

The Nzema Perception of *Abotane* ‘Patience’ as Conveyed in Their Proverbial Expressions

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Abstract

The paper qualitatively describes the socio-cultural concept of patience¹ as portrayed in selected proverbs among the people of Nzema. The data were gathered from documented and oral sources. Where necessary, the discussion dwelled on natural and/or social occurrences to highlight the essence of the proverbs, and to enhance a better understanding of the Nzema worldview of patience. The paper revealed that the Nzema perceive patience as a **crucial virtue**; and that, it is a potential behavioural trait required in achieving success in all human endeavours. It showed that the Nzema trust the efficacy of patience in mitigating conflicts and promoting peaceful societal co-existence. Interestingly, the study further found a couple of ‘counter-proverbs’ which demonstrate that, though patience is a productive prerequisite in achieving success, certain critical situations rather demand reactions in haste. These patience-related proverbs, as the discussions showcased, are largely cited in appropriate discourse contexts. Although not a comparative study, the paper suggests that the Nzema perception of patience may not largely depart from general conceptions and perceptions of patience.

Key words: Proverbs; Patience; Socio-cultural perceptions; Communication.

¹ In this paper, ‘patience’, which shall be our focus throughout the discussions, refers to the ability to avoid rush. It actually concerns one’s timing, (i.e. not wanting something to happen within the shortest possible time). Therefore, the other notion of patience; which has to do with the ability to control one’s temper is not the major concern in this study, though proverb (15), which shall be seen later, seems to be imbued with the essence of controlling one’s anger.

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INTRODUCTION

In any human settlement, inhabitants are expected to put up certain behaviours which everyone would cherish and embrace. Among such positive attitudes and virtues, which ‘patience’ is no exception include unity and cooperation, peace and justice, transparency, loyalty, hard work and perseverance, to mention but a few. These attitudes are among the common themes that are often portrayed in proverbs to check and ‘sanitise’ the behaviours of both children and adults in any traditional society where proverbs are in use. Thus, I share Onwe’s (2018) opinion that:

Proverbs play a fundamental role in the formation of human character and in child upbringing. They transmit societal norms and values from one generation to another and serve as a tool for instructing, training, guiding, correcting, reprimanding, and praising children during their journey from childhood to adulthood (Onwe, 2018, p.32).

Onwe’s assertion signals that what may be accepted or not accepted to be done among people of a particular cultural group are concealed in proverbs. I also agree with Dogbey and Sapaty (2019, p.108) who postulate that “the totality of law and order are enshrined in proverbs”. Among the Nzema as well, proverbs, apart from being employed to demonstrate one’s maturity and linguistic competence are also used to straighten human conduct. They are used as a rhetoric device to admonish, rebuke, direct, praise, encourage, educate, and entertain people. This is to say that many desirable attitudes and virtues including ‘patience’ (which is the focus of this paper)

can be taught via proverbs and other verbal art forms like riddles and folktales. Therefore, this paper looks at how the Nzema perceive and conceive patience as reflected in their proverbial expressions. The paper aims to explore and highlight the role of proverbs as depicting the socio-traditional perceptions of 'patience' in selected Nzema proverbs with the intent to determining whether patience is a virtue for achieving success, mitigating assaults/ conflicts and to show whether every situation requires an individual to be patient.

Nzema as a People and Language

Nzema refers to both the people and the language that they speak. The people are located in the Western Region of Ghana (Annan, 1980). Nzema belongs to the Niger-Congo (Kwa) languages family. Besides its dominant speakers in the South-West part of the Western Region of Ghana, it is also spoken in some parts of La Côte d'Ivoire (Kwesi, 1992). According to population estimates available on 31st May, 2012, the total population of Ghana as at 26th September, 2010 was 24, 658, 823 people of which 298, 436 were Nzema (www.statsghana.gov.gh>2010phc>201). Nzema has five (5) dialectal components known as **Dwɔmɔɔ**, **ɛllɛmbɛɛ**, **ɛvaloɛ** **Egila** and **Adwɔmɔɔ** (Kwaw, 2008). The **Dwɔmɔɔ** dialect is the standard and studied one.

1. PROVERBS

Although some scholars (e.g. Mieder, 2004; Villers, 2016) have observed that there seems to be a challenge in arriving at a common definition of proverbs, some efforts (even previously) had been made to define and explain the concept of proverbs. Durkheim (1933) described proverb as a condensed statement of a collective idea or sentiment which is relative to a determined category of objects (cited in Mubarak, 2017; Diaba and Amfo, 2018). According to Obiechina (1975), a proverb is a philosophical and moral exposition shrunk into a few words, and forms part of a mnemonic device in societies in which everything worth knowing and essential to the day-to-day life has to be memorised. Blending the imports of these two definitions, it may be said that proverbs are compressed statements which teach morals that are collectively upheld by people who develop a particular culture. Olatunji (1984) avers that proverbs are horses of speech; and that they are used to discover the truth when it is missing. Okpewho (1992) also perceives the proverb is a piece of folk wisdom that is expressed with terseness and charm. This definition implies that proverbs deal with economy in the choice of words for their constructions and that, they appeal to literary aesthetics in their expressions.

Proverbs are said to be 'culture-specific' and 'context-dependent' (cf. Yankah, 1989; Hallen, 2000; Moshood, 2016). This means there could be some divergence regarding the elements/entities that are incorporated in

the composition and use of proverbs from one culture to another. It also suggests that competent language users may not haphazardly 'inject' proverbs into any communication; rather, they would do so in an appropriate discourse context. In the view of Agyekum (2007), a proverb is a pithy and witty statement which is time tested, often symbolic and states a general truth; it portrays realities about human life through traditional experiences and transmitted from one generation to another. Ababila (2010) observes that, speakers often cite proverbs to direct people to behave well, and to advise people to also refrain from many undesirable attitudes like envy, hatred, greed, backbiting, laziness and dishonest among others. Ashipu (2013, p.11) opines that proverbs are used to add colour to everyday conversation; without proverbs, the language would be, but a skeleton without flesh, a body without soul. This can imply that proverbs are used as 'ingredient' to spice human communication (see also Yakub, 2019).

The proverb is an important aspect of the oral tradition of the folks, which has been descended to the succeeding generations. It is seen as a verbal art which occupies a vital position in the communicative encounters among people in many cultures especially in the African setting and even beyond. This has necessitated a wide-ranging literature on it cross-linguistically and culturally.

From linguistics point of view, Mensah (2010), Bhuvaneshwar (2012), Akanbi (2015), Yuka (2016) have examined the structural patterns of proverbs in Efik, Telegu, Yoruba and Lamnso respectively. Some prominent oral literature scholars such as Finnegan (1970), Owomoyela (1979), Obeng (1994), Asare (1997), Ababila (2010), Yankah (2012) and others have also studied proverbs from socio-cultural, anthropological and sociolinguistics perspectives.

Concerning studies on Nzema proverbs, Nyame & Tomekyin (2018a) investigate the "Social Representations of Masculinity and Femininity as Portrayed in Nzema Proverbs" and Nyame & Tomekyin (2018b) again examine "Neological Developments in Nzema Proverbs". Yakub (2018a) discusses "Unity and Cooperation as Portrayed in Nzema Proverbs". Yakub (2018b) also did a "Literary Analysis of Wellerisms in Nzema Proverbs". However, besides these studies, I have not noticed any scholarly work that critically examines the socio-cultural perceptions of patience as portrayed in Nzema proverbs. This present study fills a gap by contributing some additional knowledge to widen the frontiers of the existing literature on proverbs.

2. METHODOLOGY

The paper adopts a qualitative descriptive approach in examining how the Nzema perceive patience through proverbs. Data for the study were tapped from secondary and primary sources. Obtaining the secondary data, I relied chiefly on one published work (a collection of

Nzema proverbs); titled *Nzema Mrele Nee Be Ngilenu* by Kwesi and Quarm (1998) and selected 'patience-related' proverbs for discussions in this paper. I deemed this material, '*Nzema Mrele Nee Be Ngilenu*' very useful and purposively selected the sample proverbs from it; since it contained over 1,238 Nzema proverbs which are believed to be accurate and 'culturally constructed' proverbs of the people. This book, owing to its reliability in terms of rich information on proverbs in Nzema, has also been approved and recommended for students who study Nzema in Ghanaian schools and colleges/universities; hence its consultation for selecting relevant (patience-related) proverbs for analysis in this study.

The primary information involved interviews with competent native speakers. Having collected some of these proverbs, I made contacts with two native elders, aged sixty (60) and seventy (70) years, who had been chiefs' spokespersons for the past². I met each respondent separately at his home, at an hour which was convenient to him. Through semi-structured interviews, I elicited useful information and clarifications on the selected proverbs and the context of communication within which such patience-related proverbs could be deployed. My experience and intuitive knowledge as an indigenous speaker of the language was also brought to bear on this study.

3. DATA AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the data. I present the traditional proverbs as in the native language and provide satisfactory English glossing to enhance comprehensible analysis and discussion. The discussion begins with proverbs that embrace and advocate the relevance of being patient in every human endeavour. It further examines a couple of counter-proverbs which argue that, under certain delicate and critical circumstances, patience must be avoided and disregard to ensure life sustainability. The discussion is as follows:

3.1 Nzema Proverbs That Communicate the Significance of Patience

3.1.1 The Need to Wait for the Right Time Before Performing A Task³

As part of their traditional philosophies and worldview, the people of Nzema perceive patience as capable of

ensuring one's achievements in life. They believe that impatience on the other hand, may result in failure, regret and discomfort. Further, in Nzema traditional society, people have the view that impatience on the part of an individual may sometimes emanate from the spirit of 'greed'; an attitude which most people frown at. In essence, the Nzema have a number of indigenous proverbs through which they disseminate and inculcate the virtue of patience into their succeeding generations. The communicative contents of the proverbs in (1-7) portray how the Nzema cherish, and for that matter reinforce the need for people to have the 'spirit of patience', especially in waiting for the right time before embarking on any activity. The examples of such proverbs are:

1) *Ɛ sa ɛndo kane a ɛmpembe ɛnde* 'If your hands cannot reach *kane* (a kind of climbing plant), do not struggle to pluck it'. In Nzema cultural context, *kane* is a name of a climbing crop which bears fruits on top of some supporting sticks which may be provided by the farmer. The fruits can be very far from reach and so a short person may find it difficult to pluck. The basic sense of this proverb suggests that if one's hand cannot reach a particular *kane* fruit, it would be appropriate to look for another which may be easy to pluck. Therefore, the central message of proverb (1) tries to advise people not to rush in life. This implies that we should not haste in life to possess something; rather, we should wait for the right time to achieve success. In so doing, we avoid the spirit of greed. Stressing the need to be patient in life, another Nzema traditional proverb says:

2) *Abisa ɛɛdwule zo a benli* 'When the right time is not due, *Abisa* (the Kundum festival) is not celebrated'. *Abisa* (also known as *Kundum*) is a name of a traditional festival celebrated by the people of Nzema including the people of Ahanta; also found in the Western Region of Ghana. Among the Nzema, the festival is scheduled and celebrated from early September to early November each year; moving from one community to another (Kwaw, 2008). Traditionally, no chief is permitted to order his subjects to celebrate *Kundum* until the right time is due. This in a way teaches the virtue of patience. Thus, the Nzema had used the concept of *Abisa* (*Kundum* festival) in the above pithy adage to remind people not to rush in life. For instance, when the people wait for the right time before celebrating the festival, the occasion could be much interesting and more enjoyable because all, including those who had travelled outside their communities could come on board to partake in the cultural celebration since everybody knows that the right time is at hand. This implies that, success is best achieved if one waits to have it at the convenient time. This is however, not to say that the Nzema through their traditional proverbs, motivate people to be lazy and sit idle without working; rather, proverb (2) actually seeks to inform people to avoid rush, since it could compel people to indulge in any dubious means of becoming rich overnight. The following proverb in (3) also emphasises the relevance of patience, as it says that:

² I purposively consulted these two respondents because they had often been at traditional gatherings with their respective chiefs, and so I believed they had conceived significant interpretations of many Nzema proverbs to be able to conveniently give me useful information on patience-related proverbs among the Nzema.

³ All the proverbs in (1-7), which are examined in this subsection section (3.1.1), could be deployed in an appropriate communicative context when someone is being reminded to refrain from the habit of rushing in life. Thus, each of these proverbs could be convenient to be cited when reprimanding someone for exhibiting the traits of greed.

3) *Ekua senle fofolε na εto εnlonkoε nu a ɔnu* 'If you light fire and quickly put a snail into it, the fire quenches'. The snail is noted for producing some 'slimy' liquids especially when it is roasted in fire. This liquid can quench the fire if the fire is not allowed enough time to flame after it has been lighted. However, when the firewood is allowed to produce enough embers, no amount of liquid produced by the snail can quench the fire. Among other natural phenomena, the Nzema had learnt a lesson from the nature of snail as concealed in proverb (3) above. In (3), *εnlonkoε* 'snail' is likened to any situation which is capable of deteriorating a person's progress/success. For example, if a young man gains employment with very little salary and he rushes to get married and begins to bear children, there is the likelihood that his expenditure would be higher than his income; which could hinder his progress. If such a young man gives himself ample time to gain 'strong' financial grounds however, marriage and reproduction could not be an obstacle to his progress in life. The Nzema do not cherish people who rush and act impulsively. Thus, proverb (3) tells us to be patient and prepare adequately before doing everything. Highlighting the need to be patient, another didactic proverb reads as follows:

4) *Bε nee funli εnzu nafelε* 'A living being cannot compete with the corpse in terms of sleeping'. Through this pithy expression, the Nzema advise that, people who are not yet due to attain certain ranks or are not capable of undertaking certain activities should not rush and be too anxious to get what other qualified people had already gained. The Nzema use this proverb to teach that there is right time for everything to happen. The *funli* 'corpse' as in proverb (4) is noted for continuous sleep; since it is already dead, and so no living being can compete with the corpse in terms of sleeping. Thus, the proverb in a way informs us that, 'if any person wants to have endless sleep, just as the corpse/deceased, the person must patiently wait for his/her death as well'. Relating the communicative import of the proverb to our human existence, we are taught to do things in our capacities at the right time; but not to consider someone's achievements and try through dubious means to achieve same. The next proverb in (5) also underscores the essence of patience as it states:

5) *Bε nee akεle da a bεmpe* 'Whoever sleeps with a fowl, must not rush in catching it'. The domestic fowl (hen/cock) is noted for entering its coop very early, especially in the evening (see also Yakub, 2018a: 46). It can easily be caught for consumption, sacrifice or for any other purpose when it gets into the coop. Therefore, one does not need to rush in getting hold of the fowl since it would be the first to be found at its sleeping place. This proverb teaches that we should not rush over opportunities that are assured to come our ways. Another proverb that expresses similar notion about the essence of patience says:

6) *Bε nee εlene εlebele wε a εmpe εnwudwu azule* 'One must not struggle to cross a river when a canoe is on the way to save him/her'. The Ankobra River, Tanor

River and Amanzule River of Ghana, among other wide-spread rivers and streams are also found in Nzemaland. Sometimes, people need to cross some of these rivers and streams in order to reach their farms and other work places. They often use canoes and small boats to cross such rivers. When a boat picks people and gets to one end of the river, other people are expected to patiently wait for the boat to return before they also join on board. Anyone who rushes to cross the river while the boat is on the way to convey him/her does so at his/her own risk. The proverb in (6) is therefore meant to teach us that, we should not rush to put ourselves into trouble when there is a saviour to rescue us within the shortest moment. In other words, we are entreated to be patient and wait for us to be saved from difficult situations, rather than acting quickly to be found wanting. Further highlighting the need to be patient in life, another Nzema proverb says:

7) *Egyakε mεε li moa la εkpolε εnla aze* 'It is not easy to catch up with the leading steps'. This proverb advises people against greed and unnecessary aggressiveness. It actually entreats all categories of people to desist from anxiousness to overtake preceding people in the journey of life, since overtaking may result in 'accidents' and 'misfortunes'. This does not however suggest that the Nzema do not encourage people to be hardworking in order to reach the levels of other preceding competitors; rather, it reminds people to recognise the fact that one who had already taken the lead in doing anything in life may not deliberately relax for those behind to surpass him/her, hence the need to keep working, while wait for the right time for success to rain.

3.1.2 The Need to Perform One Duty Accurately Before Another⁴

The data also showed the Nzema perception of undertaking a particular activity perfectly before tackling another activity. Among the Nzema, people who fail to concentrate and remain focused when working are not much appreciated. The proverbs examined in this section reveal that patience is necessary for doing one thing very well. These proverbs portray that duties can be performed accurately when we exercise patience and spend enough time to undertake such tasks one after the other. In these proverbs (8-10), the people of Nzema had specifically incorporated the lexeme *ko* 'one' to actually emphasise the essence of doing one thing exhaustively before tackling another. The first proverb in this category says:

8) *Bεse anrene be sa ko a bedi ye ngoko* 'If you have a handful of palm kernel, you must chew them one after the other'. Palm kernels are somewhat hard nuts which require

⁴ Proverbs (8), (9) and (10) as examined in this sub-section, 3.1.2, could be quoted to advise a person who tackles a task and refuses to finish it perfectly, but jumps to touch another activity. Such a person could be reminded via these proverbs to spend enough time to exhaust one duty accurately before tackling the next task.

very strong jaws to chew. When one puts multiple palm kernels in his mouth, they may be difficult to be chewed perfectly; however, a single palm kernel in one's mouth at a time could be chewed perfectly and exhaustively. This is likened to a situation where one may have several equally important issues to deal with. In this case, proverb (8) reminds the person to tackle the situations (problems) one after the other, spending ample time to solve each problem accurately as opposed to rushing to overcome the challenges at a time, which could result in shoddy work done. An analogous sense of proverb (8) is somewhat concealed in (9), as it also says that:

9) *Enyenle nwi enlea toba ko anu* 'Two eyes cannot look inside a bottle'. A bottle has a 'closed entry' (mouth), through which liquids and other substances are made to pass. Hardly can one use both eyes to view inside the bottle. When a person uses one eye to view inside the bottle, however, the contents could be seen and described perfectly. The Nzema had therefore used the metaphor of bottle in the above proverb to portray that, challenging situations can best be addressed if one devotes enough time to handle them separately. The proverb tells us that, if we combine problems to be solved simultaneously, we may not achieve accurate results. In a parallel sense, proverb (10) that follows also affirms that one thing needs to be done very well before another. Here, the Nzema say:

10) *Betia ko na bedia nwi* 'You must start counting from one before two'. Determining the number (quantity) of something may often be done by counting; which would begin from one to the final number. This suggests that everything in life has a starting point. A baby, for example, is kept on the mother's laps for some time, he/she then sits and begins to crawl, followed by walking and subsequent running. Such is the journey of life also. At each stage, we are entreated by the Nzema proverb in (10) to have enough time to do what is expected before moving to the next stage (one after the other). In fact, the subordinating conjunction *na* 'before' as seen in the proverbial construction actually stresses the essence of doing one thing patiently and perfectly before touching another thing.

3.1.3 Patience Helps People to Achieve Success (Positive Results) in an Endeavour⁵

The data also showcased how patience becomes effective in accomplishing any task that is deemed difficult and delicate. In this sub-section therefore, I highlight the role of patience in ensuring successful completion of an activity. The first example says:

11) *Enyia alagye kpakye ngyigylira kunlu a enwye anyanle* 'If you patiently open the stomach of an ant,

you can find its intestine' (see also Yakub, 2018b: 114). The ant is a tiny insect which stomach may not be easily bisected. Notwithstanding, one could open the stomach of an ant to examine its internal organs through patience, vigilance and determination. The ant metaphor in my view had been rightly deployed in this didactic maxim among the Nzema to paint the image of a person avoiding rush; but taking enough time to carefully deal with a very delicate situation. Finding the intestines of an ant may be likened to discovering the fact in a rumour, which indeed requires the 'spirit of patience' and careful observation of the situation at hand. For instance, in order to ascertain the truth in a particular speculation, one needs to be patient and carefully study the submissions made by people before one could make accurate judgements. Having found the truth eventually, patience could be said to have been effective in making one succeed at the end of an exercise. Buttressing the efficacy of patience in achieving good results, another proverb reads as follows:

12) *Bete-bete a befa bekye akowule a* 'It takes patience to catch *akowule* 'a gnat' (a fly which pierces and sucks one's blood)'. *Akowule* among the Nzema refers to a tiny fly (parasite) which stings with its proboscis and sucks one's blood, usually when one goes to work on the farm. This fly is very smart and can easily escape if one does not attempt to catch it with patience and carefulness. Nonetheless, the parasite (*akowule*) could be captured with ease if its host (a person) does not rush in the process. The Nzema encourage the habit of carefulness and patience in addressing 'complex' situations. Hence, they use this proverb to rightly show the potency of patience in dealing with any particular delicate situation. Proverb (13) also propagates the effectiveness of patience in achieving success in an endeavour, as it states that:

13) *Abotane tudu awoka* 'Patience dismantles mountains'. This proverb says that, through patience, one can succeed in performing a herculean task. Mountains are often noted for involving huge and hard rocks, which could not be easily disintegrated. However, this proverb seeks to say that, with patience, such mountains could be gradually dissolved /dismantled. This pithy proverb tries to communicate that, through patience, a person would be able to tackle a herculean task and gradually bring it to successful completion.

3.1.4 Patience Enables People to Make Rightful Decision

The Nzema also perceive patience as an 'effective mechanism', which promotes good decision making. For instance, when one is confronted with an emergency case to handle, the person would be able to decide well and make accurate contributions if he/she retreats (relaxes) for some time and reorganises his/her thoughts before acting/making a comment. The Nzema proverb in (14) underpins this observation, as it reads:

14) *Bengyinla nyiene nu bndudu nyiene* 'If you keep standing in an army of ants, you cannot prevent them

⁵ The proverbs discussed in this section, 3.1.3 could be cited in discourse contexts when a person is being advised to desist from doing things haphazardly, without care. These proverbs could be quoted to inform such a person to be patient and have time to perform a duty diligently before another to achieve accurate results.

from biting you' (whoever hastens to provide solution to a problem does not make a useful impact). If one accidentally steps in an army of driver ants, the person can successfully remove the ants only when the person steps away from the ants for a while. If the person keeps his/her legs in the ants and tries to pick them out of his/her legs, they will rather continue to bite him/her. In this proverb, keeping one's leg in an army of ants is likened to when someone is challenged to make a decision on a particular situation; whereas stepping out of the ants to remove the biting ones is likened to taking some time to 'reason and reflect' before making a decision/contribution. The Nzema do not cherish people who try to be impulsive; who always act promptly without reasoning critically (Yakub, in press). The import of this proverb, therefore, reminds us to always retreat for some time and reflect deeply whenever we have a difficult situation to deal with. It says that we should not rush and jump into conclusion in times of decision making.

3.1.5 Patience Is Able to Bring Happiness in One's Life

Another significance of patience is that, it could prevent troubles, but bring joy in one's living. The Nzema perceive patience as able to result in excitements if one strives to endure certain difficulties that might recur in the first place. The proverb in (15) underscores this observation, as it states:

15) *Abotane ye enwonle na > nzi ye fe* 'Patience is bitter, but there is sweetness after patience' (it hurts to be patient, but beyond patience is joy). Sometimes, in life, certain circumstances may be hurting and very difficult to accommodate. However, if one endures such hardships and mishaps, the result could be positive and enjoyable. For example, among other good advices, the Nzema often caution their female wards to 'keep themselves' (keep their chastity) and wait for responsible men to seek their hands in marriage. Here, it may seem very difficult for a young lady to abstain or reject love proposal from numerous guys who may come her way, especially when her peers are in marriage relationships. However, if this young lady is able to wait patiently, she would be likely to enjoy when a 'very responsible' man comes to marry her later. In this regard, patience could be described as having resulted in excitement and joy in the lady's life. Again, if one is able to endure certain unbearable situations such as insults and/or beatings; and refuses to take revenge⁶, the person could later enjoy when his/her opponent is arrested and detained in police custody. Enduring the adverse effects of insults and beatings through patience is not an easy thing; this is what has called for the description of patience as *ye enwonle* 'is bitter' on one hand, whereas joy and liberation as a result of being patient has also resulted in the description of patience as *ye fe* 'is sweet' on the other hand.

⁶ On proverb (15) in this paragraph, the concept of patience has its focus on the ability to control one's temper (anger).

3.2 Proverbs That Tend to Refute the Need to Be Patient

Critically assessing the data, it was revealed that some counter-proverbs tend to undermine the necessities of being patient. The imports of such proverbs, as shall be seen here imply that, sometimes, certain critical conditions call for urgent reaction. The counter proverbs are discussed below in sub-section 3.2.1:

3.2.1 Avoiding Patience to Ensure Life Sustenance

The proverbs examined in this section try to communicate that, sometimes, one needs to act in haste in order to prevent foreseen and/or unforeseen calamities. We are taught through these proverbs to abandon patience, so as to be sustained in life. The first proverb in this category says:

16) *Ewole ayile bete ye nde* 'Seeking medication to rescue a victim of snake bite must be done very quickly'. The snake is naturally noted for possessing certain poisonous substance which it usually injects into a person who may accidentally step on it (Yakub, forthcoming). This poisonous substance may even cause the death of a person who might experience a snake bite; especially when medication is not sought immediately to rescue the victim. Among the Nzema, people who entertain procrastination are not smiled at. As a consequence, they have 'woven' this didactic expression based on the nature of snake to caution against procrastination. Hence, relating the import of proverb (16) to our existing life situations, we are informed to sometimes react quickly and seek solution to certain critical conditions/situations. The next proverb goes like this:

17) *Baka mwo kewe be nye la bepe zole nde-nde* 'A stick that has the tendency to pierce one's eye must be cut very quickly'. It is prudent to note that the advisory content of proverb (17) is analogous to that of (16) addressed above; in that, when a stick pierces one's eye, it causes great harm to that vital organ of the human body; just as the way snake bite causes harm to the victim. Here, a stick that is capable of destroying one's eye is likened to any situation that is liable to cause great calamities in one's life. If a situation has the tendencies of creating uncontrollable problems in the future, the Nzema believe that such situation must be eradicated without any delay. For instance, if a child exhibits the habit of being a thief in the future, his/her parents would not need to wait in the course of reprimanding the child; rather, the parents would have to react quickly and take steps to control the child since he/she could become an armed robber to even loot the parents themselves later. Thus, these proverbs (16 and 17), besides other suitable context of communication, could be deployed to advise a person to desist from the habit of hesitating to or delaying in preventing a situation from getting worst.

CONCLUSION

The paper explored proverbs in Nzema from 'patience conception conscious' perspective. In essence, the discussions had been geared principally towards the way the Nzema people codify patience, based on their socio-cultural values, beliefs, experiences and general worldview. The central messages of such proverbs teach us that **patience is a virtue** and a behavioural requirement for one to be described as a 'cultured' individual. These proverbs, as the discussions revealed, also inform us that impatience sometimes emerges out of greed. In other words, the proverbs advocate that, people who lack the spirit of waiting are attributed to possessing the spirit of greed. It showed that the Nzema trust the efficacy of patience in mitigating conflicts and promoting peaceful co-existence. Interestingly, the study further found a couple of 'counter-proverbs'; which demonstrate that the Nzema conception that though patience is a productive prerequisite in ensuring success in every aspect of human life, certain critical conditions/situations also demand reactions in haste. The paper notes that the citation of 'patience-related' proverbs in Nzema discourse is 'context-dependent'.

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