



# Some of the commonly used Bukusu Proverbs and their Literal Meanings in the Society

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## Research Article

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## Abstract

**Relevance:** Although the Bukusu community continues to maintain a strong attachment to their culture, traditions and superstitions, there is great evidence of gradual erosion of their ethnoknowledge base and ethnopractices, including their proverbs' custody, use and applications.

**Aim of the Study:** The aim of the present study was to document proverbs from the Bukusu community and give an account of their use and application in life as a way of safeguarding endangered traditions in the society. It was envisaged that this would provide a basis for further research on their applicability cross various communities.

**Materials and Methods:** Non-alienating, dialogic, participatory action research (PAR) and participatory rural appraisal (PRA) approaches involving a team of experts (whose knowledge of the community proverbs was beyond reproach and the so called paremiological minimum) from the Bukusu community were carefully selected and utilized based on their knowledge content and ethnopractice of the community proverbs.

**Results:** About 132 proverbs were listed and documented and their respective detailed meanings and interpretations given and briefly discussed where necessary. These proverbs demonstrated intellectual, emotional and moral attitudes due to the truths they exemplify and the message they convey thus making communication amongst people very admirable and interesting.

**Conclusions:** The study therefore confirms that the Bukusu have truly preserved a set of rich heritage of their proverbs anchored in the existing complex nature of various lifestyles of traditions. And further affirms that proverbs are ethnically used to give meaning to issues in life and provide teaching ethos on moral values, life experiences, speculations, interactions and skills for daily living in the society.

**Keywords:** Bukusu; Proverbs; Paremiology; Ethnoknowledge; Culture; Paremiological Minimum

## Introduction

It is indeed perplexing to define a proverb (also known as adage) because of its uniqueness, dynamic nature of utilization and existence in more than one language as people borrow them from languages and cultures similar to theirs [1-3]. Nevertheless, as per this publication and considering the philosophical framework of the proposals of definitions by Mieder and Zolfaghari and Ameri, a proverb is a short, simple, concrete, generally known sentence of the folk, which contains wisdom, truth, morals, advice, ethnic sage themes, ethnic experiences, common sense and traditional views in a metaphorical, ironical or formulaic language well-known among people for its fluent wording, clarity of expression, simplicity, fixed and memorizable form, expansiveness and generality and which is handed down from generation to generation either with or without change [4,5].

Proverbs are part of traditional practices of people and thus represent a unique kind of communication at any one given event meant for a specific class of persons amongst the entire audience with obviously hidden meanings. In such circumstances, proverbs carry messages to achieve and impact to the particular ethnic grouping under consideration in terms of giving advice, warnings, announcements, providing lessons to learn from and defining roles of individuals in the society [6,7]. However, some proverbs undermine socio-economic developments in the society when expressed and manifest discriminative disposition [8-11]. The *Bukusu* proverbs are truly a set of rich heritage anchored in the existing complex nature of various lifestyles of traditions and henceforth, worth documenting and passing on to our future generations [12-14]. More specifically, analysis of these proverbs addresses gaps and needs, which give rationale for studying and preserving them. Moreover, proverbs are ethnically used to give meaning to issues in life and provide teaching ethos on moral values, life experiences, speculation, interactions and skills for daily living in the society. Proverbs are like the old cultural trees in the compound and which therefore should not haphazardly be uprooted without well thought out traditional considerations as opposed to the conclusive remarks of Namulundah and Barasa and Opande during their discussion on the biased, marginalizing, non-gender sensitive and discriminative utilization and application of proverbs in the society [6,15,16].

In *Bukusu* community, proverbs are traditionally used in various ceremonies (in particular during circumcision and funerals), rituals, oath-taking sessions, political rallies, meetings, initiations, marriage occasions, peace initiatives etc [17,18]. For instance, the *Bukusu* funeral rhetoric type known as *khuswala kumuse* (*khusena kumuse*) is a special community ritual (ceremony) that is specifically performed to celebrate honoured and successful male elders, from clans that enjoy

respect from other clans for their kingship/leadership and governance qualities, upon their passing away [6,19,20]. In such rituals (ceremonies), proverbs are more often than not used as the main mode of communication with the audience throughout the session to preserve their deeper meanings to the old generation only and as a consideration for eloquence in public domain [21,22]. Although the *Bukusu* community continues to maintain a strong attachment to their culture, traditions and superstitions there is great evidence of gradual erosion of their ethnoknowledge base and ethnopractices, including their proverbs' use and applications [23-25]. This is fast-occurring because of drastic changes in people's life including but not limited to:

- Untimely deaths of persons with ethnoknowledge without documentation leading to loss of potentially useful information,
- Extinction of specific traditional ceremonies and ritual ethnopractices,
- Encroachment of development and modernization on cultural and traditional lifestyle,
- Adoption of lifestyles and education systems that do not embrace ethnoknowledge,
- Shifting bias in religious beliefs,
- Perception of certain socio-cultural ethnopractices as unhygienic and satanic, and
- The cost- and health-related risks involved in certain socio-cultural ethnopractices. The result is that either little or no information is being passed on to the next generation [23-25].

In this study, we discuss the results of a survey conducted to document and analyse the existence, use and practices of proverbs amongst the clans and sub-clans of the *Bukusu* community in western Kenya as a way of safeguarding endangered traditions in the society. The study demonstrates diversified and important aspects and values of proverbs in the *Bukusu* community as a cultural heritage that offers unique and productive lessons for decision-making processes and socio-economic development in the society and applying useful concepts of paremiology, where necessary, to local development needs.

## Methodology

### The *Bukusu* Community and its Diversified Clans and Sub-Clans: Source of Proverbs

The *Bukusu* community is one of the eighteen sub-tribes of the Luhya nation (tribe), which is popularly referred to as *Abaluya*, *Baluhya* or *Abaluhya* with about 1780 clans that comprise the *Baluya* cluster of the Bantu groups of the East African region [17,19,26]. The Luhya tribe is the second largest ethnic community in Kenya after the Kikuyu, representing close to 14% of the total population in the

country and it is neighbouring the Nilotic tribes such as the Iteso (Teso), Kalenjin, Luo, and Maasai. The *Bukusu* community comprises 16.35% of the Luhya population, which come from the larger Bantu tribe that settled in the fertile agricultural region of western Kenya. Out of these Luhya sub-tribes, the *Maragoli* (*Avalogooli*) and the *Bukusu* (*Babukusu*) form the largest proportion in population size. Other sub-tribes are the *Wanga* (*Abawanga*), *Marama* (*Abamarama*), *Khayo* (*Abakhayo*), *Kabras* (*Abakabras*), *Banyore* (*Abanyole*), *Tiriki* (*Abatiriki*), *Banyala* (*Abanyala*) also called *Abanyala ba Ndombi*, *Marachi* (*Abamarachi*), *Tachoni* (*Abatachoni*), *Isukha* (*Abisukha*), *Idakho* (*Abidakho*), *Samia* (*Abasamia*), *Masaaba* (*Abasonga*), *Gisu* (*Abagisu*), *Kisa* (*Abashisa*) and *Batsotso* (*Abatsotso*) [17].

The *Bukusu* community occupy the entire of Bungoma County, which is located in western Kenya between latitude 00°28' and 10°30'N and longitude 34°20' and 35°15'E near the border with Uganda to the West [27]. It occupies an area of 3074 km<sup>2</sup> on the southern slopes of Mt. Elgon with a population of about 2 million people divided into about 400 clans and sub-clans (each clan constituting a people of common ancestry, culture, language, taboos, norms and general lifestyle). The *Bukusu* community is well known for its great diversity of clans and sub-clans due to their unique ethnic-based differences in their origin, growth and development such as clans emanating from *Barwa* (*chikholo che Barwa*) (clans that had their origin from the Kalenjin, *Bayobo*, *Maasai*, *Karamajong'u*, *Samburu* and *Turkana* etc), *chikholo che Bunyala* (clans from Banyala), *chikholo che Silikwa* (clans formed after *Silkiwa* dispersal wars), *chikholo che Bumaasai* (clans assimilated from Maasai), *chikholo che Bumasaaba* (clans from *Ebugisu* in Uganda) and *chikholo che Ebuyumbu* (clans aligned to Tachoni) [28]. Other clans originated due to their fields of professionalism in life and such clans included those with circumcising potential as *chikholo che bukhebi* (circumcising clans), *chikholo che bubasi* (clans for works of blacksmith), *chikholo che kamaarara* (clans for controlling and managing hailstones), *chikholo che khukimba efula* (clans for rain-making powers), *chikholo chisolosya kamang'u* (clans that conjure orges), *chikholo chiselusya enjofu* (elephant herders clans), *chikholo chiswala kumusee* (clans that give key public speakers), *chikholo che ekutusi* (clans for ruling class), *chikholo chichasila eng'enda* (clans that avoid tan cows), *chikholo che kimikasa* (clans that wear leadership/kingship bracelets), *chikholo chikhalia engokho* (clans that avoid chicken meat), *chikholo chechuba embongo* (clans that avoid African buffalo meat) and *chikholo chisicha* (clans that offer clan secrets) among others [28]. This diversity in clans and sub-clans and their unique origin, growth and development patterns in time and space is a true reflection of the great diversity of proverbs shared a cross the entire *Bukusu* community, the current subject of interest.

## Methodological Approaches Applied in the Study

A variety of methods for collecting proverbs with the *Bukusu* community rather than from the community were applied as described by Peter [29]. After collection, a small team of experts (whose knowledge of the community proverbs goes beyond the so called paremiological minimum) from the *Bukusu* community were carefully selected based on their knowledge content and practice of the community proverbs noted during the collection period to edit the collected proverbs for such things as spellings, choosing the forms of the proverb to be included in the collection (from among alternative forms submitted), deciding if proverbs are not appropriate to be included in a public collection, etc [27]. The *Bukusu* phonetics and deeper meanings of the proverbs were also sought from this committee of experts. English translation and interpretation was given for each *Bukusu* proverb listed and towards the end of the project, the generated document was shared with the entire community of origin [30].

## The Source of Information on Proverbs of the Bukusu Community

The study of these proverbs (paremiology) focused on listing the proverbs of the *Bukusu* community in both English and native, *Lubukusu* languages while explaining their deeper meanings in English. The proverbs were sourced and compiled from a wide range of sources including, interviews and discussions with various selected *Bukusu* Council of Elders from a wide range of *Bukusu* clans and sub-clans, internet, websites of various institutions and the existing literature in various libraries [29,31,32]. Local centres and focal meeting areas known for preparation of a local brew locally known as *Busaa* were the most important meeting points of old men and women and formed important venues for the discussion sessions [27]. The ethnoknowledge of proverbs of the emigrant ethnic groupings like the *Bang'oma* and *Banyala* were also sought as they have learnt a lot about the *Bukusu* cultural practices and expressions including the use and applications of the ethnoknowledge of the proverbs. Additional secondary data were obtained from the records of volunteering individuals on the existing proverbs of the *Bukusu* community. All these groups were independently consulted because each was associated with a specific aspect of paremiology of the *Bukusu* community relevant to the current study survey.

## Personal Interviews with Selected Bukusu Council of Elders from Clans and Sub-Clans

This involved interviews/discussions with the selected

Bukusu Council of Elders from the clans and sub-clans, identified during a previous study [27]. These interviews/discussions were specifically on the use and applications of the ethnoknowledge of the proverbs of the *Bukusu* community and their interpretation while also confirming the validity of the already documented information on proverbs and proverbial sayings of the *Bukusu* community.

### Focus-Group Discussions

Holding joint focus-group discussions with all knowledgeable stakeholders considered to have attained an understanding of using proverbs beyond a paremiological minimum level in the selected 230 clans and sub-clans of the *Bukusu* sub-tribe was prioritized in order to access unique and specific aspect of paremiology relevant to the study. In the study area, focus-group discussions were formed, each comprising between 5 and 10 stakeholders based on their availability, acceptance, geographical location, ethnicity, conventional profession, economic activities, age, interest and practices of using community proverbs. A focus-group discussion was an exploratory discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a specific theme from a target group in a non-threatening environment [33,34]. This kind of group interaction produced data and insights that would have otherwise been less accessible [35]. The interaction between all stakeholders formed the collaborative and non-alienating, dialogic, participatory action research (PAR) and participatory rural appraisal (PRA) approaches utilized to build a consensus and verify that the information from other interviewees was accurately recorded IIRR. The group interaction also minimized the objectification of the first respondents as the only source of data [36]. One purpose of this form of collaborative research was to shift decision-making based on theoretical knowledge to the community, rather than conceding this role to the conventionally trained expert [37].

### Results

The results are presented by first stating the proverb in *Lubukusu* language followed by the literal meaning alluded to the proverb and lastly, its metaphorical meaning, use and applications in the society. The following are the proverbs.

*Chingekhanga yebusia.* (He who has made a mistake is always quick to defend himself.)

**Meaning:** One who has made a mistake is always suspicious and defensive before trial. Such proverbs are used in local *Barazas* for trial before a village elder, a sub-chief and/or a chief and in such circumstances, it helps to point out the wrongdoer. Same as, *Embwa enjifwi yemanya*, meaning, a dog that is ever stealing knows itself, immediately you raise a stick up in your hands close to it, it starts running away

before you even direct a stick at it to hit it. That is, the dog suspects itself of its previous wrong-doing and runs away whenever one raises a stick up.

*Kuwalulukha kukhoma tawe.* (Let a plant shed all its leaves but not dry up.) In terms of meaning, this proverb is the same as, *Kwanjula kukhoma.* (Let it lose its leaves but not try up.) and *Eyitanga ebira.* (A very heavy cloud assembly does not translate into even a single drop of rain.)

**Meaning:** Encountering a problem in one's life doesn't mean, that is the end of life. For example, becoming seriously ill doesn't mean that you are going to die and/or seeing clouds in the sky doesn't mean it is going to rain.

*Lirima lira siliombakha tawe.* (Anger kills, it doesn't provide for growth and development.)

**Meaning:** In life, anger is destructive not constructive. It is the same as, *Wakhabila oriena khubela lirima, silitekha kamabwoni kaya emayika tawe,* (implying, no matter how hot your anger is, it cannot cook potatoes), meaning, anger is not always a solution to solving any problems in life.

*Kamani ke ekhele kali neli mumechi.* (The strength of the frog is when it is in water.)

**Meaning:** You are stronger in your environment than anywhere else.

*Kuangala nio kwakhola ekhombe.* (A tree matures first before it makes a hole in itself.)

**Meaning:** Time for acquiring knowledge and experience is critical in making successful plans and decisions in life. One need to mature and acquire relevant knowledge and experiences in time and space before becoming useful to the community.

*Omwana nakhetuya taa, saria khukenda tawe.* (A baby starting to walk will not stop walking until he or she staggers and gets hurt.)

**Meaning:** Until you encounter a problem along the way in life, you will never realize and stop if what you were doing was bad and you did not listen to advice. In life, experience about a given situation is the best teacher to help explain and advise accordingly.

*Esuma engesi yayiila khusili, esuma esilu yayiila mumaya.* (A clever antelope grazes from the top of a hill while the foolish one grazes from the valley.)

**Meaning:** A wise person focuses into the future and anticipates dangers and gets ready for life challenges while a foolish one without wisdom is short-sighted and bases life on petty issues.

*Etipa seulila chichana tawe.* (One animal from a herd when it gets lost cannot even hear when the others in the herd make



sound elsewhere.)

**Meaning:** A person who does not listen to others' advices regarding dangers a head will get into trouble.

*Wakhaleka raro, nikho khakonia mao.* (Even if you despise your father, he is the one who plays sexual intercourse with your mother in bed.) In terms of meaning, this proverb is the same as, *Chinyanyi nichio baleka nichio balila busuma bamalakho khusitelu.* (Vegetables that are despised are the ones that are used to satisfy people.) and *Nisio oleka, nisio sitekhia mao.* (That which is despised marries your mother.)

**Meaning:** Do not underrate and/or despise anything in life because of what it looks like to you and/or as per your own judgement, for you will be in for a rude shock when it turns out that what you despised is indeed very valuable in your life.

*Omwana okenda akhila mawe kamakesi.* (A child who travels becomes wiser and more informed than the mother.) This proverb is the same as, *Siwomelanga niyewesingile tawe,* which implies, you do not dry from the same site you have taken bath from, instead you move to a different site.

**Meaning:** Wisdom and knowledge are acquired beyond your environment. That is, for you to realize your potential and who you are, you have come out of your comfort zone and face new challenges.

*Endekhelo emali elakhutula.* (The cooking black pot will catch/trap you and bring you back.) For instance, a child who has made a mistake and fears to be punished will be told the same when he or she is running away. When he or she becomes hungry wherever he or she will be, will come back looking forward to eat food prepared from the cooking black pot as he or she will have nowhere to lay his or her hand on.

**Meaning:** East or west, home is home, you cannot run away from it into hiding, eventually you will come back home.

*Chabiachabia akhila osocha.* (One who gives you something small is better than the one who does not give you anything.) In terms of meaning, this proverb is the same as, *Sikekhe silemia moyo.* (Small satisfies the heart.)

**Meaning:** In life, is better something than nothing.

*Okhutikitia akhila okhuyabila.* (One who tickles you to laugh is better than one who buries you in a grave.) **Meaning:** Laughter is an indicator of life, which is better than death that manifests into burial.

*Okhukhwala akhila okhupa.* (One who plays sexual intercourse with you is better than one who beats you up.)

**Meaning:** Sexual intercourse is associated with great happiness of livelihood in life. While being beaten in life is an act that is associated with sadness and great sorrow, thus profiling unproductive and indeed uncondusive environment

for survival.

*Bukesi buli oli kumukunda, wakamo nyowakesa.* (Wisdom is like a garden, if it is not cultivated, it cannot be harvested.)

**Meaning:** You have to learn, be inquisitive and seek wisdom from far and beyond if you have to be wise in life.

*Enjofu efutara nyobakinyeka kimania.* (Elephant turn away from you before you insult its ugly wrinkles behind.)

**Meaning:** An Elephant is one of the biggest and fiercest animals in the wild and when it walks around, it forms ugly wrinkles on its hind legs. Therefore, the implication of this proverb is that one cannot afford to, either insult or talk anything bad about a prominent person until that person has gone away from that environment is when one can now talk. This is not respect of the prominent person but fear of the consequences!

*Engila entayi ya khulia Enjofu elii ebweni wowo, okikhalaka khakekhe khakekhe.* (The best way to eat an Elephant before you, is to cut it little by little.)

**Meaning:** An Elephant is one of the biggest and fiercest animals in the wild. Therefore, the implication of this proverb is that you can solve any problems before you in life, however big it is by facing it one step at a time but not taking the whole of it at once.

*Okhakonyanga mwitabe liofu nyokalikhawo tawe kakona enjala.* (He who does not confirm the availability of flour in the storage tank before he prepares to cook, stayed hungry without food that night.)

**Meaning:** While facing any situations in life, think before you act, however urgent it is.

*Yuyukhana kaya kameno.* (One who is hurrying burnt his teeth.)

**Meaning:** This is an advice that, hurry, hurry has no blessings in life. Always plan things in time and space.

*Owikana kamaya kora esimbo.* (He who surrenders in war burns his fighting stick at a fire place.) **Meaning:** This is an advice given as a sign of peaceful surrender in any disagreement situation in life.

*Sikhulia sili mungubo.* (What eats you, is inside your clothes.)

**Meaning:** Your enemy is somebody who is very close and familiar with you in all respects of your personal life.

*Owekana kumurwe niye owakusuta.* (Whoever rejects to carry the head of a slaughtered animal while it is still being skinned, is the one to carry it eventually.)

**Meaning:** This is indeed a lesson in life, that, do not be quick to comment on issues that do not concern you while the concerned party is silent and still busy working on it for you

do not know the organization and the plan of the concerned party.

*Bimbakho chikone.* (Cover to sleep.)

**Meaning:** Be secretive with issues in life, without being quick to reveal it in public domain for you will not achieve the envisioned goal.

*Enulayama bwana.* (That which is nice starts from childhood.) In terms of meaning, this proverb is the same as, *Sikhukhaya, siama bwana.* (That which you cannot manage, begins from the early age.)

**Meaning:** Good-ending of a planned issue, good signs show up from the very beginning at initial stages.

*Ekhabi ekhila lukondo.* (Good luck is better than beauty.)

**Meaning:** Do not judge the value of somebody by an outward appearance.

*Ekhabi okinyola mulukendo.* (Good luck is found on a journey.) In terms of meaning, this proverb is the same as, *Omwana okenda akhila mawe kamakesi.* (A child who travels becomes wiser and more informed than the mother.), *Nandakenda kakhwa mungo.* (He who does not travel pays dowry in his own home (i.e. marries own relative) and *Nio wesingila sewomelao tawe.* (Where you have taken bath, you do not dry from there again.) From science of genetics point of view, if you marry a relative, you bear weak offsprings, which are easily wiped out, henceforth leaving no offsprings behind when the parents die, thus ending that particular lineage.

**Meaning:** In life, you succeed more when you move out of your home area (i.e. comfort zone) and you encounter challenges that industrialize your mind towards the path of growth and development with minimum interference.

*Okhabona mawe nali omukhana aloma ali rarawe kamwata busa chikhafu nicho kakhwa.* (A child despise father for having married not worthwhile woman who is the mother.)

**Meaning:** Literally, organisms lose the original and intended beauty as they age in time and space. Evolutionarily, this is indeed the past life history and tracing the circumstances of events, issues and decision-making processes is perplexing in nature. The implication here metaphorically is that you do not comment on issues that you do not know, in particular, issues that happened when you were not there to witness the underlying rationale.

*Kumwoyo kukhubolela kwakhila mao owakhusala.* (What you think from the inner heart is better than what you are told by your mother). In meaning, this proverb is the same as, *Kamaroro kakhila bufumu.* (A dream is better than soothsaying.) What you envision while a sleep is much better than what we are told by anybody.

**Meaning:** It is believed that the message of the inner voice of the sixth sense in you is better than what you are told by another person as a second party message to use in life. Your idea is the most important one in life, however, it is only shaped by advices, which should not replace the original idea under any circumstances.

*Kunaka nikwo kunaka, bora kwabumula lilisi.* (Tobacco pipe is just a tobacco pipe as long as it is producing smoke.)

**Meaning:** There are many tobacco pipes, ranging from very machine-made briar models to highly prized hand-made artisanal implements. In whatever way we look and consider all these varieties of tobacco pipes, their only function is to produce tobacco smoke. In whatever way we do things in life, the focus should be on the achievement of the intended end-result and not what is put in place in order to produce the result.

*Sie mumusiru sikhoya wanambwa.* (That of the forest requires a dog.)

**Meaning:** A forest is truly a feared monster and place, which is not easily entered by anybody. Therefore, it follows with logical necessity that in order for one to enter such a place, one needs to arm with a dog, which will counter any effects from the enemy and hunt for the desired one. In life, you need assistance from other people in order to get and/or access desired things that are not within your reach.

*Olia kama siengwe, okhalia kama sianamunyu tawe.* (Eat like a leopard but not like a hyena.)

**Meaning:** A leopard is a carnivore and very patient animal, preying on a wide range of animals (i.e. jackals, antelopes, gazelles, monkeys, duiker, eland, impala, wildebeest, birds, rodents, hyraxes, hares, snakes, sheep, goats and insects) for food and water, henceforth surviving without drinking water for long periods of time. Always it keeps what is left after becoming full for future use. While a hyena is a famed scavenger and carnivore, gluttonously eating to finish the encountered leftovers and hunted ones without keeping any for future use. This proverb focuses on the sustainable management and utilization of available resources in our environments with a view to preserving and conserving for future generations.

*Wakhaba omukesi oriema sewebeka tawe.* (However much wise you are; you will never shave yourself.) In terms of meaning, this proverb is the same as, *Sie mumusiru sikhoya wanambwa.* (That of the forest requires a dog.)

**Meaning:** In Life, you are depended on the support of other people in order to be what you are in the society. Value and appreciate the contribution of other people in your life in time and space.

*Enjofu yebubwayaya sekhusia kumusanga tawe.* (Elephant

that moves around causing disturbance, doesn't have its tusk growing and developing to maturity.)

**Meaning:** Elephant tusk is used for digging, lifting objects, gathering food, stripping bark from trees to eat, and defence as well as protecting the trunk that is used for drinking, breathing and eating. Performing these functions continuously without a break and also fighting within the herd, it will cause the tusk to break off its body while it is still young. In life, you need to humble yourself in order to minimize encountering problems that can affect your livelihood, including ending your own life.

*Okhalia weng'ene tawe.* (Do not eat alone.) In terms of meaning, this proverb is the same as, *Butelwa bwera engwe.* (Loneliness killed the Leopard.)

**Meaning:** Be considerate of others in life. In case of problems in your own life, these people you eat with will one day help you out of that problem. This therefore implies that however mighty one can be, one needs socialization, and henceforth, company in order to make ends meet in life.

*Embwa ekhasi yaula esecha.* (The female dog always wins over the male counterpart in any undertaking.) **Meaning:** Men are always weak before women in any undertaking in life and they are ever yielding to women's pressure in whatever way in the society.

*Waunwa sekalia wamosi tawe.* (A bull does not serve a heifer of the cow it is serving again.)

**Meaning:** This is a moral and an abomination advice in the society. It is immoral and abominable for a man to make love to both the daughter and the mother. From genetic point of view, it is also wrong as well as in the traditional sense, as in all respects, it is a form of a curse in life.

*Esimba yeboyela kumukhinga kwayo.* (A lion tied itself with its own tail.) In terms of meaning, this proverb is the same as, *Okhabona che balebe chilikho chipira, mala waloma oli chichefwe chabira tawe.* (Do not see the ones for the relatives passing by and then you assume to be yours.)

**Meaning:** A lion's tail serves many functions in its life history. For instance, a lion flicks its tail to communicate its feelings and as a sign of giving direction to cubs and others when hunting prey in the wild. When there is totally nothing you can use externally, you use anything available within to save the situation as the lion uses its tail to communicate and give commands in the wild without external input. What is really yours is what can save you in life not what belongs to relatives and/or any kinships.

*Okhabona efula niyipile engwe wakela oli epusi tawe.* (Do not mistake a leopard for a cat just because the leopard has been rained on.)

**Meaning:** A leopard easily climbs trees very skilfully, and

more often than not, rest on its branches just like a cat with a reduced body size, more particularly during rains and cold seasons. The implication therefore is that do not underrate people in life when you really do not know them very well. Value and respect all people irrespective of their prevailing situation.

*Kumwoyo kwesisa kwakonia engwe khwitikii.* (A sympathising heart made the leopard spent the night on the veranda of a house.) In terms of meaning, this proverb is the same as, *Kumwoyo kumulayi kukhuyila aleyi.* (A good heart takes you far.) and *Kumwoyo kumulayi kukila walia sifisilwe.* (A good heart makes you eat what is hidden.)

**Meaning:** A leopard is one of the fiercest, solitary and territorial animal in the wild. Its appearance is always a threat to human livelihood and is not tolerated in any ways, more particularly near any human habitations. In this case, because the person sympathised with it, an alarm was not raised, and the leopard spent the night on the veranda and went back in the wild without causing any harm whatsoever. The implication for this proverb is that a loving- and kind-hearted human will always avoid endangerment in life and live for long.

*Owania kebilila lakini owakasena sikebilila tawe.* (One who secreted the faeces forgot the event but one who stepped in the faeces later cannot forget it.)

**Meaning:** Whoever causes a problem in the society forgets but whoever is affected by the problem cannot forget in any ways. The impact of the problem is greatest at its impact level in future.

*Namunyu kakobola owamukisa.* (Hyena turned on whoever hid it while it was being hunted down to be killed.)

**Meaning:** In Africa, hyena is viewed as the most common large carnivore that is greedy, gluttonous, stupid and foolish, yet powerful and potentially dangerous and a threat to livelihoods in time and space. One therefore ignores this behaviour of hyena with regrets rather than with pride. In life, what has been proved to be bad is truly bad and should not be entertained as good under any circumstances. In the society, one should not defend a bad behaviour showed by some disgruntled members, for these individuals will, one day, cause damage to the society and the effects of the damage will affect the individuals who defended them one time in life.

*Ekokwa etambamo owowo olia nende bakhukutile.* (A meeting without your own, you will eat with those who have been backbiting you.) In terms of meaning, this proverb is the same as, *Kimikhono kisabisiana.* (Hands wash each other.), *Sili eburende sikhoya omulebe.* (That which is with the foreigner requires kinship.), *Siemwikubili, sikhoyela no mulebe.* (That which is in the house where the husband has passed on requires kinship.) and *Omwana wa mao esimbo*

*ye mukongo.* (A child of your mother is like a walking stick behind your back.)

**Meaning:** This proverb underscores the significance of kinship in the society. Kinship is key to survival in life as it is believed that persons connected and/or related by blood and/or marriage have indeed a strong bonding with well-guarded secrets of their lineage, henceforth, one cannot allow anything to harm the other one when it is secretly known.

*Walola nisio engekho elia sokilia tawe.* (If you see what the chicken is eating, you will not eat it.)

**Meaning:** If you consider each and every aspect in life, you will not be able to progress without assumptions.

*Ekhafu seluwanga ne lirumba liayo tawe.* (Cattle is never tired with its hump.) In terms of meaning, this proverb is the same as, *Oyima chichewe saluwa tawe.* ((Whoever is hunting his/hers, does not get tired.) **Meaning:** One should not get tired with soughting out his/her own problems in life as long as you remain alive.

*Chikhu chisala likokhe.* (Firewood gives birth to ash.)

**Meaning:** In life, people are not the same, generation after generation, for instance in a family, albeit sharing the same lineage. Do not expect children to behave the same way like their parents. The starting and ending points of an issue in a society are totally different and the resultant effects are completely unique.

*Nandakelelwa kacha ninako ebukhwe.* (One who refuses to be advised, visited with issues at the in-laws.) In terms of meaning, this proverb is the same as, *Nandakambilwa kakona khumwanda kwenjofu.* (One who refuses to be advised, slept on the elephant's road.)

**Meaning:** Is an advice in the society that, always listen to the advices of others in the society, for all of them cannot be wrong for what they say about you.

*Baofu babili sebekesanilia engila tawe.* (Two blind people cannot show each other the way.)

**Meaning:** It is true two blind people cannot lead the way for the other one, instead, you require one with normal eyes to lead the way for the blind ones. The implication is that helpless people in the society need support in order to get out of their current situation, not on their own.

*Sibikhe silie.* (Saved stuff can also be eaten any time in future.) In terms of meaning, this proverb is the same as, *Engila sebolela okenda.* (The road does not tell the traveller what lies ahead) and *Lukendo lubi selukhwikayila khukenda tawe.* (A bad journey does not prevent you from walking.)

**Meaning:** Well preserved food that does not go bad is potentially useful and can also be eaten when necessary.

Preserved food is just like any other food eaten and takes care of the future situation in the society. The implication is that it is wise to keep some food to take care of the future situation whose level of severity is not known. The situation of the future is not known so it is important that always, we prepare for it in the society. What lies ahead of our future lives, we do not know, henceforth, preparing for the unknown.

*Oraka bulo sakesanga kamayindi tawe.* (When you sow finger millet, you do not expect to harvest maize instead.) In terms of meaning, this proverb is the same as, *Engokho sesala likulukulu tawe.* (Chicken cannot give rise to Turkey.)

**Meaning:** What you prepare today will determine what you will have tomorrow. The future life is determined by what you do today in terms of preparations.

*Etibile olonda lukele.* (For a lost one, you follow footprints.)

**Meaning:** Animals when they walk, more particularly during rains, they leave behind prints of their feet in a step wise manner. So when they get lost and become a problem in the society, the foot prints are followed step by step until are located. The implication of this proverb is that, in life when you are solving a problem, approach it in a step wise manner, checking bit by bit until you finish the whole of it.

*Sikhula sicha enju.* (That which grows, goes into its own house.)

**Meaning:** What you take care, nurture it very well to maturity level, moves out to be on its own elsewhere. For instance, a young girl at home, once she matures, she gets married and leaves the father's homestead. The implication of this proverb is that, once you have been mentored to maturity level, you must be on your own without depending any more on the person who mentored you.

*Kubuli kukwa kukundi kwelayo.* (When a hip of dust drops and is replaced by another one.)

**Meaning:** Generations replace one another in time and space. When an old man dies in a family, a son and/or grandson assumes his position as a replacement strategy. In life, things age and die as they are replaced by others of the same kind. Life is dynamic in nature and like layers of a skin, it peels off and become replaced by newly emerging ones.

*Sikhukhaya siama mukhanwa siakwa.* (That which defeats you to manage, drops from the mouth.) In terms of meaning, this proverb is the same as, *Namukhokhome kafucha lisa.* (Gecko spit caterpillar.) **Meaning:** You may want, with all your desires to help somebody so that he/she gets out of a bad situation, threatening his/her livelihood but unfortunately defies what you suggest and further, does not appreciate and value the assistance on offer.

*Maayi wowasio sakhusinga wanoka tawe.* (The mother of the



other person cannot wash you until you become clean.) In terms of meaning, this proverb is the same as, *Maayi muro sali maayi tawe*. (My young step-mother is not my biological mother.)

**Meaning:** Somebody who is not your own biological mother cannot take care of you properly. It is only your own biological mother who can ensure your proper upbringing in life.

*Sikhuniala sikhuluma*. (That which persists bites you.)

**Meaning:** Continual recurrence of something in life is not good, it always causes damages in life, avoid if you can.

*Wangila akhila okhukhwela*. (The mediator who helps to bring on board the wife is better than one who gives you dowry.)

**Meaning:** The mediator investigates and gets data and information about the girl to be married as a wife and the nature of the entire family lineage and homestead in general. The general behaviour and discipline of the girl is comprehensively considered. The decision to marry the girl as a wife is therefore evidence-based and beyond dispute. While that one giving you dowry because of your daughter and the above survey of the mediator was not considered and henceforth involved, in case she misbehaves, the dowry shall be withdrawn with a penalty depending on the norms of a given ethnic grouping and severity of the misbehaviour. Therefore, always investigate what you want to do first before putting it into action.

*Khukhwekhebukha sebuli buri tawe*. (Looking back while walking is not a sign of cowardice.) In terms of meaning, this proverb is the same as, *Khuba nelimanya nilio limenya*. (To have realization is life.) **Meaning:** Always rethink about things you do in life so that you correct any mistakes in case any was made as you proceed on.

*Embwa yakalukha omulai*. (Dog turned to attack whoever praises it.)

**Meaning:** Your own dog is most likely to turn around and bite you instead of the perceived enemy. The person you have mentored in life to succeed will turn around and fight you fiercely.

*Kumusango lumee* (A purification ceremony with a congregation present is like due.)

**Meaning:** In the morning, when you are walking around, due simply attaches to you in all respects even if you are not aware of it. In life, such purification ceremonies with a congregation present are unavoidable and become associated with you just like due attaches to you in the morning when you are walking around. In life, things aren't always what they look like! You should become aware that far-fetched issues can become easily associated with you in a manner that you are not aware of.

*Kukwabaka eya butu, kulibaka nende enamu*. (A knife that was used to skin the dead animal, is the same that will be used to skin the live one.)

**Meaning:** One need to be careful in life not to mix bad and good issues in the society for this causes damage to livelihoods.

*Bumiumiu seburia omwami tawe*. (Slippery has no respect for the leader.)

**Meaning:** A leader is a very well respected individual in the society but if he/she dare walk on slippery ground, will easily slide and fall down, soiling cloth and any item carried in the hand without considerations of respect. Some areas in life have no room for respect regardless of your position in the society, so it is upon the leader to humble himself/herself under such circumstances if respect is to be earned.

*Nasikoko akhila omukhana*. (A woman already given birth to a child is better than a girl.)

**Meaning:** A woman has a better experience in managing life than a girl. Experience is the best teacher in life.

*Entuyu ekhulu enuna mung'ana*. (An old rabbit breastfeeds from its young ones.)

**Meaning:** Life in the society is solely interdependence. You take care of your children so that when you are old in future, they can take care of you too.

*Busale bukhila lituli*. (Friendship is better than a crowd.)

**Meaning:** Support and peaceful coexistence in the society is only realized through friendship and not by crowd, whether by kinship or not.

*Siabene siamoni*. (Property that is not yours is only owned by eyes.) In terms of meaning, this proverb is the same as, *Newaya eyo musumba, waya nolola emuliango*. (If you take care cattle of a non-married man, you do it as you watch at the door for the arrival of the owner) and *Nokhama enjekehwa okhama nolola emuliango*. (If you milk a cow that is not yours, you do it as you watch at the door for the arrival of the owner.)

**Meaning:** Do not invest mind and hope in the property that is not yours. Only value and glorify what is yours.

*Litore otilila nelikhakwasi tawe*. (You support a banana before it falls down.)

**Meaning:** Once a banana falls down, it gets spoiled. Even if you now support it to be upright, the damage is already done as the roots are already removed from the soil. Helping and/or assistance should be timely in life. Do not offer assistance when it is not necessary.

*Olinda kumunwa okhalinda lilisi tawe*. (Have hope in a promise made by a word of mouth to be fulfilled not smoke.)

**Meaning:** A promise is as good as debt. A debt is always paid back, whether the borrower is dead or alive. While smoke is not even contained, and just disappears in the atmosphere without trace of its origin, current and future state and/or direction, henceforth not reliable. In life, consider focusing on reliability.

*Kumwenyoela sekufubanga tawe.* (Early engagements do not always fail to succeed.)

**Meaning:** When you want to succeed in life always start planning early enough. This applies to all engagements in life, that always start arrangements and plans early, not on the deadline hour.

*Omwana wesecha sikolonjo silinda ekunda.* (A male child is like a piece of a broken clay pot; he is a custodian of the ancestry land.)

**Meaning:** Maleness is symbolic of continuity of any one given generation in the society as ethnicity is defined by identity of maleness.

*Khatuluku khosi khakheli.* (A hill is also a mountain.) In terms of meaning, this proverb is the same as, *Khatuluku khosi khema, okhhabotokhana nio wakhanina.* (A hill is also firmly erect; you go round it before you climb to the top.)

**Meaning:** Do not underrate and/or despise people and/or things in life. Do not assume and/or take things for granted; for things aren't always what they look like in life.

*Kumurumba sekuninikha.* (African teak (*Milicia excelsa*) tree is not climbed.)

**Meaning:** The species is a large deciduous tree growing up to 50 metres (160 ft) tall, while its trunk is bare lower down with the first branch usually at least 20 metres (66 ft) above the ground, thus implying that it almost impossible to climb this tree. The implication of this proverb is that what is impossible is impossible, you do not need to force things to happen in life.

*Nokhwesa siuna okhwesa ne endakala.* (When you pull Large-leaved transvaal gardenia (*Gardenia ternifolia*) tree, it comes along with all the rubbish on the way.)

**Meaning:** Gardenias are evergreen shrubs of flowering plants with hardy branches which collects rubbish when pulled along the ground. The implication of this proverb is that when you desire something, you must also accept what it comes along with.

*Omwibo omulilakho nasili khulusanja.* (You eat that which has been brought for a woman who has given birth before she heals.)

**Meaning:** A woman who has given birth is carefully taken care of by almost everybody in the community getting concerned and bringing nice food and presents. Once she heals, they

stop bringing these things, meaning that they become unavailable, henceforth inaccessible. The implication of this proverb is that, timing of the accession is very important to succeed in life by securing the opportune time.

*Kimiandu bimuli, biamulukhanga.* (Wealth is like flowers, which withers and drops off.) In terms of meaning, this proverb is the same as, *Eyabuchilanga khusili lelo ebuchila mumayo.* (That which used to roar from a hill, today it roars from the valley.)

**Meaning:** A flower on a plant blossoms and later withers. This is indeed likened to the situation of acquisition/accumulation and disappearance of wealth in one's life. Do not be proud of your wealth in life and base on it to despise and/or undermine others in the society for it can get finished in your life and all of sudden you become one of the poorest individual in the society.

*Omwimbi sakeleka enungo tawe.* (A short person does not advice on the traditional firewood store.) **Meaning:** The firewood store is usually put in the kitchen at a height above the fire place for cooking, meaning that a short person cannot reach there in any ways and correct and/or collect anything. The implication of this proverb is that, do not get concerned with what you cannot manage and/or afford.

*Nokaya okhailila, okaya nende engabo.* (If you separate one who doesn't listen from a fight, you use a shield.)

**Meaning:** A shield is a hard and protective instrument used in wars to prevent any weapons reaching out to your body. If you want to separate somebody who is consistently fighting and is not listening to your request to end the fight, it means that in the course of the separation as the fight continues, you will also be in trouble if you are not protected by the shield. In life, do not get into issues without taking precautions of the consequences of the outcome.

*Ekhisi elilanga okifumbusie.* (Gazelle's troubles are blamed on one who sited it in its hideout.)

**Meaning:** The gazelle does not blame the person who kills it but who identifies it from its hide out. Identifying a problem in life is the beginning of getting a solution to that problem for you cannot get a solution for something that you do not know.

*Embolu niyo eyiranga.* (The humble one is the one that kills.)

**Meaning:** Do not underestimate/underrate anything by an outward appearance.

*Nio okhambukhako tawe, okelao esimbo.* (The site that you do not use to cross a river, when you do, you first start by checking the depth of water using a stick.) In terms of meaning, this proverb is the same as, *Niyawenya khwambukhila luluchi, okeleka kamechi kamwo nelusala nyo.*

(If you want to cross a river, you check the depth of its water first by the stick.) and *Omusilu, nikenya khwaambukha luluchi akelekanga kamechi kamwo nebikele biombi*. (If a fool wants to cross a river, checks the depth of its water using both legs.)

**Meaning:** In life, think before you leap just to be sure that the landing site is safe. In other words, one should not be quick to get into any existing situation without first critically thinking about the pros and cons of the situation in terms of the consequences.

*Efumbukhe seria lume tawe*. (The one that is out to run for safety, does not fear morning due.)

**Meaning:** Do whatever it takes to save a bad situation encountered in life.

*Sikhulia sili mungubo*. (That which eats you up is inside the clothes you are wearing.)

**Meaning:** In life be careful as your greatest enemy to harm you is always closer to you than you think.

*Soleka kumusuru nikwo wamenyamo tawe*. (You do not despise the forest that shelters you.)

**Meaning:** It is indeed foolish to insult and/or undermine anyone you depend on or have once upon a time depended on for your survival in life, for if you do, you automatically become a cursed individual in the society.

*Kumusuni kuli khumatayi*. (Good fortune is indicated by the first stick you throw.)

**Meaning:** Good fortune only comes once in life not twice.

*Owalumwakho nende endemu karia likongolo*. (He who has once been bitten by a snake, fears a millipede.) **Meaning:** A millipede and a snake look alike in all respects except the size, whereby the millipede is smaller than the snake. In life, you do not live by assumptions, instead, you should be cautious of any circumstances that has hurt you before so that you avoid by all means.

*Sowelesia owasio kumubano kwoo, mana warere enyama mumayika olikho wosia*. (You do not give your knife to another person when you have put your meat on fire to roast.)

**Meaning:** Remove a peck in your eye first before you can be able to see what is in your friend's eye. In other words, satisfy yourself first before thinking of others, otherwise, you cannot pretend to be solving other people's problems when on your part, you are overwhelmed by problems.

*Sonyala wanina engasi eyetilile khumurongoro mbaka khungaki norere kamakhono mumufuko tawe*. (You cannot purport to climb a ladder supported on a tree to the top with your hands in the pocket.)

**Meaning:** A person who puts hands in the pocket means that, that person is not working and henceforth, cannot be

successful. Miracles to success are not there in life, instead, you have to work hard in order to be successful.

*Engibwe esakhulu sokisomia chingila chemusuru tawe*. (You cannot teach an old wild dog the paths of the forest.)

**Meaning:** Old is cold! The old wild dog has seen it all in the forest wild and it knows each and every corner of the forest just like the back of its hand. For the sake of attaining wisdom, learn to respect and listen to old generations no matter how stupid and/or ignorant they look like.

*Oyo oyilanga embusi khusoko yesi anyolekhananga musoko*. (He who takes a goat to the market also finds himself in the market.)

**Meaning:** In life, when you tarnish somebody's image for whatever reasons, with time, you will also tarnish yours more than you did for that person.

*Esimba ekurumanga seyiranga omundu yesi yesi tawe*. (A roaring lion kills no one.) In terms of meaning, this proverb is the same as, *Embwa esemanga selumanga tawe*. (A parking dog does not bite.) and *Orafuwanga sikapanga omundu tawe*. (He who is harsh does not beat anybody.)

**Meaning:** For you to succeed in your intentions in life, you need to execute them secretly and quietly or else you won't accomplish them by talking in public domain.

*Bikela bikenda bikhebulila biasenile mwiloo liendemu*. (Moving feet may find themselves stepping into a snake pit.)

**Meaning:** Moving feet have no eyes and sense where they step next as one is moving in any one given direction. In the same way, any person who is busy doing nothing and without considerations in life, can easily get into trouble in the next engagement just like the moving feet stepped into a snake's pit.

*Omwana okila mawe akhaye khukona lilo, yesi sakonanga tawe*. (A baby who makes the mother not to sleep, will also not sleep.)

**Meaning:** In life, your planned actions and inactions, will always affect you in one way or the other in time and space. So be careful when you are planning an action in life about its target effects.

*Efula yakhakwa eriena, selisinga kamapalapala ke engwe karula khwisielo tawe*. (However much it rains, rainwater shall never wash away the spots on the leopard's skin.)

**Meaning:** A leopard is a wild animal ever taking shelter on trees, henceforth, being rained on from time to time throughout life. Rainwater has never caused any changes on the spots of the leopard's skin in any ways. It therefore follows with logical necessity that you cannot change a person's true character no matter how hard you try in life, instead, you just learn how to cope up with it in a sustainable

way, i.e. co-existence is the way forward in life.

*Okhakhulela akhupa bukumba.* (That one who did not help you baby-sit your children; will always say you are childless.)

**Meaning:** Just by virtue of not having a chance to baby-sit somebody's child, cannot make you conclude that, that person is childless, this is purely myopic in nature. In life, do not judge the value of somebody by an outward appearance.

## Discussion

Literal and emblematic meanings alluded to the proverbs and their applications in the society. While presenting the results and discussion of the respective proverbs from the *Bukusu* clans and sub-clans, their literal meanings, interpretation, explanation, use and applications in life were given a priority. Proverbs also known as adage are short and popular sayings, just like aphorisms and

metaphorically, use formulaic and figurative language as some form of advanced communication amongst the old generation in the society to express perceived truth, old-age experience and as a form of life advice as well as warnings, teaching, educating, commentaries on life experiences and encouragements depending on circumstances. Proverbs carry emblematic messages contrary to their abnormal look and their popularity is purely based on four issues, namely: - (i), their application in spoken language on daily basis, more particularly in meetings/discussions, (ii), diversity of cultural expressions and practices, (iii), their innovative use and application in folk literature and (iv), the advancement of ethnic ethnoknowledge. The wisdom of any one given cultural expressions and practices is encoded in their formulaic and figurative languages of their proverbs and proverbial sayings [38].

A	B	C	L
Baabiya Baala Baabangura Baala Balubiri Baala Bakoyabe Baafu	Babaasaba Babaamanga Babambo Babaambocha Babangachi Babenge Babichu Babichachi Babikala Babengele Baburire Babuutu Babuya Bahambwa <i>Babuya Baholo</i> <i>Babuya Bakabo</i> <i>Babuya Bakhufwe</i> <i>Babuya Bamwonja</i> <i>Babuya Basikulu</i> <i>Babuulo Babatelema</i> <i>Babuulo Banabukhisa</i> <i>Babuulo Banakoyonjo</i> <i>Babuulo Baweswa</i> Babuutu <i>Babwoba Banabweba</i> <i>Babwoba Banakhulundu</i> <i>Babwoba Basiabulili</i> <i>Babwoba Batuta</i> <i>Babwoba Bananyenje</i>	<i>Bachambachi</i> <i>Bachango</i> <i>Bacharia (Bamacharia)</i> <i>Bachoe</i> <i>Bachemayi</i> Bachemwile Bachesoli Bachibino	Balako Babamweye Balako Bakhandia Balako Bakelo Balako Basiambo Balanda Balende Baley Balindo Baliango Baliisa Baliuli Baluu Baluchwata Balumela Balunda Balwonja Banawanga Balwonja Bakheyana <i>Balwonja Bakutoyo</i> <i>Balwonja Bamusabi</i>
		<b>E</b> <i>Baechalo Baminyi</i> <i>Baechalo Bachebasa</i> <i>Baechalo Banakhungu</i> <i>Baechalo Batoya</i> <i>Baechalo Banabalayo</i> <i>Baechalo Bamanyonge</i> Baemba Baengele	
		<b>F</b> <i>Bafulo</i> <i>Bafumbula</i> <i>Bafuumi</i>	
		<b>I</b> <i>Bailifuma</i>	
		<b>H</b> <i>Bahabiya</i> <i>Bahuma</i>	
<b>K</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>T</b>



Bakafisi	Bamaandali	Bananjofu	
Bakalasi	Bamaakita	Banang'unda	
Bakangala	Bamaesos	Banasaka	
Bakamukong'i	Bamacharia	Baneembe	
Bakamutebi	Bamakambo	Banyangali	
Bakembe	Bamakhanga	Banywaka	
Bakibwabi	Bamakhuli	Bang'ale	
Bakibeti	Bamakina	Bang'oma	
Bakikayi	Bamalicha	<b>R</b>	
Bakimepuli	Bamarakaru	Baraki	<i>Bata</i>
Bakimiyu	Bamasike	Barefu	<i>Batasama</i>
Bakimweyi	Bameme	<b>S</b>	<i>Batakwe</i>
Bakinisu	Bamiiso	Basaakha	<i>Batanyi</i>
Bakisebe	Bamoyayo	Basakali	<i>Batecho</i>
Bakiyabi	Bamufumi	Basakwa	<i>Batemulani</i>
Bakhali	Bamulundi	Basamba	<i>Batilu (Bamutilu)</i>
Bakhayabi	Bamunaa	Basang'alo	<i>Batindui</i>
Bakhanywinywi	Bamuhongo	Basamo	<i>Batinga</i>
Bakhwami	Bamuki	Basaya	<i>Batobo</i>
Bakhekhe	Bamukoya	Basamu (Basamo)	<i>Batolometi</i>
Bakhelenge	Bamululu	Basefu	<i>Batukwiika Baluleti</i>
Bakhiisa	Bamulundu	Basekese	<i>Batukwiika Bakitang'a</i>
Bakhoma	Bamuruba	Basyena	<i>Batukwiika Bakwangwa</i>
Bakhone	Bamusomi Bamahe	Basianaka	<i>Batukwiika Banambobi</i>
Bakhonjo	Bamusomi Basomi	Basibacho	<i>Batukwiika Basakha</i>
Bakhururwa	Bamusomi Basiuma	Basichongoli	<i>Batukwiika Baluchekhe</i>
Bakiyabi Babikeyo	Bamusomi Batoboso	Basihondo	<i>Batura</i>
Bakiyabi Balikiywa	Bamusomi Bamasiukha	Basimaola	<b>W</b>
Bakiyabi Banelima	Bamusomi Batunguya	Basime	<i>Bawambwa</i>
Bakobelo	Bamusomi Bamabecheu	Basimisi	<i>Bawandiambi</i>
Bakobolo	Bamusomi Bayasere	Basibende	<i>Bawabuya</i>
Bakokho	Bamuki	Basiloli	<i>Bawasio</i>
Bakolati	Bamulika	Basikula	<i>Bawaswa</i>
Bakongolo	Bamulolwana	Basimaola	<i>Bawele</i>
Bakoyi	Bamululu	Basituyi	<i>Bawayila</i>
Bakwangwachi	Bamunaa	Basiombo	<b>Y</b>
Bakwaya	Bamuruba	Basioya	<i>Bayaya</i>
Bakuta	Bamuyonga	Basombi	<i>Bayaka</i>
Bakusi	Bamweya (Bamwaya) Bamwalo	Basonge	<i>Bayemba Bakhayama</i>
Bakuunga	Bamweya (Bamwaya) Bengaki (Balukulu)	Baswuhu	<i>Bayemba Basaya</i>
	Bamwiima	<b>U</b>	<i>Bayima</i>
		<i>Bauma</i>	<i>Bayiitu (Baitu)</i>
		<i>Baumba</i>	<i>Bayumbu</i>
		<i>Baundu</i>	<i>Bayundo</i>
		<i>Bausi</i>	

**Table 1:** The identified 230 clans and sub-clans of the Bukusu sub-tribe (also known as Babukusu and/or Bakitoshi) represents one of 18 ethnic groups (sub-tribes) of the Luhya people of the interlacostrine Bantu group of East Africa. In the Table, the clans are arranged according to their main alphabetical letters of identity.

**Source:** Data adapted and modified from, Munialo, 2017: *Bukusu Clans*. Cultural Mini-blogger, Writer and T-shirt Designer. <http://dimplesnet.blogspot.com/2017/10/bukusu-clans.html>. As retrieved on Friday, November 2nd, 2018 at 2:37 AM East Africa Time.

It is indeed perplexing to define a proverb using just short statements that can be understood so easily but many

people understand and derive pleasure in using them when they encounter them on daily basis in life. For instance, in the course of interaction with the *Bukusu* ethnopractitioners and Council of Elders, the definition of the proverb was considered in the context of Wolfgang Mieder who defined the proverb as “a short, generally known sentence of the folk, which contains wisdom, truth, morals and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorisable form and which is handed down from generation to generation” [4]. Proverbs are just like a genre of folklores and exists almost in every language and culture of every ethnic grouping in *Bukusu* community as a way of reinforcing the values and colloquial language in the entire community life. The proverbs advise, motivate, acknowledge, educate, attract attention, propose, recommend, inspire, counsel and request people in the society as a guarded piece of folk wisdom, henceforth their popularity in daily spoken language and folk literature [39-41]. Just in the same way Jerzy Glusky stated that the philosophy of people and its nation are discovered in their formulaic and figurative language of their proverbs and proverbial sayings, so it is to the *Bukusu* community of western Kenya [42]. The *Bukusu* proverbs and proverbial sayings are used and applied in various unique situations relating to humanity, plants, animals, non-living entities and the entire universe. This therefore reflects the holistic and wholesome understanding of the various spheres of life of the *Bukusu* community that is framed into proverbs and proverbial sayings whose meanings extend far much beyond their literal meanings. Interestingly, the proverbs are ingenuously framed to be applied and work for all occasions and seasons throughout the generations of the entire life of the community with their universal value and plea due to the truths they exemplify and communications they convey [4,41]. Throughout evolutionary history therefore, proverbial expressions and sayings have significantly evolved and shaped the English language a great deal and henceforth made the communication admirable and very interesting, particularly amongst the old generation. A good number of proverbs comprise knowledgeable advice, which plays a didactic role of teaching wisdom and sagacity to the general public in the society while giving power to what is being communicated [43].

In total, about 132 proverbs were documented and compiled during the many visits made in the homesteads of various *Bukusu* ethnopractitioners and held focus discussions on the existing proverbs, their use and applications in life and subsequent storage format for future generations. However, the list is not exhaustive in any ways as it became self-evident that in the *Bukusu* community, there is a proverb for almost every situation in life and yet our study did not cover all situations in the community. Out of 132 proverbs, 38 were noted to have similar meanings with the ones already recorded earlier but framed differently using

different, ethnic-based formulaic and figurative language to literally give the impression of new and unique proverbs. Nevertheless, these 38 proverbs were metaphorically having the same meaning with those already in records, thus implying that they were developed under different experiences in different environmental conditions to communicate the same message by different ethnic groupings. This manifests in the diversity of the over 400 *Bukusu* clans and sub-clans (Table 1) [28], which may have had different evolutionary lineages in time and space, henceforth, different experiences in life resulting into different expressions of the same proverb by different ethnic groupings. It was noted from the recorded *Bukusu* proverbs and proverbial sayings that, in life, they demonstrate intellectual and emotional attitudes, i.e. dissatisfaction, compassion, purpose, acceptance as well as moral attitudes, i.e. consent, displeasure, indebtedness, confession or remorse [41]. These proverbs truly reflect who the *Bukusu* people are in understanding different situations in life.

## Conclusion

From the aforementioned numeration of 132 *Bukusu* proverbs from the diversified *Bukusu* clans and sub-clans, shows a manifestation of a robust and rich heritage of a genre of folklores and traditional lifestyle being practised today that is reinforced by the values, ethos and colloquial language of the old generation in the society [20]. The diversity of the proverbs is an indicator of elaborate ethnic diversity; implying that every sector of life in the *Bukusu* community has a unique set of proverbs associated with it for application and communication on daily basis. The advanced ethnic-based idioms used within the framework of these proverbs is an indication that there are evolutionary processes of these formulaic and figurative languages in time and space across the *Bukusu* clans and sub-clans, henceforth their conservation and preservation of the unique expressions of the proverbs within the old generation to date, beyond the paremiological minimum [18,28]. There is also an implication of a well-guarded ethnic-based systematic transfer of these proverbs within generations, otherwise, they would not have evolved through generations to reach this 21st Century intact in this commendable manner [7]. The study confirms that the *Bukusu* have truly preserved a set of rich heritage of their proverbs anchored in the existing complex nature of various lifestyles of traditions. And further affirms that proverbs are ethnically used to give meaning to issues in life and provide teaching ethos on moral values, life experiences, speculations, interactions and skills for daily living in the society [41]. There is need therefore to conduct ethnic-based surveys in all the 47 Counties of Kenya and document the associated proverbs in preparation for their depository at the Kenya Copyright Board as a future reference resource for archiving.

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