduce the problems of insecurity in Yorùbá land if their teachings are utilised to guide them appropriately.

**Keywords:** insecurity, proverbs, vigilance, wisdom

### Introduction

Security is the condition of not being threatened either physically, psychologically, emotionally or financially (Adebowale, 2014). The need for security and protection of life and property predates the modern way of policing, protecting life and property. Yorùbá, like any other nation of the world, takes the matters concerned with the security of its individuals very seriously. In Yorùbá land, for the purpose of effective defence, a town is invariably surrounded by a wall. Hunters have an important role to play in the scheme of defence of Yorùbá towns, especially those situated in the tropical rainforest belt. Ilésanmí (2004) stated that the *babaláwo* (Ifa priest), the cult of women, herbalists and those gifted in the art of incantation work hand in hand to defend the community.

Atólágbé (2011) asserted that among the Yorùbá of the South West Region, Nigeria, everybody contributes towards providing security, both for themselves and for all others. Although, the Yorùbá of Nigeria value their security greatly and do many things to maintain it; still, the contemporary situation calls for greater concern in this regard. The current spate of challenges such as kidnapping, murder, robbery, ritual killings, and others have brought about an atmosphere of insecurity in the country despite the fact that law courts, some of which make use of the services of tribal elders, work to reduce the act of insecurity in the country.

Much scholarly work addresses the issue of security. Recently, Arówóşégbé (2018) opined that the need for security is borne out of everyday reports of losses through theft, fraud, embezzlement, kidnapping, rape, assassination, political violence of all kinds, and threats to life and property. The author explained further that laxity in security may result in the loss of life and property or may lead to permanent disability. Táíwò (2013) viewed the issue of security

---

\*Corresponding Author: [deborah.arowosegbe@aau.edu.ng](mailto:deborah.arowosegbe@aau.edu.ng)

as a collective responsibility, which should not be left in the hands of security agencies, solely. Adébòwálé (2014) contended that Yorùbá proverbs give warnings that can save one from any possible danger. This induced us to examine proverbs in Yorùbá land.

Among Yorùbá people, proverbs are valued very highly; indeed, proverbs play a very important role in the everyday culture of the people. Whatever problems they have, they try to search for a solution in their proverbs. Matters are easily handled and rifts settled by people who are versed in proverbs (Ọlátúnjí, 2005). Doyle (2001) stated that a proverb is a brief, pithy expression that occurs in the oral tradition. Proverb is seen as context-bound. Proverb changes according to the user and the situational context. The language of proverbs projects conventional wisdom and is considered as the storehouse of the collective wisdom of Yorùbá people. Proverbs refer to social situations that determine the sense or meaning of a particular proverb (Sheba, 2006). Proverbs are the national heritage of the Yorùbá people and they depict the moral and social behaviour that is considered correct and acceptable. Moreover, proverbs also depict the unacceptable ways of life. Šótúndé (2009) described proverb as a short, familiar sentence expressing a supposed truth or moral lesson, it often requires an explanation beyond the literal meaning of the words used. Àkànmú and Ezekiel (2012) depicted that proverbs enrich and make Yorùbá language clearer, more meaningful and striking in everyday communication of the people. It reminds them of the past occurrences. Òjó (2015) regarded proverbs as treasured sayings which project the wisdom, ethics, cultural heritage and worldview of the Yorùbá people. Adétòrò (2019) contended that proverbs are constructed according to the people's belief system and traditions.

When commenting on the origins or sources of proverbs, Mustapha, Adébòwálé, Àlàgbé, & Oyèrindé, (2009a) explain that Yorùbá proverbs originated with the farmers, hunters, fishermen, traders, herbalists, drummers and carvers, in relation to their experiences in their vocations. Proverbs also originated from the Ifa corpus, some originated from history, while others emanated from Yorùbá inter-tribal wars. Ọlátúnjí (2005) explained that elders are seen as the general overseers and custodians of proverbs and this is evident in their utterances. It is not a common thing among the Yorùbá for young people to begin to press a point with elders by citing proverbs. The young preface proverbs before elders with expressions showing total submissiveness. Such expressions include *'tótó ó ẹ se bí òwe ẹyin àgbààgbà'* (as the elders would say), *'ẹyin àgbà náà ẹ sọ pé'* (it is you elders who say), and *'Àwọn àgbà bọ wón ní'* (the elders would say). The elders' response is usually *'o ó pa òmíràn'* (You will have another opportunity), which is an indication of approval. Friday-Ọtun & Ọmóléwu (2017) confirmed that the Yorùbá reconcile disputants, encourage those who are downcast, and raise the expectations and hopes of the people undergoing difficult or trying times through proverbs, as well as commiserate with those who have lost loved ones.

From the foregoing, Yorùbá proverbs are seen as context-bound. So, they can be interpreted differently on different occasions, depending on the situational context. This paper, adopting the sociology of literature, examines thirty (30) security related proverbs collected through personal observation and from published texts, to know how they can be used to limit the adverse effects of insecurity on Yorùbá people.

### **Significance of the Study**

Proverbs in Yorùbá land are regarded as repositories of collective wisdom, whether it be religious, political or social. They are used in various ways in Yorùbá society. As great as the efforts have been in the study of Yorùbá proverbs, little attention has been given to security-related proverbs. Some researchers have touched on security and proverbs in their research work but none, to the best of our knowledge, have worked extensively on Yorùbá proverbs related to security, the gap this research work intends to fill. The criminal activities facing

Yorùbá land create an atmosphere of insecurity. In this paper, thirty (30) security-related Yorùbá proverbs are cited for remarks, analysis and interpretation with a view to explore their role in limiting the adverse effects of insecurity on Yorùbá people. The current study sought answers to the following research questions using sociology of literature.

### Research Questions

- Can Yorùbá proverbs play a significant role in bringing insecurity in Yorùbá land under control?
- What are the significant roles Yorùbá proverbs play to limit the adverse effects of insecurity on the society?

### Theoretical Framework

Sociology of literature was adopted for the analysis of Yorùbá proverbs in the current work. The term ‘sociology of literature’ was coined by Taine (2013), the French philosopher and critic (1828-1893) (Ògúnṣínà, 2006). According to Ògúnṣínà (1987), the name ‘sociology of literature’ suggests that it is the fusion of two disciplines: sociology and literature. The study of the mutual interactions of human beings and the consequences of these interactions is known as sociology. It deals with their experience and behaviour with regards to their fellow human beings (Barber, 1978). Literature is the product of society. It seeks to investigate man, his behaviour in the society, his knowledge of himself and the universe in which he finds himself (Ògúnṣínà, 2006). Literature portrays day-to-day activities of a particular society. Sociology of literature is, therefore, an attempt to understand the interrelationship between literature and society. It is a subfield of the sociology of culture. It studies the social production of literature and its social implications.

The mirror image approach of sociology of literature was adopted for the purpose of this study. It was believed to be the appropriate approach because the issues of security and proverbs concern the society at large.

### Depiction of Security Issues in Selected Yorùbá Proverbs

An examination of Yorùbá proverbs shows that issues on security abound in them. Yorùbá perception of security is depicted by these proverbs. Selected proverbs and their analysis is given below.

### Proverbs Warning against Making False Assumptions

1. *‘Owó tí a fì gbé ekòlò sọ̀nù, bí a bá fì gbé ejò bẹ̀ẹ̀, a ó ká a lórí ní’*. A snake is not to be handled in the manner an earthworm is handled.
2. *‘Mo tí ñ fòyí, mo tí ñ fò tẹ̀hún ní í mú ológbò kó sínú iná ọ̀tí/epo gbígbóná’*. The cat that believes it has overcome many obstacles ended up in the brewer’s fire or palm oil

The first proverb manifests that one should not work based on the assumption that all is well without taking precautions. It is a fact that an earthworm resembles a snake but they are not the same. Snake is poisonous while earthworm is not. Individual differences should be taken into consideration when dealing with people (1). The second proverb manifests that overconfidence can be doom laden (2). Sociology of literature encourages one to be security conscious; indeed, one has to examine every situation before taking any step. Although, experience is a good teacher, still we should examine the circumstances surrounding each

situation. A particular situation can change. It may be because of the type of people present or the type of the environment. We should look before we leap.

### Proverbs Warning against Keeping Bad Company

3. *Eni tí kò kẹ̀wọ̀n, tí kò kọ́kú, tó bá lóun ód lówó, ẹ́ sá fún un.* Avoid the penniless hoodlum who thinks nothing of going to jail or being killed but wishes to become rich.

One should avoid the company of an overambitious person. Such people can do and undo. One has to be careful with the type of friends one keeps. ‘Tell me your friend and I will tell you the type of person you are’ says an adage. Bad company spoils or corrupts good behaviour.

### Proverbs Warning against the Lack of Foresight

4. *Eni tó ní kí ọmọ òun máà ké ní kékeré, wọ̀n dìjọ máà ké lágbà ní.* Whoever does not want her child to cry at a young age, will surely cry with the child in her old age.
5. *Ọmọ́dé bú ìròkò, o ń bojú wẹ̀yìn, òdìjọ kọ ní olúwéré ń pa ní.* After insulting the Iroko tree, a child looks over his shoulder not knowing that olúwéré (the ìròkò tree spirit) bides its time in taking revenge.

The proverb implies that the mother of a spoilt and pampered child and the child himself will both suffer together later in their lives. In Yorùbá society, the education of the young in the codes of manners, conventions, customs, morals, superstitions and laws of their society is achieved through various members of the family and household, the extended family (usually located in the same compound), the kindred and the neighbours. If a mother rejects the training other members of the family and society provide to her children, she will bear the consequences when the children lack in the moral aspect of their development. Such children may, for instance, join criminal groups to become armed robbers and kidnappers. Christian theology also teaches the consequences of not training a child: ‘A foolish son is the heaviness of his mother’ (Proverbs: 10:16) (4). The other proverb instantiates that if a child had known that taking revenge by Olúwéré may not come as early as he thinks, he would not insult the sacred tree. The revenge would come when it is least expected and it would keep the child in suspense, indefinitely. The revenge of an offence one committed while young may come when the child is old. One should always be conscious of what one says or does (5).

### Proverbs Encouraging People to be Alert to the Possibility of Danger

6. *‘A kì í pa asínwín ilé, nítorí ọ́jọ̀ tí tòde yóò bá wá’.* One does not kill the mentally unstable person within one’s home, because of the day the one from outside might visit one.
7. *‘Àgbàrá kò ní òun kò nílẹ̀ wó, onilé ní kò nù gbà fún un’.* The destructive tendency of torrent is matched by the dogged determination of the house owner to checkmate it.
8. *‘Bí ará ilé ẹ̀ni bá ń jẹ kòkòrò búburú, bí a kò tètè sọ fun, kẹ̀rẹ̀kuru rẹ̀ kò nù jẹ kí a sùn lóru’.* If one of our relatives is eating harmful insects and you do not warn him, when he contracts a cough, the noise in his chest will not let you sleep.

All proverbs in this section connote getting prepared for bad days. One should be alert all the time, especially now as the country is gripped by the fear of kidnapping, murder and ritual killing, just to name a few. One should be aware of the fact that nobody is totally useless. If one keeps what they think is useless at the moment, it may turn out to be useful in the future, especially when it comes to ensuring the safety of lives. Another Yorùbá adage says ‘*ọmọ burúkú lójó tirẹ̀*’, indicating that an unscrupulous child may one day be useful. One shouldn’t



look down on anybody because everyone has their strengths and areas of expertise (6). Also, one has to take steps to checkmate any imminent danger of attack before the situation gets out of hand. A building may be destroyed by a torrent if nothing is done to prevent the upcoming situation before the rainy season. It is the tradition in Yorùbá land to prepare a drainage around the house before the commencement of early rain. During the rainy season, they make use of drain pipes. The essence of doing it is to debar the torrent from entering into the compound. In the same vein, one should possess all the necessities that can save one's life against any imminent danger (7). In Yorùbá land, everyone is his brother's keeper. The actions of nearby people may affect us. So, it is wise to warn them if they are acting imprudently, so as not to suffer with them at a later time (8). Sadia (2015) cited Alan Sinfield (2003) who viewed gayness as an identity that needs to be both deconstructed and revised to include an understanding of the different social forces at work. Gayness is a taboo for a Yoruba man. Modern healthcare is of the opinion that men who have sex with other men are at an increased risk of contracting HIV, the virus that causes AIDS as well as other sexually transmitted infections (<https://www.mayoclinic.org/in-depth>). So, when someone lives around such a person, he should be very careful.

### Proverbs Stressing the Importance of Making a Concerted Effort to Maintain Security

9. *'Ài-kòwòò-rìn ní jẹ ọmọ ejò ntyà tí ọkà bá ọájú, tí paramólẹ̀ tẹ̀lẹ̀ e, tí sèbẹ̀ ẹ̀ ẹ̀ ikẹ̀ta tí òjòlá n wó ruru bọ̀ lẹ̀yìn wọn ta a lakikanjú ọdẹ̀ tó jẹ̀ kojú wọn, ta lòpẹ̀ tó jẹ̀ pọ̀mọ̀ ejò níjà?'* The vulnerability of the snake emanates from its lone ranger disposition. If Gabon viper, night adder and python follow each other who is that champion or foolish person that can call them to a fight?
10. *'Íṣọ̀ parapọ̀ wọn kólẹ̀ ọlá gogoro, igèrè parapọ̀ wọn jàrẹ̀ àgbẹ̀; bí ijàlọ̀ bá parapọ̀, wọn yòò lé ẹ̀kùn ní buba'.* If the nails in cooperation could build a skyscraper and the fish traps defeat the farmer, then the soldier ant could frighten the leopard out of its lair.
11. *'Awo nú gbáwo nígbòwọ̀, báwo kò bá gbáwo nígbòwọ̀, awo a tẹ̀'.* Solidarity is the ground rule of every fraternity, without which it falters.

The above proverbs depict the significance of working together as a team to fight insecurity. Unity is strength. Security issues concern every individual. All hands should be on deck when it comes to the matter of saving lives and property. The other proverb is *'Ajẹjẹ ọwọ kan kò gbẹ̀rù dórí'.* A single hand cannot lift a bundle of sticks unto the head. One should always seek help to do a task which cannot be accomplished single-handedly, especially when it comes to security issues. Communal efforts are more protective and provide greater defence than the solo effort. When members of the society unite to fight crime, they would be able to surmount any problem facing them. There should be cooperation among people in a society to make their security watertight. An adage says 'united we stand, divided we fall'. The proverbs emphasize team spirit as the right type of defence, so as to be able to protect one's community (9-11).

### Proverbs Stressing the Need for Constant Vigilance to Maintain Security

12. *'Bí ọmọdẹ̀ bá n lu agogo ilú ko-ko-ko, kí àwọn àgbààgbà ilú múra nítorí wọn fẹ̀ gba ijoba ní'.* The ringing of the city bell by youth portends possible seizure of power by them.
13. *'Ìlọ̀ yá, oníbodè Apòmù; a kó o nífá, a gbà á lóbìnrin, ọ̀pẹ̀lẹ̀ tó ní òun ó fi wádùtì ọ̀ran, ajá gbé e, ọmọ ẹ̀ tó lé ajá láti gba ọ̀pẹ̀lẹ̀, ó já sí kànga; oníbodè Apòmù wá dáhùn, Ó ní, 'Ìlọ̀ yá'.* It is time to get out of here, says the gatekeeper of Apòmù. His home was burgled, his wife was taken from him, the psychic power string he was going to use to investigate matters was snatched by a dog, his son who ran after the dog to retrieve the divining string

fell into a well. The gatekeeper of Apòmù then spoke up and said, ‘It is time to get out of here’.

14. *‘Ojú lalákàn fi ń sọrí’*- It is the crab’s eyes that safeguard its head.

One should be fully conversant with what goes on in their environment. In Yorùbá land, the hitting of the community gong is to be carried out by elders, having something germane to tell the community. It will be a bad omen if youth takes it upon themselves to hit the gong. It depicts that something unusual is about to happen, probably they want to overthrow the yoke of their elders. When something unusual happens, people should rise immediately to investigate it and make the necessary correction before it gets out of hand. People should be watchful and careful to notice the signs of danger or trouble (12). When a place becomes too challenging for a person, they should know that it is time to leave that place (13). We should always observe the countenance of the people around us to know whether it is pleasant or not, especially when it becomes a matter of security. This observation will enable us to know our next line of action (14). For instance, during the lockdown aimed to reduce the spread of coronavirus disease, everybody was expected to stay indoors in order to stay safe and nobody dared went out (coronavirus disease, otherwise known as COVID-19, is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus) (<https://covid19.ncdc.gov.ng>). No wonder Ambreen (2020), when commenting on the writers that considered health a significant concern in Pakistan at that moment in time, supported lockdown to prevent the virus from spreading. Her belief was that the writers’ write-up shows how vital the role of print media is in constructing the discourse of fear around the COVID-19 situation using language as a tool. One should know what goes on in their environment and plan ahead to escape the place when the need arises.

### *Proverbs Depicting Wisdom as a Way of Maintaining Security*

15. *‘Olòdògùn ni ń se bí a-láìgbọ-mòràn; bí ogun ó bàá wòlú ọlọgbọn là ń fọrọ lẹ’*. The medicine man behaves like a person impervious to wise counsel, if war threatens a town the person to consult for counsel is the sage.

16. *‘A kì í gbá ẹni tó yòbẹ mú’*. One does not hold a person who has pulled out a knife.

17. *‘Ajá tó yó kì í bá àìyọ şeré (ajá tí kò yó)’*. A dog which has just had its food does not play with one which is hungry.

The above proverbs emphasize the importance of wisdom in dealing with dangers in our environment. One should apply wisdom in any situation they find themselves. One has to trust in wisdom rather than in magical charms. It is the sage that has the words of wisdom because of his experience (15). A Yorùbá adage says *‘ogbón ju agbára’*, which means that wisdom supersedes power. Discretion and caution are imperative in dealing with dangerous people, who should be dealt with caution. One has to use wisdom if such an occasion arises (16). A successful man is likely to become an object of envy to his unsuccessful friends, so he must be careful in his dealings with them and also with other people. This does not mean that one should neglect his friends but wisdom should be applied in dealing with them all (17).

### *Proverbs Depicting Carefulness as a Way to Maintain Security*

18. *‘Igi ganganran má gún mi lójú, òkèrèrè ni a tí ń lẹ ọ’*. One should take precaution from a distance against prefunding branches that can pierce their eyes.

19. *‘Bí kókó bá ń fẹ ni lẹfẹfẹ, a kì í jẹ orí ìmàdò, a sì ma ń jẹ orí ìmàdò, àjọ kùmọ la ò gbọdọ lẹ. A sì lè lẹ àjọ kùmọ bí a bá mọ ìwọn ara ẹni’*. If you have knobs on the head, eating

the warthog's head becomes a taboo but if you must, you should not go to a gathering of cudgels, you can go to the gathering of cudgels so far you avoid a fight.

20. '*A kì í finá sórí òrùlé sùn*'. One does not go to bed while there is fire on one's roof.

21. '*Gungigungi sọgi gùn kó o má ba à gungi aládi*'. The person climbing the tree must be careful so that he does not climb the tree where small black ants build their nest.

It is wise to take precaution against an evil before it is too late, to be forewarned is to be forearmed (18). If unforeseen circumstances force one to engage in a risky behaviour, one should be more careful and exercise caution in one's actions. Literally, if one with knobs on the head eats warthog's head, his knobs may be more protruding. Hence, he must not show up where they use cudgels to fight, where they can easily hit the knobs on his head that may bring him pain or even death. The only option he has is to ensure that his head is protected. In social life, if one knows that he has certain weaknesses, he must try as much as possible to protect the weak areas (19). We should not let down our guard while danger still lurks. It is better to take care of problems before relaxing (20). One should think about the possible results of an action or threats posed by it before doing it. For instance, one should think about the pros and cons of a business before one embarks on it (21).

### *Proverbs Depicting Learning from One's Mistakes as a Way to Maintaining Security*

22. '*Ìtākùn kan kì í fọ̀ ní nísà lẹ̀mẹ̀jì*'. No one should be tripped and break his pitcher twice by the same stump.

23. '*Bí ọ̀mọ̀dé bá ẹ̀bú, a wo iwájú, bí àgbàlagbà bá ẹ̀bú a wo ẹ̀yìn*'. When they fall, the child looks ahead while the adult casts a look backwards.

The two proverbs illustrate the Yorùbá attitude to avoidable mistakes. There is a need for the sensible person to take necessary precautions to avert potential danger, particularly after an earlier experience. A sensible person is supposed to take precautionary measures, including observation, analysis, and conclusion to understand the circumstances surrounding his tripping at the stump in the first instance, in order to prevent its future recurrence. Moreover, to avoid repeating the previous occurrence, he should examine its reason(s). This will enable him to avoid another fall. For instance, if one knows how and why one had been defrauded, one would safeguard against it.

### *Proverbs Encouraging One to Learn from the Mistakes of Others*

24. '*Èni tó gúnván jẹ tó kú, ó dẹrù ba ẹni tó ẹ̀şẹ̀ ñ se işu tiẹ̀ lówó*'. He who dies after taking the pounded yam meal he himself prepared frightened the man preparing his own. Another relevant proverb is '*Èni tó jìn sí kòtò kó ará yòókù lógbón*'. He who falls into a ditch teaches others coming behind to be careful.

25. '*Èni tí wèrè bá pa ìyá rẹ̀, tó bá rí mẹ̀kánìkì, yòò hò*'. A person whose mother had died in the hands of a lunatic would take to his heels at the sight of an automobile mechanic.

One should learn from the mistakes or experience of others to save one's own life. The person in the proverb needs to investigate the cause of death of the deceased before he can take his own food. In social life, doctors do investigate the cause(s) of different types of diseases in their environment to know how to save lives. For instance, when people became aware of the fact that Lassa fever is caused by rats, they started killing rats in their environment (24). When something bad happens in a community or in a country, the head of that community or country has to take proper steps to know the cause(s) of the calamity and to look for a solution. For instance, when coronavirus first appeared, each government started looking for ways of



phasing off the disease, especially when people were dying. This should be the responsibility of every leader and it tends to good governance. ‘Bí ikú bá ń pa ojúgbà ẹni, òwe ló ń pa fúnni’. The death of one’s peer sends a proverbial message. When one’s contemporaries die, it is a warning to others that their days are equally numbered. One should take warning from the fate of others. For instance, some months ago in a nearby town in Oñdó North Senatorial District of Oñdó State, Nigeria, a woman was butchered on her way back home from a long journey at around 4.00 am. Her private parts and breasts were taken away. All churches in that surrounding stopped vigil for about three months, some holding vigil since that incident. In Nigeria, automobile mechanic often appears in a black, greasy and dirty uniform which gives them the appearance of a lunatic. Therefore, one can easily take an automobile mechanic for a lunatic. The fear in the affected person’s mind will give no room for the proper identification of the mechanic to know the difference between the two before they run for their dear life. The situation in Nigeria today does not give room for the proper identification of a lone gunman in the bush to know whether he is a kidnapper or a hunter, before one runs for one’s life. Once bitten, twice shy (25).

### *Proverbs Depicting that the Knowledge of Occupation Hazards can Save One from Danger*

26. *‘Ikú ogun ní í pa akíkanjú, ikú odò ní í pòmùwẹ, òwò tí àdà bá mọ ní í ká àdà léyín.* The end of the valiant is potentially on the battle field, that of the swimmer is potentially by drowning. Whatever trade the cutlass knows will spoil its teeth.
27. *‘Ikú tí ń pọdẹ ń bẹ nínú apó, ikú tí ń pàgbẹ ń bẹ lórùn ebè’.* The potential death of the hunter is in his quiver, that of the farmer is close to the top of his heaps.

Death is the ultimate risk inherent in certain occupations. There is no armour against fate as far as these occupations are concerned. It is true that everybody is indebted to death, yet nobody is ready to die. When one knows the hazards in one’s occupation, he will be more careful while performing his duty. For instance, having known that reckless driving can cause an accident, a driver will be more careful in his driving to reduce or curb the occurrence of an accident. An occupation is a necessity for earning one’s livelihood still, one has to take all the possible precautions. Be warned, death will come when it will come, and each outing may be the very last. In spite of this reality, the struggle to make ends meet and afford a degree of comfort must continue because only in doing what one knows best is there a likelihood of socioeconomic survival. A Yoruba adage says, ‘n ò lè wá kú kì í joyè ilé baba rẹ. The timid cannot claim his chieftaincy inheritance. No food for the lazy person. Everybody has to work regardless of the danger implied in the work. The foreknowledge of the hazards or danger inherent in each occupation only directs us to carefully go about the work.

### *Proverbs Encouraging the Use of One’s Discretion to Tighten up Security*

28. *‘Bí erin bá kojú sí ọ, ta á, bí ẹfọn bá kojú sí ọ, ta á. Tí ó bá ku ìwọ nìkan kí o tún èrò ara rẹ pa’.* If you are advised to shoot any elephant or buffalo that crosses your path, reflect on it when you are alone by yourself.
29. *‘Agboolé tí ikú tí pa aláboyún toyún-toyún, tó pa àgùtàn tọlẹ- tọlẹ, tó pa ajá tógòrò-tógòrò, bí a ba fẹ lọ sájò, bí a ò dágbére kò burú’.* In a family where pregnant women, sheep and dogs all die with their foetuses, if one tries to make his movement unknown to people around him, he should not be blamed.

The above proverbs advise people to use their discretion or to be discreet when it comes to making a choice that has to do with their safety. Sometimes, one has to be independent. You

do not need to reveal your secrets to others for security reasons. When one is alone, one needs to be security conscious and use one's common sense to solve certain problems. In real life situations, when one has the freedom to decide on what should be done in a particular situation, one should be able to keep one's secret to oneself, that is, one should be discretionary at times to avoid danger. Many people have their wedding ceremonies without guests. When asked why you are not informed, the answer is 'God's directive'. In Yorùbá, 'bíṣu ẹ̀ni bá funfun a á fowó bò ó jẹ̀ ni'. Its literal meaning is 'if your yam is white, cover it while eating'. This means a successful person should keep the secret to oneself because some people may not be happy at his success.

### *Proverbs Depicting Honesty as a Way to Maintain Security*

**30. 'Ogun nù ọ̀ ni mú, ẹ̀pẹ̀ kì í ọ̀ ni pa, kò ẹ̀ké kì í fì ẹ̀ké kú'.** It is only war that can kill an innocent person, curse does not kill an innocent person, whoever that is not unjust or dishonest can never die unjustly.

An honest person is somebody that tells the truth and never steals nor cheats. The act of dishonesty is punishable by law, it can cost someone their job (job security). In Yorùbá land, it is believed that if someone is accused wrongly, the person may suffer but would be released when the truth is known. The Bible says 'You will know the truth and the truth shall set you free'. There are people that have been jailed for defrauding the company they worked with. Some were punished, for instance, in the Bible (2Kings, 5: 20-27), Gehazi, the servant of Elisa, ministered faithfully before he was overtaken by greed. He lost his faithfulness, thereby losing his job as a minister of God and suffered leprosy. For someone to secure their job, they must be honest. The proverb depicts that honesty can save them from the impending danger. Whoever tells the truth would always be saved, especially during bad times. People should, therefore, try to tell the truth all the time.

### **Conclusion**

This paper, using the sociology of literature, examined thirty (30) security related Yorùbá proverbs. Some proverbs showed the causes of insecurity. It was depicted by the selected proverbs that when one makes false assumptions without any verification, one would easily fall into the hands of enemies. When one thinks that one has been doing certain things for a long time without taking cognizance of changes that might have taken place, it may result in endangering one's life. Yorùbá proverbs also enlighten people on what they can do to be secured. People with foresight easily save their own lives and that of their neighbours. Sociology of literature also depicts that unity is strength. When a community or country unites in their dealings with security issues, especially in collective warfare, they emerge victorious. For instance, it is not uncommon in Yorùbá land to create vigilante groups to combat thieves. Another example is from the period of coronavirus pandemic. Everybody attempted to comply with preventive measures as recommended by the Federal Ministry of Health and Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). People used hand sanitizers, face masks and machines for fumigation in some states. Yorùbá proverbs depict that society should be security conscious. One should study one's environment to know when things are about to change. One should learn from both one's own mistakes as well as from others' mistakes to know what to do in order not to repeat the previous mistake. At times, it is better to use one's discretion when faced with danger. Yorùbá people hate dishonesty as depicted in their proverbs. Honesty can save one from untimely death and can also provide job security.

Moreover, it was depicted through the sociology of literature that Yorùbá proverbs are meant to teach and guide the members of the society in their relationship with the people in their community on things pertaining to security. As important as proverbs are among the Yorùbá, observations show that frequent use of proverbs in Yorùbá community, especially among the youth, is gradually losing popularity due to the effect of so-called ‘civilization’, as observed by Sheba (2006). Fábíloḷá (2016) also opined that proverbs are an endangered heritage of the Yorùbá people. They are increasingly threatened by western influences, including western education. Şótúndé (2009) confirmed that the number of proverbs used by the people is negligible as compared with the available stock of proverbs. It is believed that the lack of awareness of the place of proverbs in the literary and social life of the people is partly responsible for the skewed behaviour of many youth today. Some are wondering whether Yorùbá still have proverbs because they seldom hear people using them.

It is depicted in this work that security related proverbs can play a significant role in reducing the problems of insecurity in Yorùbá land. It is, therefore, recommended that Yorùbá society should allow the proverbs to guide their daily actions. One of the ways through which Yorùbá people can take issues of security with all seriousness is to enforce the use of security related proverbs on their youth. The paper concludes that Yorùbá studies should be made compulsory in both primary and secondary schools, so that students can learn more about Yorùbá proverbs.

### References

- Adéḃòwálé, O. 2014. Lítírésò Yorùbá, Òrò Ààbò àti Ìdàgbàsókè Orílẹ̀-Èdè. *Yorùbá: Journal of Yorùbá Studies Association of Nigeria*. 7(3):1-31.
- Adétòrò, B. 2019. A Study of Proverbs Categorisation in Yorùbá and Chinese Cultures. *Yorùbá: The Journal of Yorùbá Studies Association of Nigeria*. 9(3): 92-111.
- Àkànmú, A. and Ezekiel, B. 2012. A Study of Proverbs in Yorùbá Traditional Religion. *ÒPÁÑBÀTÀ: LASU Journal of African Studies (Special Issue)*. 5: 115-126.
- Ambreen Shahriar and Junaid G, M. 2020. The Discourse of Fear around Health and Economy in Pakistani English Newspaper Articles on Covid-19, *Linguistics and Literature Review*. 6(2):1-10.
- Arówóşẹgbé, D.B. 2018. Orò Obìnrin Rites among the Yorùbá Panacea to Contemporary Social Vices. *Ọlóruntóba, S. O. and Vusi Gumede (ed.) (2018). State and Development in Post-Independent Africa*. 387-400.
- Àtólágbé, A.M.O. 2011. *Security Consciousness in Indigenous Nigerian Houses: A Preliminary Survey of Yorùbá Ethno Medical Devices*. Department of Architecture, Lautech, Ògbómòşó, Nigeria. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09735070.2011.11886392>
- Bible Society of Nigeria 2004. *The Bible, King James Version*. Lagos: Nigeria.
- Doyle, C. C. 2001. ‘Observations on the Diachronic Study of Proverbs’ in *Proverbium Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship 18: The University of Vermont*. Pp. 57-75.
- Doyle, C. C. 2001. Observations on the diachronic study of proverbs. *Proverbium-Columbus Then Burlington-*, 18, 57-76.
- Fábíloḷá, O. 2016. *Òwe Yorùbá*. Ìbàdàn: First Veritas Educational Content Delivery Limited.
- Friday-Òtún, J.O. and Ọmóléwu, O.C. 2017. Commiserating through Proverbs among the Yorùbá: A Pragmatic Act Analysis. in *Yorùbá: Journal of Yorùbá Studies Association of Nigeria*. 8(3): 51-78.

- Ilésanmí, T.M. 2004. *Yorùbá Orature and Literature: A Cultural Analysis*. Obáfẹmi Awólówò University, Ifẹ: University Press.
- Mustapha, O. (ed.), Oyèrìndé, O., Àlàgbé, A., and Adébòwálé, O. 2009a. *Èkó Èdè Yorùbá Titun (JSS) Ìwé Kéta*. Ìbàdàn: University Press PLC.
- Mustapha, O. (ed.), Oyèrìndé, O., Àlàgbé, A., and Adébòwálé, O. 2009b. *Èkó Èdè Yorùbá Titun (SSS) Ìwé Keji*. Ìbàdàn: University Press PLC.
- NCDC . Nigeria Centre for Disease Control. <https://covid19.ncdc.gov.ng>.
- Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research (MFMER) 1998-2021. Health Issues for Gay Men and Men who have Sex with Men. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/in-depth>
- Ògúnṣínà, B. 1987. The Sociology of the Yorùbá Novel: A Study of Isaac Thomas, D.O. Fágúnwà and Oládèjọ Òkédìjì [Unpublished Thesis]. University of Ìbàdàn, Ìbàdàn.
- Ògúnṣínà, B. 2006. *Sociology of the Yorùbá Novel: An Introduction*. Ìbàdàn: Integrity Publication.
- Òjó, E. T. 2015. Predominant Stylistic Devices of Proverbs in Selected Yorùbá Literary Texts. *Yorùbá*, 7(1): 253-292.
- Ọlátúnjì, O. O. 2005. *Features of Yorùbá Oral Poetry*. Ìbàdàn: Oxford University Press.
- Sadia Riaz 2015. Queering: Empowerment or Threat, *Linguistics and Literature Review*. 1(2): 119-130. <https://doi.org/10.32350/llr.12.05>
- Sheba, L. 2006. Ìwúlò Òwè fún Ìtòsónà Àwọn Ọmọdè ní Ilé-ẹkó: Ìpàjùbà. *Yorùbá: Journal of Yorùbá Studies Association of Nigeria*. 3(2): 62-70.
- Şótúndé, F. I. 2009. *Yorùbá Proverbs and Philosophy*. Abẹ̀òkúta: Damsan Nig. Company.
- Táíwò, A. 2013. *Ká Rìn Ká Pọ̀: A Novelist's Perspective on Security*. *Yorùbá: Journal of Yorùbá Studies Association of Nigeria*. 7(2): 111-138.