

## A SEMANTIC STUDY OF IGBO PROVERBS OF ADVICE

**Chinenye Loyce Okoye, PhD**  
**Department of linguistics/ Department of Chinese studie**  
**Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Nigeria.**  
**clo.okoye@unizik.edu.ng**

### **Abstract**

Language serves not only as a tool of communication but also as a means of transmitting culture, values, and collective wisdom. In Igbo society, proverbs are an essential part of oral tradition, encapsulating advice, moral guidance, and communal philosophy in short and memorable expressions. This study is a semantic investigation of Igbo proverbs of advice, focusing on how they convey meaning beyond their literal forms. The goal of the research is to analyse the semantic features of Igbo proverbs of advice and to show how they function as instruments of guidance, caution, and moral instruction within the community. The study is anchored on the componential analysis (Goodenough, 1956; Eugene Nida, 1975) to break down the semantic features of proverbs into their basic meaning components for clearer interpretation, Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), which explains how abstract ideas are understood through metaphorical expressions, and Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), which views language as action, showing how proverbs perform communicative and pragmatic functions. Data were obtained from oral interviews, literary texts, and direct observation. Fifteen respondents were interviewed, drawn from both elders and youths, ranging from ages 20 to 70. This mix allowed for intergenerational perspectives on the use and interpretation of proverbs. The findings reveal that Igbo proverbs of advice are highly metaphorical and symbolic, drawing imagery from nature, animals, human body parts, and social experience. They serve multiple semantic and pragmatic functions, including teaching patience, promoting unity, encouraging hard work, ensuring moral conduct, and warning against evil and its consequences. In conclusion, the study demonstrates that Igbo proverbs of advice are not merely decorative linguistic forms but powerful tools of communication, moral education, and cultural preservation. They embody the worldview of the Igbo people and remain vital for sustaining identity and intergenerational wisdom.

**Keywords:** Proverb, Semantics, Metaphorical, Igbo, Pragmatics Symbolic

### **INTRODUCTION**

Proverbs are an essential component of language and culture, functioning as vessels of wisdom, tradition, and moral instruction. In African societies, particularly among the Igbo people of southeastern Nigeria, proverbs are deeply embedded in everyday communication and serve as a sophisticated tool for expressing ideas, values, and social norms. They often contain layers of meaning that transcend their literal interpretation, requiring a nuanced understanding of both language and cultural context. The Igbo language, like many African languages, employs proverbs not only for aesthetic and rhetorical purposes but also to convey advice, warnings, encouragement, and general life principles. Proverbs of advice in Igbo culture are especially significant, as they guide behavior, settle disputes, and instill communal values across generations. From a linguistic perspective, proverbs are fertile ground for semantic analysis. The meaning embedded in a proverb goes beyond the surface structure; it involves metaphor, symbolism, cultural knowledge, and pragmatic inference. This study seeks to explore how meaning is constructed in Igbo proverbs that convey advice, examining both their literal and figurative semantic elements.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the cultural and communicative importance of Igbo proverbs, especially those that convey advice, there has been limited scholarly attention on their semantic structure and how they function meaningfully within their cultural context. While many works have focused on the literary or sociolinguistic aspects of proverbs, few have carried out a focused semantic analysis of proverbs of advice in the Igbo language. This lack of attention creates a gap in understanding how meaning is encoded, transmitted, and interpreted in these culturally rich expressions. Without a clear semantic study of these proverbs, their deeper meanings risk being misunderstood, lost, or misinterpreted especially among younger generations or non-native speakers. This study, therefore, seeks to bridge that gap by offering a detailed semantic analysis of selected Igbo proverbs of advice.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study on Igbo proverbs of advice is to document, analyse, and interpret the wisdom and guidance embedded within these proverbs, highlighting their cultural significance and practical application in Igbo society. This includes understanding how these proverbs function as a means of education, moral instruction, and conflict resolution. The study will also examine the broader context of the proverbs, including their origins, evolution, and relevance to contemporary Igbo life.

### **Objective of the Study**

1. To explain the common semantic features of Igbo proverbs of advice
2. To explain how these proverbs construct meaning beyond the literal level
3. To discuss cultural values that are embedded in the meanings of these proverbs

### **Research Questions**

In order to fulfil the above objectives, this study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the common semantic features of Igbo proverbs of advice?
2. How do these proverbs construct meaning beyond the literal level?
3. What cultural values are embedded in the meanings of these proverbs?

### **Scope of the Study**

This study focuses specifically on proverbs of advice within the Igbo language. It does not cover all types of Igbo proverbs but limits itself to those that are didactic in nature. Proverbs that offer guidance, counsel, or caution. The analysis is limited to selected proverbs collected from written Igbo texts, oral sources, and interviews with native speakers. Linguistically, the study will focus on semantic interpretation, with occasional reference to pragmatic elements where necessary.

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of studying Igbo proverbs of advice lies in their role as a rich repository of cultural wisdom, ethical guidance, and linguistic insights. Understanding these proverbs can enhance communication, promote cultural awareness, and offer valuable life lessons. Igbo proverbs are a vital part of Igbo culture, reflecting their beliefs, values, and worldview. Studying them helps preserve this cultural heritage and provides a window into the Igbo way of life. Proverbs add depth and color to the Igbo language, making it more expressive and nuanced. They also offer opportunities to learn about different grammatical structures and rhetorical devices. Igbo proverbs often offer practical advice on how to navigate social situations, resolve conflicts, and live a more fulfilling life. They provide insights into Igbo ethics and social norms. Proverbs can be used to defuse tense situations, facilitate dialogue, and promote reconciliation by highlighting shared values and perspectives. Proverbs can be used to teach language, culture, history, and values to younger generations, ensuring the continuation of cultural traditions. Analysing and interpreting proverbs can enhance cognitive abilities, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and language comprehension.

### **Limitations of the Study**

For this study on Igbo proverbs of advice, limitations include the subjectivity of interpretation, the difficulty of universal translation, and the influence of cultural context on how proverbs are understood and used. Igbo proverbs often carry multiple meanings and nuances that can be interpreted differently by individuals or groups within the Igbo society. Additionally, the potential for biased data collection (e.g., relying solely on certain age groups or social classes) and the challenges of accessing a diverse range of proverbs could also act as limitations. Factors such as age, gender, social status, and the specific situation can influence how a proverb is interpreted and what advice it is perceived to offer

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical Studies**

The study of proverbs, especially from a semantic perspective, is grounded in several linguistic and literary theories. Semantics is the study of meaning in language. It has evolved through various approaches, from traditional lexical semantics to modern cognitive and pragmatic models. Traditional Semantics focuses on the meaning of words and sentences in a relatively fixed and literal sense. In this view, proverbs are often seen as fixed expressions whose meanings can be broken down into definable units or semantic features.

Cognitive Semantics, as developed by scholars like George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) emphasizes that meaning is shaped by human experience and conceptual metaphors. Proverbs often use metaphorical mappings (e.g., life is a journey, wisdom is wealth) that reflect cultural and cognitive patterns. For instance, the Igbo proverb "*Nwátà búlìé áká éli, ámághì íhé ó nà-àchọ*" ("When a child raises his hand, no one knows what he is asking for") metaphorically implies uncertainty in a person's intentions or desires, especially the young or inexperienced. Pragmatics also plays a key role, particularly in understanding how meaning depends on context. Igbo proverbs often carry indirect or implied meanings, which require the hearer to infer the speaker's true intention. The Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) is relevant here, as proverbs frequently perform illocutionary acts such as advising, warning, or instructing rather than merely stating facts.

### **Conceptual Studies**

Proverbs, as a conceptual category, are generally regarded as pithy, metaphorical expressions that encapsulate communal wisdom, philosophical insights, and socio-cultural experiences. They are concise linguistic tools that rely on shared cultural knowledge for full comprehension, often requiring contextual interpretation. Conceptually, proverbs are not simply ornamental elements of speech; they are vehicles of cultural memory and ethical instruction, passed down through generations.

Conceptually, proverbs are understood as condensed expressions of wisdom, often metaphorical, and deeply rooted in cultural experience. Scholars like Finnegan (1970) have noted that African proverbs are more than literary devices, they are communicative tools that reveal the values, morals, and worldviews of a society.

In many African societies, including the Igbo, proverbs function as an oral archive, carrying the historical consciousness and existential reflections of a people. They are considered cognitive frameworks through which communities understand and interpret life events, human behavior, social obligations, and divine justice. Proverbs serve multiple communicative functions: they educate, warn, persuade, resolve conflicts, and reinforce social norms. They are typically used by elders or speakers of high.

Chinua Achebe (1958), in his famous assertion, said, "Proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten," emphasizing their centrality to effective and persuasive speech among the Igbo. Proverbs of advice are particularly valued for their role in informal education and moral instruction. They guide individuals toward acceptable behavior, often through indirect language and vivid imagery.

According to scholars like Bascom (1965), proverbs are "the most important of all the forms of oral literature," given their ability to both reflect and shape societal norms.

In the Igbo worldview, communication is layered and often indirect; hence, proverbs serve as subtle instruments of truth-telling, correction, and diplomacy. Their indirectness provides a socially acceptable way to advise, rebuke, or warn, especially in sensitive situations. This conceptual use of metaphor and allusion ensures that proverbs convey meaning while preserving social harmony. The listener is expected to decipher the meaning. It is a process that promotes reflection and personal insight.

Furthermore, proverbs are seen as performative and situational. They do not exist in isolation but are activated in conversation, storytelling, and communal decision making. They carry authority, especially when spoken by elders or those perceived as wise. This aligns with the traditional Igbo belief that language is powerful, and the speaker's skill is judged not by directness, but by how effectively they use proverbs to persuade, instruct, or entertain.

Proverbs of advice, in particular, are conceptually tied to moral and ethical education. They are used to groom the young, counsel peers, and remind older individuals of communal standards. Such proverbs reflect Igbo values such as respect for elders, hard work, humility, community solidarity, and foresight. Their enduring relevance demonstrates how the Igbo use proverbs not only to navigate personal relationships but also to reinforce societal expectations.

Finally, from a linguistic and philosophical standpoint, proverbs are conceptualized as encapsulations of indigenous epistemology. They reveal how the Igbo conceptualize reality through nature, human relationships, and ancestral wisdom. Proverbs, therefore, are not merely linguistic expressions, but cognitive maps that help individuals make sense of their world.

### **Empirical Studies**

Empirical studies on Igbo proverbs have contributed valuable perspectives on their linguistic, cultural, and communicative significance, though the scope remains somewhat limited. These studies have generally focused on the stylistic, pragmatic, sociolinguistic, and literary dimensions of proverbs, offering insight into how they function in real-life communication and cultural expression.

Nwachukwu-Agbada (1993) carried out an influential study examining the stylistic and rhetorical functions of proverbs in Igbo literature. His work demonstrated how proverbs serve as aesthetic devices that enrich both oral and written narratives, offering layers of meaning that deepen readers' understanding of characters, themes, and cultural settings. He emphasized the artistry involved in proverb use and how it contributes to the identity of Igbo literary tradition.

Echeruo (2001), in a socio-anthropological approach, explored the role of proverbs in maintaining traditional Igbo societal structures. His research emphasized how elders and leaders use proverbs to assert authority, foster communal dialogue, and mediate disputes, thus reinforcing social cohesion. His findings highlighted proverbs as tools not only of communication but also of cultural governance and social control.

Okafor (2014) examined the contemporary relevance and usage of proverbs among Igbo youth. His study revealed a noticeable decline in the frequency and depth of proverb usage, attributing this to factors such as globalization, urbanization, Western education, and a gradual shift away from indigenous languages. He raised concern about the erosion of cultural values and indigenous knowledge systems due to diminishing familiarity with proverbs among the younger generation.

Anyanwu (2017) provided a semantic-pragmatic analysis, investigating how the meaning of proverbs can shift based on context, tone, and speaker intention. Her work showed that the same proverb could serve various purposes such as warning, encouragement, or criticism depending on the situational use. This underscores the importance of pragmatic competence in interpreting proverbs accurately.

Another relevant study by Obi and Nwachukwu (2020) looked into the gender dynamics in the use and interpretation of proverbs in Igbo discourse. Their findings indicate that while proverbs are often perceived as gender-neutral, many encode patriarchal values or subtly reinforce gender roles. Women's use of proverbs is sometimes limited by cultural expectations, although female elders often subvert this through creative appropriation in storytelling and communal events.

Additionally, Nwosu (2021) explored the impact of digital media on the transmission of Igbo proverbs. His study revealed a growing interest in using social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and YouTube to document and share proverbs. This indicates a shift from purely oral to digital modes of preservation, offering both opportunities and challenges for authenticity, contextual use, and interpretation.

While these empirical works have shed light on various dimensions of Igbo proverbs, there is a noticeable gap in studies that focus specifically on proverbs of advice and their semantic richness. Few have taken a targeted approach to analyzing how such proverbs function as moral and behavioral guides within the Igbo worldview. This study seeks to fill that gap by offering a detailed semantic exploration of proverbs of advice, examining how they encode ethical instruction and cultural knowledge, and how meaning is shaped by metaphor, context, and speaker intent

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study adopts an integrated theoretical framework combining Componential Analysis by Goodenough (1956); Eugene Nida (1975), Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), and Speech Act Theory by Austin (1962); John Searle(1969,1975) to analyze Igbo proverbs of advice.

**A. Componential Analysis:** Componential Analysis (CA) was introduced in anthropology and linguistics through the works of Ward Goodenough (1956) in anthropology, and later developed in semantics by Eugene Nida (1975) and other structuralist linguists. This is used to break proverbs into their smallest meaning-bearing units or features. For example, in the proverb “*Ágwá ñtị ókwú, ó búrú nà ó núghì égbúrú ísì ñtị èsòró yá*” (“If advice is given to the ear; if it does not listen, when the head is cut off the ear follows”), the key components are advice, hearing, and consequence. This theory helps identify recurring semantic patterns and underlying messages.

**B. Conceptual Metaphor Theory:** This theory was introduced by Lakoff and Johnson(1980), explains how abstract concepts are conveyed using concrete imagery. Igbo proverbs often draw on nature rivers, animals, body parts to express moral lessons. For instance, a tree bending in the wind may symbolize humility or adaptability.

**C. Speech Act Theory:** This theory was first introduced by John Lang shaw Austin in 1962 through his posthumously published book "How to do Things with Words". It was later developed and expanded by John Searle in 1969 with his work *Speech Act: An Essay in the philosophy of language*. It was John Searle (1969,1975) who pushed this futher by highlighting how proverbs act as indirect speech tools. Proverbs may issue warnings, advice, or corrections without being explicit, often allowing the speaker to pass a message tactfully and persuasively.

Integrating these three theories provides a comprehensive method for analyzing both the literal meaning and pragmatic function of proverbs. This framework ensures a rich and culturally grounded interpretation of Igbo proverbs of advice.

### **Summary of Literature Review**

The literature reveals that proverbs are powerful communicative tools in African societies, especially among the Igbo, where they convey wisdom, morals, and cultural values. Theoretical studies highlight their role in instruction, persuasion, and conflict resolution.

Conceptually, proverbs are metaphorical expressions rooted in shared cultural experiences. They use vivid imagery to communicate advice, often indirectly, as emphasized by scholars like Finnegan and Achebe.

Empirical studies by Nwachukwu-Agbada(1993), Echeruo(2001), Okafor(2014), and others show how proverbs function in literature, social control, youth culture, and pragmatics. However, little focus has been placed on the semantic analysis of proverbs of advice.

This study addresses that gap using an integrated framework: Componential Analysis for semantic features, Conceptual Metaphor Theory for figurative meaning, and Speech Act Theory for communicative function.

Together, these approaches support a deeper understanding of the meanings and cultural relevance of Igbo proverbs of advice.

## METHODOLOGY.

### Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design. The qualitative approach is appropriate because the study focuses on interpreting and analysing the meaning embedded in language specifically, the semantic content of Igbo proverbs of advice. A descriptive design is suitable for examining how proverbs convey meanings, moral guidance, and cultural values without manipulating variables. This design allows for an in-depth analysis of selected proverbs and provides rich, detailed explanations of their semantic and contextual implications. The research population consists of: Igbo proverbs that function specifically as advice within the Igbo language and culture. Native Igbo speakers, youths, elders, scholars, and custodians of oral traditions who are familiar with the usage and interpretation of proverbs. Written sources including Igbo literature, textbooks, compilations of proverbs, and ethnographic texts. This population ensures that the proverbs analyzed are authentic, culturally grounded, and semantically rich.

### Method of Data Collection

The primary method of data collection for this study was oral interviews with native Igbo speakers, particularly elders, cultural custodians, and language teachers who are well-versed in Igbo proverbs. These interviews were conducted in both rural and urban Igbo communities to ensure a balanced representation. In addition, written sources such as Igbo literature, collections of proverbs, and academic texts were consulted to supplement the oral data. A semi-structured interview guide was used to maintain consistency while allowing flexibility in responses. All interviews were recorded with consent and later transcribed for analysis. The combination of oral and written sources ensured both authenticity and depth in the data collected.

### Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. Each Igbo proverb was carefully examined for its literal meaning, contextual usage, and underlying cultural or moral message. The proverbs were grouped thematically based on the type of advice they convey such as moral instruction, caution, wisdom, or social values. Patterns, similarities, and variations in meaning across different communities were also identified and discussed. Translation from Igbo to English was done with attention to cultural nuances to retain the original intent. This analytical approach allowed for a deeper understanding of the role of proverbs in Igbo society.

## DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

### Introduction

This section presents and analyses selected Igbo proverbs of advice. A total of 50 proverbs were selected from oral interviews with native speakers and written sources such as Igbo literary texts and collections of proverbs. Each proverb is presented and analyzed under three sub section.

### Data Presentation

The original proverbs in Igbo are hereby presented below;

1. Nwátà búlié áká élú, à mághí íhé ọ̀ nà-àchọ́.
2. Íhé ọ̀jọ̀ọ̀ ánághị ẹ́rì ọ́nyé àmàmíhé.
3. Éwú ná-átá áhìhíá, ọ̀mághị nà échí dì.
4. Ágwá n̄tì ọ̀kwú mà ọ̀nụ̀ghị, ẹ̀gbúrú ísì n̄tì ẹ̀sòró yá.
5. Éwú n̄wá ọ̀gbènyè bù ẹ́fí yá.
6. Ụ̀tọ̀ kà m̄mà n'òtè áká.
7. Áká ẹ̀kpè kwọ́ áká n̄rì, áká n̄rì àkwọ́ áká ẹ̀kp.
8. Ọ̀tù ọ̀sísí ádíghị ẹ̀mé ọ̀ké ọ̀híá.
9. N̄didi n̄wé m̄méri.
10. Nwátà kwọ́chá áká yá ọ̀sòró ọ̀gàrànyà ríé íhé.
11. Ánághị ẹ̀kwò m̄gbágbú ghàrá ọ̀gù.
12. Ụ̀kwà ánághị ẹ̀ré ụ̀bọ̀chì ọ̀dàrà.
13. Ụ̀kpàná ọ̀kpókò gbúrú n̄tì chírí yá.
14. Ẹ̀jìghì ụ̀tùtù àmá n̄jọ́ áhíá.
15. Azù ráhù ụ̀rà, ázù íbè yá ẹ̀lọ́ yá.
16. Ọ́nyé chọ́ró ị̀ bú ọ̀gàrànyà gà-àgbá m̄bò, máká nà ẹ̀gō dì n'ọ̀gwū.
17. Kà áná àchù àjà, kà íkpé n'ámá n̄dị́ m̄mùò.
18. Ẹ̀gwù ádírò àtù áfọ́, ọ̀búrú ụ̀zọ́.
19. Ọ̀krò ánághị ẹ̀tókárí ọ́nyé kúrú yá.
20. Ẹ̀zì áhà kà ẹ̀gō.
21. Ọ́nyé ná-ébi n'ókè yá, n̄dù yá gà-àdírí yá m̄mā.
22. Ọ́ jì n̄gàzì ẹ́rì chètákwá n̄dị́ jí áká.
23. Áká áná-áná díkè bù itúbé yá ụ̀gò.
24. Ísì kótára ẹ̀bù kà ẹ̀bù nà-àgbá.
25. Ọ́ nà-àbù ákòtá íhé ká ụ̀bí, è lée ọ̀bá.

26. Ùgò chará àchá ádíghì èchú èchú.
27. Òkíríkírí kà ànà-àgbá úkwù òsè ànàghì àrì yá élù.
28. Òtù ónyē tūò izù, ò gbúé óchù.
29. Ánú gbálá tàà, échí bù ntá.
30. Èjìghì ákpátá átúfuò àbá ògàrànyà.
31. Òbúghì ógè óbùlà kà ósísí jì ámì m̀kpúrú
32. Òkúkò ríé ǹrì, ò hápùtù íríghírí .
33. Ányásì ádíghì m̀mā ádíghì emébi échí.
34. Ò búghì ógè níílè kà m̀mírí nà-ézò.
35. È nyéré nwátà áká búlié íbù, ò wèlié áká n'èkèlè.
36. Ónyé jí òkú gbaá nwátà, nà-ègbú ònwé yá.
37. È jírì ógólógó ndù emé íhé ikè, òkúkò ágághì àbù ánú.
38. Íhé òjòò ànàghì èrì ónyé àmàmíhé.
39. Ónyé jí ígù kà éwú nà-ésò.
40. Ónyé nwé m̀mádù kà é jì àmā m̀mádù.
41. Ónyé chòrò ìdī ndù nà-ésò úzò ndù.
42. Ónyé rúrú ùlò , yá rúò ùlò ózò
43. Ánwù ànàghì ègbú chí.
44. Ónyé nà-árúsì òrú íké nà-èrì íhé ómā
45. Ónyé àmághì ébé m̀mírí bìdòrò mábá yá àmághì ébé m̀mírí gà-ákwúsì.
46. Ónyé ná-ákpá íké gà-èrì ǹrì.
47. Ónyé ájùjù ádíghì éfù úzò.
48. M̀mírí ànàghì ègbú ényí, mà ò búrú nà ó gbúó yá, íhé ózò ádíghìzì.
49. Ò búghì ógè níílè kà ósísí jì ámì m̀kpúrú.
50. Ónyé nwèrè m̀mádù nwèrè égò.

We hereby present below; The literal English translation, the contextual meaning and semantic / figurative analysis  
Below display some of the selected proverbs:

1. Nwátà búlié áká élù, àmághì íhé ó nà-àchó.

Gloss: Child raise hand up not knowing what he want.

Translation: If a child raises a hand, no one knows what he wants.

Meaning: People's intentions are not always clear, caution is needed before acting. This proverb has uncertainty, intention, and caution as the key points there.

The is usually used where an individual is confused on a particular decision to make in a difficult or unfavourable situation. Example A type of business to start or switch, so the person have to inquire and be cautious before making any decision.

2. Íhé òjòò ànàghì èrì ónyé àmàmíhé.

Gloss: something evil do not eat someone wisdom.

Translation: Evil does not consume the wise.

Meaning: It teaches that being wise protects us from danger. This proverb advice us to be wise in everything that we do so to avoid any danger.

It can be used where there is family crisis or business war so as to be wise in every step and decide we make.

3. Éwú ná-átá áhìhjá ò mághì nà échí dī

Gloss: Goat that( progressive aspect ) eat grass it- PRO does not know that tomorrow exist.

Translation: The goat eats grass, unaware that tomorrow exists.

Meaning: It advice that we should act with foresight and self-control. Time, consequence, wisdom are the key points. This proverb is use to advice people that spend extravagantly in to teach to spend wisely because no body knows tomorrow.

4. Ágwá ntì ókwú mà o 'núghì, égbúrú ísì ntì èsòró yá.

Gloss: To speak eat word if PRO does not hear when cut head ear follows PRO.

Translation: If words are spoken to the ear, if it does not listen, when the head is cut off the ear follows.

Meaning: Ignoring advice leads to consequences. Advice, punishment and responsibility are the key points.

This proverb is usually applied or use when someone being given an advice but still the person is being stubborn to listen. Example: Advising a child that is following bad gang.

5. Éwú ǹwá ógbènyè bù éfì yá.

Gloss: Goat child poor man is cow his/PRO

Translation: A poor man's goat is his cow.

Meaning: This proverb teaches that contentment is the key in everything so we should cherish what you have.

It is an advice given when someone is being greedy and not satisfied. Example: when parents advice their children not to be played by any man outside, they should contented in the little their family can offer.

6. Ùtò kà m̀mā n'òtè áká.

Gloss: sweetness more than/ greater beauty at distance hand

Translation: Friendship is most pleasant from a distant.

Meaning: It is good to keep some distance from friends to avoid unnecessary insults from them.

This proverb explained that too much of closeness to friend and neighbors can make them to disrespect and insult you any time and however they want. So are supposed to keep our distance from others.

7. *Áká èkpè kwó áká níri, áká níri àkwó áká èkpè.*

Gloss: Hand left wash hand food hand food wash hand left.

Translation: If the left hand washes the right hand, the right hand washes the left hand.

Meaning: it teaches us to do favour to others and they may return the favour when needed.

It is used in a situation where we have money and our friend or neighbour don't have, we are supposed to help them because tomorrow might be our turn.

8. *Ótù ósísí ádíghì èmé óké óhíá.*

Gloss: One tree does not make big forest.

Translation: A tree does not make a forest.

Meaning: it teaches to speak up when you are not comfortable or when you need help others. When facing challenges or situations that we can't handle we should ask for help from others.

It can also be used in a situation where someone is being greedy to snatch property or land, so we should know that one person cannot live alone in a community or family.

9. *Ñdidi nwé mméri.*

Gloss: patience have victory.

Translation: Patience has victory.

Meaning: Having patience in life brings about good results in future and overcoming of hardship. Things might not be good for us today in business or education we should have patience and keep working hard to achieve exactly what we want.

This is an advice given when someone is facing challenges or problems, example problems in business and not achieving something for a long time.

10. *Nwátá kwóchá áká yá ò sòró ògàrànyà rié níri.*

Gloss: Child washes hand PRO he /PRO follow rich man eat food.

Translation: if a child washes his hands then he could eat with kings.

Meaning: It advice us to pay respects to people that it is due to for a better future.

11. *Anághì ékwò mgbágbú ghàrá ògù.*

Gloss: One does not avoid pain to avoid fight.

Translation: The fear of death cannot prevent people from going to war.

Meaning: You cannot avoid your challenges because of the problems that you will face. It teaches us to stand upright to face your problem because no one will do that for us.

This proverb can be given to people that lost their parents or people that are facing many problems in life. Example, when someone loses the parents the eldest will be advice to take on the responsibility of the junior ones.

12. *Úkwà anághì èré úbòchì ó dàrà.*

Gloss: Breadfruit do-neg spoil day it/PRO falls.

Translation: Breadfruit does not ferment the day it falls.

Meaning: Your hard work may not pay immediately but in the future therefore, we should continue to work hard for a better tomorrow.

It is a proverb that teaches patience and hard work and providing us will courage to continue to work hard because hard work pays no matter how long.

13. *Ụkpànà òkpókò gbùrù níti chíri yá.*

Gloss: Grasshopper the hawk kill-past ear deaf PRO.

Translation: The grasshopper that is killed by crow is deaf.

Meaning: It advice us not to be stubborn, so as not to face the consequences.

It teaches us to always listen to advice that is to be obedient be it pays and can help to prevent danger. Example: when an elder is advising the junior one against doing something bad to make money if the person continues then he will face the consequences.

14. *È jíghì útùtù àmá níjọ áhíá.*

Gloss: One does not morning to know bad market.

Translation: You can't judge that a market would be bad in the morning.

Meaning: Ones future can't be determined by a bad start because tomorrow may be better than today.

It advice us on patience and determination, we should continue to work hard because it pays but may not pay immediately. So whether in business or carrier hard work is needed.

15. *Ázù ráhù úrà, ázù íbè yá èlọ yá.*

Gloss: Fish slept sleep fish fellow PRO swallow PRO.

Translation: if a fish sleeps, it will be eaten by another fish

Meaning: This proverb advice us to be cautious and keep pushing to our dream. It teaches us not to let our guard down because there are many dangers that can arise at any time.

We should be wise and alert at any point in time in our daily life. It can also be used to advice us to keep praying because evil people don't sleep.

16. Ónyé chóró íbú ògàrànyà gà-àgbá mbò, máká nà égō dì n'ógwū.nà égō dì n'ógwū.

Gloss: Person want to be rich man will make effort because and money exists in thorn.

Translation: Whoever wants to be wealthy must be prepared to work hard because wealth resides right in the thorn.

Meaning: We must take risks in order to achieve our goals in life. It teaches us that to be successful is not easy, we must pass through challenges before we achieve what we want.

This proverb teaches that wealth and success require hard work, courage, and the willingness to face difficulties. It reflects the Igbo belief that valuable achievements are often found in challenging places, and only those who are determined and persistent can attain them. The message encourages resilience and emphasizes that nothing meaningful comes without effort. This proverb teaches hard work, determination, confidence and fearlessness.

17. Kà áná àchù àjà, kà íkpè n'ámá ndí mmùò.

Gloss: The more one is offering sacrifice in the world judgement spirits.

Translation: let's keep sacrificing, let the gods take the blame.

Meaning: It advice us to do whatever we are supposed to do and leave others for God to finish.

It teaches that when individuals consistently put in their effort, they are free from accusations or consequences that may arise later. The expression reflects the communal Igbo belief that responsibility is shared, and anyone who fulfills their duty stands justified regardless of the outcome.

18. Égwù ádíró àtù áfó, òbúru úzò.

Gloss: Fear does not catch stomach to be in front of road.

Translation: Fear does not affect the stomach, that's why it is always in front.

Meaning: Irrespective of the risk involved, we must make an attempt in order to get what we want. It teach confidence and fearlessness in whatever we do In life.

It advice that we should have courage, and take initiative even in the face of potential danger or uncertainty.

The idea is that while other parts of the body might hesitate or be afraid, the stomach (represent need, hunger, or sheer determination) is always in the lead, pushing forward to get what is necessary.

19. Òkrò ánághì ètókáí ónyé kúrú yá.

Gloss: Okra( a vegetable plant) does not grow taller than person planted it.

Translation: The okro cannot grow taller than the planter.

Meaning: No matter how successful you are in life, you cannot surpass the hand that groomed you.

It teaches us respect and humility towards people that are above us or those that senior us like the leaders and elders of our community.

20. Ézí áhà kà égō.

Gloss: Good name is more than /greater than money.

Translation: Integrity and good reputation are more valuable than wealth. This proverb emphasizes the enduring value of integrity, reputation, and character over material wealth. The core message is that while money can be fleeting, a good name earns respect, trust, and goodwill within the community, which are considered priceless and will ultimately benefit a person more in the long run than any amount of riches.

It serves as a moral guideline, encouraging individuals to pursue virtuous actions and build a strong, reputable character. We should not be too obsessed with money rather we should make a good name for our self.

21. Ónyé ná-ébí n'ókè yá, ndù yá gà-àdíri yá mmā.

Gloss: Person who lives within boundary PRO life his/PRO will be PRO beauty.

Translation: He who lives within his limit, his life will be good for him.

Meaning: Contentment brings peace and a stress-free life. This proverb teaches us to know our boundary between our friend and neighbour because too much of closeness may lead to problem in the future so we are supposed to always watch ourselves. It advises us that whatever we do in life we should know our limits and be contented in what we have.

22. Ò jì ngàzì èri chètákwá ndí jí áká.

Gloss: He/ PRO has spoons to eat remember those has hand.

Translation: He who eats with spoon should remember those who uses hand to eat.

Meaning: While you enjoy yourself, always have the destitute at heart. This proverb advice that those that are comfortable should be humble and not to cause problem for those who struggle.

This proverb teaches us to help others when we have something, that means we should harbor kindness in heart. For example, in a situation where you have money and opportunities, you should be kind enough to help those that are need of help.

23. Áká áná-áná díkē bù ítúbé yá ùgò.

Gloss: Hand that you collect strong person is to praise him eagle.

Translation: Appropriate handshake for the valiant is to cap him with an eagle .

Meaning: Noble deeds should be appreciated. It teaches appreciating the heroes of our community and country. It advice us to appreciate people that stand against evil in our village or community that is those that protect our community.

24. Ísì kótará èbù kà èbù nà-àgbá.

Gloss: Head carries wasp/hornet that wasp bites.

Translation: It is the head that disturbs the wasp that the wasp stings.

Meaning: It is a proverb that we used in warning trouble makers about serious consequences of their actions.

It advices us on evil and their consequences, every bad action/step we do has it's consequences. For instance, in a situation where someone is misbehaving like being a prostitute, maybe in later time it can lead to childlessness and this is where we can use this proverb.

25. Ọ nà-àbù ákòtá ihé ká úbi, è léè ọbá.

Gloss: Is as if that when farming something more than farm we look barn.

Translation: Whilst farming, if one encounters what is bigger than the farm, one sells the barn.

Meaning: It teaches that we should not incurs what is beyond our ability so that it will not cause any problem for us.

It advice us to know what we can do and what we cannot do so that we will not bring problem to ourselves. This proverb also teaches us to know our limits and capabilities in everything that we do.

26. Ụgò chára àchá ádíghì èchú èchú

Gloss: Eagle( symbol of dignity , greatness) that ripe will not look unpresentable.

Translation: A mature eagle feather will ever remain pure.

Meaning: Someone that is well trained will remain the same and not change. It teaches that we should be genuine and not fake, because when we are genuine and good it will never change

For instance, when we train our children very well when they grow they will follow the same footsteps and not disappoint us.

27. Okirikiri kà á nà-àgbá úkwù òsè anághì àrì yá élù.

Gloss: Round round that we run waiste pepper we cannot climb it up.

Translation: The pepper shrub is not climbed but circled.

Meaning: When we faced a dicey situation, we should approach it with caution. We should be wise in every decision and situation because and missed step may cause a huge problem for us maybe instantly of in the future.

It is an advice on wisdom and caution in whatever we do in life because life is full of challenges.

28. Ọtù ónyē tùọ izù, ò gbúé ọchù.

Gloss: one person offer decision he kills.

Translation: If one man takes decision, he commits murder.

Meaning: Knowledge is never complete, we should always seek for advice from others. It teaches that whatever we do we should inquire from others before acting because two heads are better than one. For instance, if someone want to start a new business, the person should inquire on the advantages and disadvantages of that business i.e the risk in the business in order not to have problem in handling the business.

29. Anù gbálá táà, échí bù rítá.

Gloss: Meat that run today, tomorrow is hunting

Translation: if an animal escapes the hunter today, tomorrow is yet another day to hunt.

Meaning: Tomorrow is a new day with new opportunities, so we should have hope and determination that opportunities will occur for us.

It advice us that we should have hope as far as we are still alive opportunities will come for us. For example, when looking for a job, and the person didn't get the job at first or second time, this is the kind of proverb the person need in that situation

30. È jíghì ákpátá átúfúò àbá ọgàrànyà.

Gloss: One does not harvest to throw away to be rich.

Translation: No one gets wealthy by throwing away what they have acquired.

Meaning: It teaches us that wasteful people will never become wealthy.

I advise us to avoid wasting our resources or money because tomorrow we might be in need of that money or resources. It is an advice on wisdom.

31. Ọ búghì ógè ọbùlà kà ósísí jì àmì mkpúrú.

Gloss: It is not time every that tree use bear fruit.

Translation: It is not at all times that a tree bears fruit.

Meaning: It is a proverb that encourages and teaches patience. In whatever we do in life we are not supposed to always expect a quick result but rather we should be patient for God's time or the right time.

In life, some days are bright while some days are dark. This proverb is used to teach where someone is facing some problems in business, then the person will be advised to have patience for God's time.

32. Ọkúkò rié ní, ọ hápùtù írighiri.

Gloss: Chicken eats food it leaves crumb/leftover.

Translation: When the fowl eats, it leaves crumbs.

Meaning: It teaches to consider others in whatever we do and as we are being kind to people then our own blessings and reward will come for us.

It can serve as an advice on unity, community and kindness. We should help others that are in need when we have it because tomorrow it might be our turn.

**33.** Ányàsì ádíghí m̀m̀m̀ ádíghí èmébì échí.

Gloss: Night does not beauty does not spoil tomorrow

Translation: A bad night does not spoil the morning.

Meaning: It advice us not to lose hope rather we should believe that tomorrow will be better . It is an advice that encourages hope and also provide us with confidence in our future i.e believing that tomorrow will be great and powerful more than today.

For instance, when someone opens a business and it is not selling the person can be given this proverb as an advice of encouragement.

**34.** Ò búghì ógè níílè kà m̀m̀m̀rì nà-ézò.

Gloss: It is not time all that water/rain will fall.

Translation: The rain does not fall forever.

Meaning: It is an advice on wisdom teaching that we should have hope because it is not every time that problem will come. Trouble does not last forever so we should believe that all the problems we are facing will go away in the future.

**35.** É nyéré nwátà áká búlíé íbú, ò wèlíé áká yá n'èkèlé

Gloss: someone helped child hand lift load he lift hand his in gratitude.

Translation: When you help a child lift his load, he lifts his hand in gratitude.

Meaning: This Igbo proverb encourages gratitude and reciprocity. To whom thatde serve it.

It teaches us to appreciate people after they helped us in trouble or problem because when you appreciate maybe tomorrow if you need help again they will still be willing to help us again.

**36.** Ónyé kwé, chí yá èkwé.

Gloss: Someone accept God his accept.

Translation: When a person agrees, his chi agrees also.

Meaning: It teaches determination in whatever we are doing.

Human effort aligns with destiny so we determined and focused in whatever we are doing in life.

**37.** Ónyé ná-énwéghì chí ánághí àgbá ósó .

Gloss: Someone does not have God does not run speed.

Translation: He who has no destiny does not run far.

Meaning: It advice that in everything we do in life, fate guides our effort. It teaches hard work to achieve our destiny, because we can decide our fate or destiny.

**38.** Ó búghì ónyé nà-àkwúsìghì íké kà ónwù nà-ègbú.

Gloss: It is not someone that does not stand strong that death kills.

Translation: It is not only the person who refuses to rest that death kills.

Meaning: It is a proverb that teaches that it is not only the weak that death kills, death is inevitable.

It advice that trouble or death can come to anyone, not just those who overwork themselves. This means that misfortune is not limited to a specific kind of person.

**39.** Ónyé chóró ídī ndù, nà-ésò úzò ndù.

Gloss: Someone want to be alive will follow road life

Translation: He who desires life must follow the path of life.

Meaning: This proverbs teaches that we should make good choices because it can preserve our life.

It is an advice on moral conduct, advising us to be aware of anything we do in life. For instance, someone that is following group of bad people may not last long in life, therefore this proverb can be used as an advice to this person.

**40.** Ónyé ájùjú ádíghì éfù úzò .

Gloss: Someone question does not miss road.

Translation: He who asks questions does not miss the road.

Meaning: This proverb encourages seeking knowledge before acting.

It advice that we should always ask questions or seek knowledge before making any decision in life because in Igbo asking questions is a beginning of wisdom. It tells us to know what knowledge we lack .

**41.** Ágwó ánághí àgbá ósó n'éfù.

Gloss: Snake does not to run running in vain

Translation: The snake does not run in vain.

Meaning: This proverb teaches that every action has a reason why it happened, therefore we should be observant enough to notice the reason or causes whether good or bad

This proverb try to explain that anything that happens has a reason or causes of the incident which makes things to turn out like that. For instance, when you come in a family, and you notice that members of the family dies at a certain age, it must have a reason so in this situation this proverb is used.

42. íhé òjòò ànàghí èrí ónyé àmàmíhé.

Gloss: Something bad does not eat someone wisdom.

Translation: Evil does not consume the wise.

Meaning: This proverb teaches that being wise protects us from danger because we may notice when we encounter danger.

This is an advice on wisdom, for instance when someone want to scam us of our money or property if we are wise enough to dictate the plan of the person then we can be able to avoid the problem.

43. Nwátà kwúó áká, ò ríé níí ndí ókènyè.

Gloss: Child washes hand he eats food people elder

Translation: A child who washes his hands dines with elders.

Meaning: It teaches that discipline earns respect. This proverb encourages us to be respectful and obedient because it bring about success in life.

When we respect our elders they will bless us and that will be our starting point of blessing which usually leads to a successful future. So when someone is being disobedient this is the proverb can use.

44. Ísí ádíghí àrí élù kárjà nnà yá.

Gloss: Head does not climb up more than father PRO

Translation: The head does not rise higher than its father.

Meaning: This proverb teaches respect for authority. This proverb to use to guide us to obey the rules and regulations in our family and community.

This proverb also teaches us to know our root and people that build us to the place we are now which may include our parents, and uncles and Aunt depending on the person.

45. Ónyé búrú chí yá úzò, ò gbágbúé ònwé yá n'ósó.

Gloss: Someone carry God PRO road he/PRO run(too much) self PRO in run.

Translation: He who runs ahead of his chi (personal god) runs in vain.

Meaning: This proverb teaches being patience in whatever we are doing in life. We are not supposed to rush into thing or make decisions quickly without thinking about it's consequences.

It advice us to leave things for God to do it in his own way so as not to be disappointed, that is God's time is the best.

46. É jíí ógólógó ndù èmé íhé ikè, òkúkò ágághí àbù ànù.

Gloss: PRO use long life to do something strong/hard Chicken will not be meat

Translation: If long life were by force, the chicken would not be meat.

Meaning: This is an advice on humility and acceptance of fate. It teaches us that to be successful is not only by hard work or extent of your struggle but God determine everything future that we will have.

47. Nwátà kúrú áká n'ntí yá, ò gághí áamá kà ò dì mímá.

Gloss: Child knocks hand on ear PRO he will not to know that it is good/beauty

Translation: A child claps on his ear, he won't know if it feels good or not.

Meaning: This proverb try to explain that children need guidance because experience comes with age. Parents and elders should teach the younger one the behavior that are good so that they will flee from bad behaviors.

48. Ónyé nà-émé íhé ómá, é jì yá àmára mímádú àtù.

Gloss: Someone that does something good PRO use PRO to give person example.

Translation: He who does good is used as an example to others.

Meaning: It teaches that good conduct earns respect and serves as a model for society. When you have good behavior in a society, you will always be used as an example to others. For instance, when a particular child is misbehaving you will notice that the parents or village elders will use another child that have good moral conduct as an example to the one misbehaving.

49. Ónyé ámághí ébé mímírí bidòrò mábá yá, ámághí ébé ò gà-ákwúsí.

Gloss: Someone does not know where rain start-past sucking PRO does not know where it will end

Translation: He who does not know where the rain began to beat him will not know where it dried his body.

Meaning: It is a advice on reflection and self-awareness. This proverb teaches us to have wisdom and also to ask questions in order to gain direction. It teaches that we should watch ourselves to point out exactly where our problem lies so that we can overcome them.

50. Ónyé jí ígù kà éwú nà-ésò.

Gloss: Someone have palm leaf that goat will Follow.

Translation: It is the one who holds the yam that the goat follows.

Meaning: This proverb teaches that respect follows wealth or resourcefulness. It encourages us to work hard in life because people usually gives respect to those that have deep pockets.

## DATA ANALYSIS

The proverbs were grouped into themes based on the kind of advice they offer:

### Advice on Wisdom and Caution

#### Examples:

- Nwátà búlié áká élù, à mághì íhé ó nà-àchó.

Gloss: Child raises hand up PRO does not know something he

Translation: If a child raises a hand, no one knows what he wants.

Meaning: This proverb shows that people's intentions are not always clear therefore caution is needed before acting. It is proverb that shows, Uncertainty, wisdom, intention, caution.

- Éwú ná- átá áhíhíá, ò mághì nà échí dì

Gloss: Goat that eats grass PRO does not know that tomorrow exist

Translation: The goat eats grass, unaware that tomorrow exists.

Meaning: One should act with foresight and self-control. Time, consequence, wisdom

These proverbs employ metaphor (e.g., a goat, a child) to convey the need for foresight and careful decision-making. The semantic elements include "future," "awareness," and "consequence."

- Ónyé ájùjú ádíghì éfù úzò.

Gloss: Someone question does not miss road.

Translation: He who asks questions does not miss the road.

Meaning: This proverb encourages us to seek knowledge before making any decision in life. For instance, when someone want to start up a business the person is supposed to inquire about the advantages and disadvantages of that business, that the gain and risk in the business before concluding whether to start or not.

- Ágwó àgbá ósò n' éfù.ánághì

Gloss: Snake does not to-run run in vain.

Translation: The snake does not run in vain.

Meaning: It advice that every action or incident that happens has a reason so we have to be very observant in whatever we are doing.

- Íhé ójòò ánághì èrì ónyé àmámíhé.

Gloss: Something bad does not eat someone wisdom

Translation: Evil does not consume the wise.

Meaning: Wisdom protects from danger.

These proverbs warn against ignorance, rashness, and careless behavior. They show that wisdom is a shield and also show that caution helps one avoid mistakes because when a wise person is very cautious it will be hard for the person to enter a problem that can destroy his life.

### Advice on Humility and Obedience

#### Examples:

- Nwátà kwúó áká, ò ríé níí ndí ókènyè.

Gloss: Child washes hand he/PRO eat food people elders.

Translation: A child who washes his hands dines with elders.

Meaning: This proverb teaches that discipline earns respect. When you respect your elders, it serves as a bless to you and in the future your junior will still give you the same respect.

- Ísí ádíghì ágá élù káríà ínnà yá.

Gloss: Head does not to go up more than father his.

Translation: The head does not rise higher than its father.

Meaning: It advice us to respect for authority that those that have power or authority over us including the rules and Principles of our village.

These show the Igbo respect for elders, tradition, and authority. Humility and obedience open doors for growth, while pride leads to disgrace.

### Advice on Moral Conduct

- Úkwú ná-ágá wàrà wàrà, anyá ná- ágá wàrà wàrà nà-àhù yá.

Gloss: Leg that to go

Translation: The foot that walks clumsily, the eye follows it closely.

Meaning: This proverb implies that when someone behaves carelessly, irresponsibly, or awkwardly, people will always take notice and keep watch over them. It teaches caution and mindfulness in conduct. If one acts recklessly, they naturally draw people's attention and criticism.

- Ónyé jí àkù éjidé ínmádù, ákù yá nà-éjidé yá.

Gloss: Someone hold wealth to hold somebody wealth his/PRO holds him.

Translation: He who holds wealth to trap others, that same wealth traps him.

Meaning: This proverb teaches that immorality done with power or riches eventually destroys the doer. It advice us that any behavior that we are doing thinking that it only affects others will eventually affect us directly or indirectly. This means that we should always watch our behavior towards others.

- Íhé òjòò ànàghí è nyéré òmádù áká.

Gloss: Something bad does not to-help somebody/person hand.

Translation: Evil never helps anyone.

Meaning: This proverb teaches that wrongdoing might seem profitable at first, but it never gives lasting benefit. That means that we should keep our behavior straight and not to be evil because evil can destroy us whether now or in the future, and evil person must pay the price of the evil deeds.

- Ónyé nà-émé íhé ómá, é jì yà àmára òmádù àtù.

Gloss: Someone that does something good PRO use PRO to give person example.

Translation: He who does good is used as an example to others.

Meaning: Good conduct earns respect and serves as a model for society. For instance when someone's behavior is good, others usually elders will use the child or person as an example, so it is good for our behavior to always be good.

- Ézí áhà kà égō.

Translation: A good name is better than money.

Meaning: It teaches that integrity and good reputation are more valuable than wealth. Anything we are doing in life we should understand that have good behavior is more important and appreciated than having wealth. For example someone that have money may not have the mind or heart to give money to the poor while others that don't have will always be willing to give to those people they are better than.

### Unity, Community and Strength

- ìgwè bù íké

Gloss: Crowd is strength

Translation: Multitude is strength.

Meaning: This proverb shows us that there is power in community. Community that do things together always progress in whatever they are doing because there is peace and joy.

- Ótù ósísí ádíghí èmé óhíà.

Gloss: One tree does not bear forest

Translation: One tree does not make a forest.

Meaning: This teaches that single person cannot makes a community that means collective effort is necessary.

- Ónyé ághànà nwánné yá.

Gloss: Someone do not leave sister/brother PRO

Translation: Let no one abandon his brother.

Meaning: It taught us that community must support one another, especially in times of need.

- Ñkú dí n 'mbà, nà-éghéré mbà níí.

Gloss: firewood in society will cook society food

Translation: The firewood found in the land cooks food for the land.

Meaning: Every community survives by working with its own people and resources.

This teaches that unity is the strength of a community. Therefore in whatever we do we members of the community should unite to achieve their goals.

### Advice on patience

#### Examples:

- Ñdidi nwé òméri

Gloss: patience have wins

Translation: Patience has victory.

Meaning: It teaches that in anything that we do in life, we should know that patience is the most victorious thing. For instance, when we are struggling in life or with money, this type of advice can be given to the

- Ñdidi bù ísí íhé.

Gloss: Patience is head something

Translation: Patience is the key thing.

Meaning: Patience is the foundation of success and good living. It teaches us that if you have patience in life you must succeed and get what you want.

For example, when some women want a child, some will start going to river to do rituals forget that God's time is the best. So this proverb is usually use to advice people to be patient.

- Ónyé jí ñdidi ríé ùgbá, ó ríé yá ñkè ómá

Gloss: Someone has/ possessive patience eat oil bean he eat it very good

Translation: He who eats oil-bean paste (ugba) with patience enjoys it well.

Meaning: This proverb teaches that careful patience in handling situations brings better results. Any decision we make in life should be carefully planned and arranged, we should not rush things but rather have patience.

- Ụkwà ánághì èré ụbòchì ọdàrà.

Gloss: Breadfruit does not spoil day it fall

Translation: Breadfruit does not ferment the day it falls.

Meaning: It teaches our hard work may not pay immediately but in the future. This proverb gives a gentle reminder that valuable things take time to mature. It encourages patience, teaching that rushing important processes often leads to loss, but waiting with calmness brings better results. For instance, someone that has been hustling for years, this proverb can serve as an advice for him.

#### Advice on Contentment

##### Example:

- Éwú n'wá ógbènyè bù éfí yá.

Gloss: Goat child poor man is cow his/PRO

Translation: A poor man's goat is his cow.

Meaning: It teaches us that contentment is the key, we should always cherish what you have so as not to lose it. The proverb teaches that when a person accepts their condition with calmness and self-respect, they avoid unnecessary shame or comparison. It encourages people not to envy others or feel inferior because of what they lack. Instead, it reminds us that true dignity comes from being content with who you are and what you have, rather than allowing poverty or limitations to define your worth.

- Ézí áhà kà égb̄.

Gloss: Good name more than money.

Translation: A good name is better than money.

Meaning: It advises us that integrity and good reputation are more valuable than wealth. It encourages us to be satisfied with living honestly and maintaining integrity, rather than chasing money in ways that damage our reputation. It teaches that true worth comes from character, not possessions.

- Ónyé ná-ébi n'ókè yá, ndù yá gà-àdírí yá m̄mā.

Gloss: Someone that lives in boundary him/PRO life PRO will be PRO good.

Translation: He who lives within his limit, his life will be good for him.

Meaning: Contentment brings peace and a stress-free life. This proverb encourages us to accept our level, to avoid unnecessary competition, and to find satisfaction in what one can genuinely afford.

For instance, if you are satisfied with what you have, you will not compare yourself to others.

- Àkù ná-énwéghì úchè bù íngwóngwó ọnwú.

Gloss: Wealth that does not have brain/mind is instrument death.

Translation: Wealth without wisdom is property of death.

Meaning: It teaches us that unbridled wealth without moderation or contentment leads to ruin. It reminds us not to chase riches blindly but to value moderation, good judgment, and peace of mind. It encourages us to be satisfied with what you can manage wisely, rather than pursuing more than you can handle.

#### Hardwork

##### Example:

- Ụkwà ánághì èré ụbòchì ọ dàrà.

Gloss: Breadfruit does not spoil day it falls.

Translation: Breadfruit does not ferment the day it falls.

Meaning: Your hard work may not reap immediate results so keep working diligently.

- Ákwúkwó ndù ánághì àgbá áká àbúó.

Translation: "The book of life is not read with folded arms."

Meaning: It teaches that success requires effort and active participation, laziness achieves nothing. This proverb encourages hard work by teaching that valuable results do not come instantly. Just as ụkwà cannot be sold the same day it falls, success requires steady effort, preparation, and patience. It reminds us that meaningful achievements come from consistent work, not shortcuts.

- Ọrú ánághì ègbú ónyé rúrú ọrú.

Gloss: Job does not kill someone work job

Translation: "Hard work does not kill the one who labors."

Meaning: This proverb teaches that diligence may be tiring but it never destroys rather, it builds strength and prosperity. This teaches us to continue our hardwork because it pays that our hard work can never destroy us.

It serves as an encouragement to embrace hard work with confidence, knowing that effort and persistence lead to positive outcomes, not destruction.

#### Confidence and Fearlessness

##### Examples:

- À nághì ékwò mgbágbú ghàrá ọgù.

Gloss: PRO cannot use because of death avoid fight.

Translation: The fear of death cannot prevent people from going to war.

Meaning: This proverb teaches that hesitation and fear weaken a person, but boldness clears the path forward. It encourages facing challenges with confidence, reminding us that courage often prevents the very troubles that fear invites.

- Ónyé kwé, chí yá èkwé.

Gloss: Someone accept God possessive PRO accept.

Translation: If someone agrees then their God will agree.

Meaning: The proverb emphasizes the power of self-belief. When a person is determined and confident, circumstances tend to align in their favour. It encourages courage, reminding us that progress begins the moment one believes in their own ability. Remember that determination aligns with destiny.

- Ónyé díkē ánághì àtú égwù ògù.

Gloss: Someone hero does not afraid fear fight.

Translation: "The brave person does not fear battle."

Meaning: It advises that a hardworking and determined person should not be intimidated by challenges, because diligence combined with bravery makes difficult tasks achievable. The fearless confront challenges head-on without retreating.

- Ògbú mmà ádíghì àtú égwù.

Gloss: Someone who kills does afraid

Translation: "The knife wielder does not fear threats."

Meaning: A confident and prepared person does not get easily intimidated. This teaches no matter how hard things are, we must hold on and continue to live our life. It encourages facing responsibilities boldly rather than shrinking back in doubt.

### Democracy and Right

#### Example:

- Égbé béré ùgò béré

Gloss: Eagle perch kite perch

Translation: Let the kite perch and let the eagle also perch.

Meaning: This proverb teaches us to allow everyone the opportunity to succeed and express themselves, regardless of their status. This proverb teaches fairness, equality, and shared opportunity.

It advises that in any community or democratic setting, everyone deserves a chance to stand, speak, and benefit just as both the kite and the eagle have space in the sky. It promotes respect for rights and discourages oppression or exclusion.

- Ónyé jí mmádù n' àlà, jíkwù ònwé yá.

Gloss: Someone hold person on the ground holds self him/PRO

Translation: "He who holds another down must also remain on the ground."

Meaning: It teaches that oppression denies both the oppressor and the oppressed freedom, justice and fairness benefit all. It advises that respecting people's rights and giving others their freedom creates a just and peaceful society

- Ónyé óbùlà nwéré ònú, yá kwúó ókwú yá.

Gloss; Someone any that have mouth PRO speak word PRO

Translation: "Everyone with a mouth should speak his word."

Meaning: It encourages that every individual has the right to express their opinion and freedom of speech is vital in democracy.

It advises that in a democratic society, everyone's opinion matters and should be heard. Respecting each person's right to speak promotes fairness, inclusion, and balanced decision making.

### Evil and Consequences

#### Example:

- Ísì kótará èbù kà èbù nà- àgbá

Gloss: Head that brings wasp that wasp will bite.

Translation: It is the head that disturbs the wasp that the wasp stings.

Meaning: It advice us on evil and their consequences, every bad action/step we do has it's consequences. For instance, in a situation where someone is misbehaving like being a prostitute, maybe in later time it can lead to childlessness and this is where we can use this proverb.

- Ónyé rúò íhé ójòò, ó gà- àhú íhé ójòò.

Gloss: Someone works something bad he will see something bad

Translation: "Whoever does evil will meet evil."

Meaning: It advice that every wicked act has its consequence that means evil begets evil. It serves as a reminder that evil actions do not go without consequences, and whatever one sows good or bad will surely return to them.

- *Ónyé ná-ákú m̀kpòrògwù ójòò m̀gbè ó tòrò, ò gà-èbìbí yá. èbìbí yá.*

Gloss: Someone that does root bad when it grows it will destroy PRO.

Translation: "He who plants an evil root, when it grows, it will destroy him."

Meaning: It advises people to avoid harbouring harmful habits, relationships, or intentions, because what starts small can become destructive in the future, turning back against the very person who fed it.

It teaches that evil deeds eventually backfire on their perpetrator.

### Conclusion

The analysis of the selected Igbo proverbs of advice reveals the deep philosophical, moral, and cultural values embedded in Igbo oral tradition. These proverbs are more than mere expressions, they serve as vehicles for transferring wisdom, guiding behavior, and preserving communal ethics across generations.

From the thematic categorization, it is clear that Igbo proverbs emphasize wisdom, caution, humility, obedience, moral discipline, patience, and unity. The figurative language and metaphors employed such as goats, trees, fish, hands, and even market scenes make these proverbs relatable, vivid, and didactic. They reflect a worldview that encourages personal responsibility, community cohesion, and respect for social hierarchy and divine order (e.g., one's *chi*).

Additionally, the structure and symbolism in these proverbs show that Igbo society places great importance on foresight, moderation, and shared values. Proverbs such as "*Éwú ná-átá áhíhíá, ò mághì ná échí dì*" and "*Ónyé búrú chí yà úzò, ò gbàgbúrú ònwé yà n'úkwú*" underscore the consequences of reckless behavior and the need for divine or ancestral guidance.

In essence, these proverbs are not only linguistic expressions but also instruments of social control and guidance, shaping how individuals relate to themselves, to others, and to their environment. They remain relevant in modern times, offering timeless lessons in character formation, leadership, and daily decision-making. Through them, the Igbo worldview continues to be preserved, celebrated, and passed on.

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

This is on Semantic study of Igbo proverbs of advice. The study has been able to answer the research questions mentioned. This study introduced the research topic, stating that proverbs are a central aspect of Igbo oral tradition, used not only for entertainment but also for imparting wisdom, moral conduct, and advice. The study emphasized on three objectives. To explain the semantic analysis of Igbo proverbs of advice: Igbo proverbs of advice share certain semantic features that make them effective as carriers of meaning. These include figurative expressions such as metaphor, simile, and symbolism, which allow the proverbs to communicate complex ideas through familiar images. Example, "*Ngwèrè kpòró òndù yá m̀kpà nà- àgbá ósò n'èlú ósísí.*" (The lizard that values its life runs swiftly on top of the tree.) The lizard represents a wise person, while the act of running swiftly symbolizes caution and quick action in times of danger. Meaning, A wise person acts with foresight and avoids danger when necessary. It shows how their meanings go beyond literal interpretation. Secondly, To explain how these proverbs construct meaning beyond the literal level. Igbo proverbs of advice rarely operate at a purely literal level; instead, they encode implicit meanings that listeners must infer. Through metaphorical mapping, events from the physical world e.g "*nwáyò nwáyò kà èjùlà jì àgá n'ógwú*" ( a tortoise's slow movement) are used to represent moral lessons (e.g., patience). Idiomatic structures further distance the surface meaning from the intended moral. Context also plays a crucial role. The same proverb may carry different shades of meaning depending on the situation, the speaker's tone, and the relationship between interlocutors. Thirdly, To discuss cultural values that are embedded in the meanings of these proverbs. The deeper meanings of Igbo proverbs of advice reflect core Igbo cultural values. These include respect for elders and authority, as many proverbs stress the importance of listening to wise counsel. Communalism and mutual support are also emphasized, with proverbs highlighting the interdependence of individuals within society. Hard work, patience, and perseverance frequently appear as moral lessons, aligning with the Igbo ethos of industry. Proverbs in Igbo culture play a crucial role in communication, serving as a tool for expressing wisdom, tradition, and moral values. They are deeply ingrained in everyday interactions and hold deeper meanings that require an understanding of both language and cultural context. The research adopted an integrated framework that combined componential analysis, cognitive semantics by Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980), on the role of metaphor in meaning-making. It also references Achebe's (1958) assertion that "proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten." And pragmatic theories such as Speech Act Theory by Austin (1962) and Conceptual Metaphor Theory by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Despite the significance of Igbo proverbs, especially those conveying advice, there is limited scholarly focus on their semantic structure and cultural functionality. The research adopts a qualitative descriptive approach, analyzing a wide selection of Igbo proverbs of advice. Data were collected from oral interviews, literary texts, and elders' sayings. The proverbs are then classified thematically (wisdom, morality, patience, unity, contentment, hard work, etc.) and analyzed semantically through literal and figurative interpretations. A total of fifty proverbs were collected through oral and with native speakers and from written sources, after which they were carefully analyzed. The study on Igbo

proverbs of advice aimed to document, analyze, and interpret the wisdom embedded in these proverbs. The research questions guiding the study include identifying common semantic features of Igbo proverbs of advice, exploring how these proverbs convey meanings beyond the literal level, understanding the cultural values embedded in them, and analyzing how figurative and contextual elements influence their interpretation. The study's scope is limited to Igbo proverbs of advice, focusing on those that offer guidance, counsel, or caution. It involves a selection of proverbs from written texts, oral sources, and interviews with native speakers, primarily emphasizing semantic interpretation. By studying Igbo proverbs of advice, one can gain insight into the cultural wisdom, ethical guidance, and linguistic nuances embedded in these expressions. Understanding these proverbs can foster better communication, cultural appreciation, and offer valuable life lessons, reflecting the beliefs and values of Igbo society. This work has shown that Igbo proverbs of advice are deeply rooted in cultural experiences and are indispensable in shaping thought, guiding behavior, and transmitting values across generations. They combine semantics, culture, and pragmatics to achieve their communicative purpose, and their study contributes to understanding the dynamic relationship between language and culture in Igbo society.

### **Conclusion**

The findings affirm that Igbo proverbs of advice are deeply rooted in indigenous knowledge systems. They function as tools for shaping character and sustaining cultural values. Proverbs encapsulate wisdom passed down through generations and are crucial in guiding behavior. Their semantic richness and layered meanings make them powerful tools for communication. However, their full appreciation demands cultural immersion. This study concludes that proverbs are indispensable in understanding Igbo society. They remain relevant in contemporary discourse and moral education.

### **Recommendations**

Future researchers should explore comparative studies between Igbo proverbs and those of other African ethnic groups.

Educators should incorporate proverbs into school curricula to preserve indigenous wisdom.

Linguists should create bilingual anthologies with detailed context for easier interpretation.

Digital archiving of proverbs with audio recordings from native speakers should be developed.

Cultural organizations should host proverb-centered storytelling events to promote intergenerational learning.

Translators and interpreters should be culturally informed to avoid misrepresenting proverb meanings.

Media and literature creators should revive and adapt proverbs in modern formats like drama, film, and social media.

### **References**

- Achebe, C. (1958). *Things fall apart*. London: Heinemann.
- Anyanwu, O. (2017). *Igbo proverbs and their semantic implications*. Enugu: University of Nigeria Press.
- Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Bascom, W. (1965). The forms of folklore: Prose narratives. *The Journal of American Folklore*, 78(307), 3–20. <https://doi.org/10.2307/538099>
- Finnegan, R. (1970). *Oral literature in Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Goodenough, W. H. (1956). Componential analysis and the study of meaning. *Language*, 32(1), 195–216. <https://doi.org/10.2307/410649>
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Nida, E. A. (1975). *Componential analysis of meaning: An introduction to semantic structures*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Nwachukwu-Agbada, J. O. J. (1993). *The Igbo proverb: A study of its context, performance, and functions*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers.
- Obi, C., & Nwachukwu, A. (2020). Proverbs as tools of moral instruction in Igbo society. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 32(4), 512–523. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13696815.2020.1778923>
- Okafor, I. (2014). *Language and culture in Igbo proverbs*. Owerri: Totan Publishers.
- Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Searle, J. R. (1975). Indirect speech acts. In P. Cole & J. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and semantics: Vol. 3. Speech acts* (pp. 59–82). New York: Academic Press.