

Justice Conceptions in Tigrigna Proverbs

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Abstract: This paper aims to examine justice conceptions in Tigrigna proverbs. Through the conceptual structure of justice and critical discourse analysis, the embedded and overt aspects of justice are investigated. To contextually identify the meanings of the proverbs, four purposively selected key informants were involved. Accordingly, the proverbs showed the importance of due time witness, faithful and credible evidence. Likewise, judges are noted as crucial to ensure justice. Yet, some proverbs notify the possibility of judicial errors or misuse of judicial power, and the need for further appeal. Furthermore, the proverbs indicate the need for a community of justice to be sensible and justly pursue their cases. Yet, standing to sue is taken as negative. Additionally, empathy, peace, shared responsibility to prevent oppression and ensure justice, the safety of the neighborhood, giving parents immunity from accusation, and standing against those who try to override justice are salient concerns, instructions, and forewarnings to maintain justice.

Keywords: conceptual structure of justice, critical discourse, justice, proverbs, Tigrigna

Introduction

Proverbial expression, among the different discourse genres, is the day-to-day means of making sound communication among the people of Tigray. They make use of this genre of discourse, *inter alia*, to reflect their cognition, ideologies, relations, actions, and values. Both personal and social cognition encompass various aspects such as views, intentions, valuations, feelings, arrangements of recollection, and the act of representing through discourse communication (van Dijk 2001). Similarly, ideologies that are fundamental communal images are constructed within discourse. They serve as the basis for understanding, and socially shared opinions, and relational image representations for individuals, including relational tools, objectives, actions, standards, and means for these individuals. Additionally, ideologies encompass the fundamental values that shape socially shared opinions (van Dijk 2001).

At the core of sound adult conversation, are proverbs that distill human experience and wisdom, facilitating easy interaction. These concise and memorable expressions capture thoughts derived from keen human observations that can deepen the meaning and enhance understanding among

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interlocutors (Mieder 2004; Manser 2007). According to Mensah (2013), proverbs are traditional means of expressing views and preserving and transmitting worldviews and cultural heritage. They also serve as reflections of people's knowledge and sociocultural ways of life.

Exploring these distilled human experiences through proverbs deepen our understanding of beliefs, attitudes, relationships, lessons, causes of failure, paths to success, the practice of justice, and the various aspects of life in a given society. Fasiku (2006, 52) emphasizes the importance of proverbs, stating that "proverbs serve as charters of social and ethical norms in human interactions, extol what the society considers to be virtues, and condemn anti-social patterns of behavior".

In their daily activities, adults share their lived experiences, express their concerns, and seek to persuade others of their thoughts, often incorporating proverbs that are relevant to the subject of their discourse. Peek and Yankah (2004) highlight that the recitation of proverbs occurs in various contexts, including discussions, education, legal proceedings, and meetings. In the same vein, Mieder (2004, 1) points out that proverbs, being employed to differing degrees in various forms of communication, ranging from "friendly chats, powerful political speeches, and religious sermons to lyrical poetry, best-selling novels, and the influential mass media".

Among the pervasive social issues that are given space in proverbs are issues of justice. In this regard, the conception of justice, which is the concern of this paper, is among the viewpoints that are reflected in Tigrigna proverbs. Thus, this study explored the conception and expectation of justice in Tigrigna proverbs. It also investigated the means to maintain and the causes of failure to put justice in place. In light of this, the study has explored the proverbial expressions from the perspectives of the conceptual structure of justice and critical discourse analysis, using the following research questions:

- 1) What is the cognition of justice constructed in the Tigrigna proverbs?
- 2) How are community of justice viewed?
- 3) What are the judicial behaviors reflected in the proverbs?
- 4) What are the ideational functions of witnessing in the proverbs?
- 5) What are the principles of justice constructed in the proverbial expressions?

Conceptual Framework

This study investigated justice conceptions in Tigrigna proverbial expressions. It explicated the selected proverbs through the language used and the views about the proverbs from focused group discussion. It employed qualitative research design to investigate views and expectations of justice.

Justice, according to Cohen (2016), is possibly characterized by activities or events enacted by individuals or institutions. It is related to impartiality, parity, mutuality, necessity, and compensation. Though incorporating standards into laws may not be sufficient to realize justice,

these standards are indispensable for the rendition of justice. According to Husserl (1938), justice is a quality of an action in which the quality depends on the attitude of the person who undertakes the action. To do justice is to take equality or impartiality into account, consistently stay true to oneself, maintain constancy of determination and fair act ('formal equality'), and perform uniform actions between people. Furthermore, justice considers "essential equality" that represents shared essence or shared humanity and takes humanity as a governing idea for making a just decision and ensuring justice.

Considering the above views, the study adopts the conceptual structure of justice and critical discourse analysis as perspectives. As stated by Stumpf, Becker, and Baumgärtner (2016), justice as a notion of ethicality considers judgment. It regards what is good and bad, right and wrong based on relational perspectives. It looks upon performers, institutions, and their actions concerning their effects on parties and their rights. Besides, it denotes individuals' claims and responsibilities in response to the claims and the roles of institutions in guiding the claims and responsibilities.

To explore the conceived views of justice, Stumpf, Becker, and Baumgärtner (2016, 1193) propose considering the different key aspects of justice, including: "(1) the *judicandum*, i.e. that which is judged to be just or unjust, (2) the community of justice, consisting of claim holders and claim addressees, (3) the claims of the claim holders and obligations of the respondents, (4) the informational base for the justice judgment, (5) the principles of justice, and (6) on a more practical level, the instruments of justice."

As indicated by these same authors, a *judicandum* consists of types such as actors (who take responsibility for meeting social rules), their actions and omissions, social rules (conventions, institutions, and laws), and events or states of affairs. The community of justice refers to parties who hold specific claims (claim holders) and are in charge of meeting those claims (claim addressees that should fulfill claims or should not be obstacles to fulfilling claims). The legitimacy of such a claim depends on whether an "accepted ground of justice or ethical position" is in place when ascribing the claim to a given member of a community of justice. This is related to the ways in which the "principles of justice" are applied and how duties of justice are considered. The principles include fairness (or uniformity), balance, and order of importance.

A critical discourse analysis (CDA), similar to the conceptual structure of justice, is a critical perspective of investigation that takes the position of the oppressed, considers their interests, and takes their views and practices into account to tackle unfairness (van Dijk 2001; van Dijk 1995). As stated, it critically exposes the manipulation of text and conversation in creating and validating power misuse, emphasizing positive self-image, and de-emphasizing inequality and stereotypes that undermine and denigrate others (van Dijk 2001). CDA is a viewpoint that helps to critically interpret social issues that focus on shaping and reshaping power misuse and control

attendant to the role discourse plays (Wodak 2001; van Dijk 2001; Fairclough 1995; van Dijk 1995).

Likewise, Fairclough (2001) points out that CDA considers communal habitual activities and language uses as historically and communally positioned, shaping dialectically different dimensions of social, political, and economic structures or relations and being shaped by them; these activities and language uses host hidden grounds and effects (Van Dijk 1995; Fairclough 1995). Fairclough further states that CDA considers the community's different webs of worldviews and guides to examine the personal views on the acceptability of understanding, the implicit relations of power through language use (discourse), and the specific benefits or advantages and personalities of diverse individuals. To study social concerns such as justice, CDA considers contextual situations that help to identify the qualities of the discourse and examine the circulation of power, domination, shared beliefs, attitudes, and ideologies. It gives attention to emphasis, way of utterance, arrangements, and forms of words, choices of topics (content or the gist of the communicative event), illocutionary acts, intentions, ways of arguing, etc. (Van Dijk 2001; Van Dijk 1995). Furthermore, CDA is used to make inferences and identify latent implications and underlying views through presumptions, allusions, figures, etc. (Van Dijk 2001; Wodak 2001; Fairclough 1995; Van Dijk 1995). In similar terms, Fairclough (1995) and Van Dijk (2001) point out that CDA is a way of interpretation that gives attention to all-inclusive arrangements, schemes, and illocutionary acts of discourse that embrace forms of discourse (communicative event) such as interaction, pragmatics, grammar, style, rhetoric, semiosis, and narrations.

Research Method

This study has examined Tigrigna proverbs to appreciate the conception and cognition of justice, describe how the community views justice, and study the judicial behavior, the ideational functions of witnessing, and the principles of justice constructed in the proverbial expressions. To realize this appreciation, the study selected Tigrigna proverbs as communicative events that focus on justice. It uses a book of Tigrigna proverbs and searches out justice-related proverbs as a source of data for analysis. In addition, the study interviewed four key informants to give context to the 50 proverbs selected from the book and to articulate their meanings.

In doing so, the study employed a qualitative approach, focusing on the interpretation of the contextual use of proverbial expressions. Accordingly, all the selected proverbs taken as thematic sentences were carefully read; the meanings of these proverbs were identified and analyzed depending on the context provided by the key informants. Thus, based on the conceptual structure of justice, conceptions of justice concerning actors, their perceived actions, moral grounds, principles, and instruments have been analyzed. In addition, CDA as an analytical tool has been used to see the language uses that provide the implicit and explicit meanings. Besides, the proverbs were arranged based on their themes. Each proverb has been numbered and

translated into English for the sake of easing comprehension and the flow of the themes and of notifying the reference to the proverbs. The translated proverbs were checked and verified by linguistic experts at Mekelle University.

Analysis of Data and Interpretation

As stated above, proverbial expressions can contain long-lasting issues and beliefs of justice. In what follows, a detailed analysis of the conception of justice from these proverbial expressions is given.

Underpinnings of Justice

Justice, Fairness Warnings, Instructions, and Consequences

Proverbs are used as vehicles to give instructions, views, forewarnings, and concerns about a foreboding danger, the importance of fairness, and the precautions for safety in a given society. Such issues are reflected in the ensuing proverbs: 1) ግፍዒ ክበዝሕ ኣብ ሃገር፣ ንሕድሕዱ የፋግር ። (When oppression is prevalent in a country, it fatigues everybody.), and 2) ደሓን ክትከውን፣ ጎረቤትካ ደሓን ይኾን። (For you to be well, let your neighbor be well.).

As reflected in the 1st proverb, chances are high that every citizen is vulnerable if atrocity is prevalent in their country. It implicitly gives an insight that shared responsibility to prevent atrocity and injustice is indispensable as everyone is susceptible to the common pressing causes of brutality. The 2nd proverb underlines the importance of peace and safety in a neighborhood; it reflects that one's peace and safety depend on the neighbors' peace and safety. All members of the community can be free from risks as everyone can make extra efforts (in good neighborhoods) to care for the physical and spiritual well-being and well-becoming of members in their daily lives. A good neighborhood can be a ground for social cohesion, friendship, shared responsibility, and justice. That is why a safe and peaceful neighborhood is claimed to be a panacea for one's well-being and well-being.

In the same vein, well-being, well-becoming, and thereby justice can be realized when opposing parties consider empathy, coming out of one's perspective and worldview, and considering others' feelings, beliefs, and points of view. Following are proverbs that accentuate the need for opposing parties to have empathy: 3) ብኢድማትካ፣ ሓዊ ሓዝ። (Seize fire but with others' hand.), and 4) ንዘይኩርምትካ፣ ሕፃ ሕየኸሉ። (Chew sand but with others' teeth.).

These proverbs function to comment on opposing parties and to get them to sense the suffering from the victim's perspective. Those who claim to be victims comment on their opponents so that they can open up their senses, breaking themselves free from their indifference, pain-free, and insensitive sense of self. Although fire burns and chewing sand are all painful to victims, others should have empathy for the victim's plight. The same is true in interpersonal conflicts.

In line with this, the proverbs call for opponents to understand the pains of others as their pains and consider the victim's agony.

As mentioned by the above proverbs, collective responsibility, mutual understanding, and empathy are crucial for maintaining peace, justice, and well-being. Yet, preventing one's bad intentions, actions, and misdeeds is an important move to achieve justice. For this to happen, proverbs instruct and warn individuals to refrain from their bad intentions, and actions. If otherwise, the proverbs instruct, they would be the recipients of the consequences of their bad deeds. This is reflected in the ensuing proverbs: 5) ከም ኢድካ ትፀንሐካ (You receive according to your deeds.), and 6) ዝኸዓታ ጉድጓድ፣ ባዕሉ ይኣትዎ (One who digs a ditch for others will end up falling into it.). The 5th proverb spells out that one receives according to his/her deeds or misdeeds. In the same way, the 6th proverb underlines that one who has the intent to place others into a difficult situation will surely put himself/herself into it. Both proverbs imply that one should do justice for one's own sake; to refrain from planning misfortune for others is to save oneself from the price of self-inflicted pain or trouble, and to protect and defend justice.

Defending justice is supposed to be key in maintaining interpersonal coherence and peaceful coexistence in a society. In light of this, there are proverbs (structured as slogans) that call for actors to preclude the failure of justice. These include: 7) ፍትሒ ኣይጥፋእ፣ መጥፊኢኡ ይጥፋእ (No miscarriage of justice but death to the one who is a cause for justice to die), and 8) ፍትሒ ኣይጥፋእ፣ ዝሰተየ ኣይትፋእ (No denial of justice, and no drunkard's vomiting). These proverbs promote the need to ensure justice and the bold move to face those who try to override justice. They equate the price of the failure of justice to the death of those who deny justice. Vomiting marks abject and so does denial of justice. Both of these proverbs instruct strict adherence to ensuring and maintaining justice.

Other proverbs figure out why adherence to ensuring and maintaining justice is believed to be crucial for all actors. These proverbs underscore the crucial role justice can play. This view is reflected in the ensuing proverbs: 9) ፍትሒ ፈውሲ ሞት፣ እኽሊ ፈውሲ ጥሜት (Justice heals one from death, as food does from hunger), and 10) ፍትሒ ንዓራት፣ ዘርኢ ንግራት (Justice is to a bed as a seed is to a field).

Death is inevitable. But no one (or very few) would want to die. Who wants to lose their soul? Who wants to go hungry? Given this, the proverbs accentuate that justice heals as food satisfies hunger. Justice gives respite and repose in bed as seeds give life to a field, and a sense of hope and happiness to a field owner.

Judges

Judges play an indispensable role in settling disputes and ensuring fairness. This belief is reflected in the ensuing proverb: 11) ሰማይ ብዘይ ማይ ብረት፣ ነገር ብዘይ ዳኛ ተረት (A sky without water

is iron, and a case without a judge is a tale.) During the rainy season, farmers commonly look up at the sky to see clouds and hope for rain to quench the earth. A sky with black clouds signals pending rain and hope for crop growth. However, if the sky is clear, the farmers' hope diminishes. A sky without rain is like iron, dry. Similarly, a case without a judge is like a sky without rain, an empty tale. It implies that a judge is considered a pillar to resolve disputes and ensure fairness.

The crucial role of a judge can also be supported with the following proverb: 12) ብዙይ ዳኛ አይከላሱ፣ ብዙይ ስኒ አይነክሱ (Without a judge, you cannot be indemnified, and without teeth, you cannot bite.) Biting without teeth is inconceivable; proper biting is not possible with crooked teeth. The usefulness of teeth for biting is unquestionable. In the same way, this proverb indicates that without a judge, damages cannot be fairly compensated. For a victim to receive compensation, a judge must make a decision ordering the payment of appropriate compensation according to the losses or injuries suffered.

The role of a judge relies on critical investigation to discover and verify facts and judge based on convincing evidence that ensures care, balance, and fairness between two opposing communities of justice. For this to occur, a judge is expected to thoroughly examine the evidence. The following proverb attests to this: 13) ዳኛ መርማሪ ጣዘማ ሰርሳሪ (As a judge is an examiner, tazma is a driller.) As the proverb suggests, tazma, a tiny insect, is a driller. This insect carefully drills into the earth, making a minuscule hole, and finds a safe place in the ground. Similarly, the proverb indicates that a judge is an investigator, someone who thoughtfully and critically explores evidence and ensures its credibility to render careful and sound decisions.

The following proverb further supports this view: 14) ዳኛ እንድሕር መርማሩ፣ ከርከብዩ ቁምነገሩ (If a judge examines a case thoroughly, the truth will be uncovered.). A judge's ability to conduct a thorough investigation is valued to ensure the delivery of justice. According to this proverb, if a judge carefully examines the circumstances of the opposing parties and conducts serious investigations on the evidence, the truth will be revealed. In the course of an examination, a judge is expected to be impartial, as reflected in the proverb: 15) "A judge shall be impartial as he/she can reap his/her due pay from losers." This proverb suggests that a bribe can influence the behavior of a judge, potentially hindering fairness. However, the proverb also emphasizes that the judge is meant to be impartial as long as they receive their due pay from the loser.

Furthermore, a judge's decision is considered final, as suggested by proverbs such as 16) "A judge's decision is like a thing that gets torn with a knife's edge" and 17) "A judge's decision is like too many torn out pieces." These proverbs imply that a judge's decision is unlikely to be altered or reversed, akin to torn-out pieces being difficult to restore. This viewpoint suggests that judges are not prone to making errors and undermines the possibility of appeal and rectifying judicial mistakes. In an appeal, a decision may be reversed, modified, or confirmed.

The notion that a judge is a dependable source of justice is also conveyed in the following proverbs: 18) "Hear from your judge, and stand firm by your shield" and 19) "Get your case to a judge and eat the labor of your hand." Both proverbs advise disputing parties to listen to the judge and accept the decision. They also underscore the importance of protecting the rights of opposing parties and relying on one's own resources, rather than taking from others.

The idea that a judge filters out biased views and personal interests that could compromise the integrity of the legal process, and instead makes judgments based on factual evidence and impartiality, is evident in the following proverbs: 20) "With a judge of your choice, you can be let down" and 21) "Getting your body cut by your sharp knife is like losing your case through a judge of your own choice" and 22) "If a judge of your own choice makes a judgment against you, and if you are beaten by your staff, it is God's justice and righteousness." These proverbs highlight the importance of avoiding partiality, even when choosing a judge, and imply that God's justice prevails when justice is not served. The 20th proverb spells out that a judge of one's choice can decide against expectations and can turn out to be a source of shame. This warns that choice is not a guarantee and implies that the judge can be disinterested and can make a judgment against one's favor. The 21st proverb also gives insight into the consequence of choosing a judge and getting a judgment in one's disfavor. It considers this as a self-inflicted wound from one's sharp knife. This implies that a judge makes a judgment based on impartiality and regardless of prior relationship. This means that a judge is required to avoid a conflict of interest, and in case of a conflict of interest, she has to vacate her seat (change of venue). The 22nd proverb shares the same essence yet qualifies God's justice. Like the other two proverbs, it describes that a judge of one's choice can decide against one's expectation. It also states that this is like getting punished by one's stick. That said, the proverb underscores that such an incident qualifies for divine justice.

Although a judge is considered a reliable decision-maker, the final decision seems to fall on three judges. This view is reflected in the following proverb: 23) ሰማይ አይምለጥ፣ ፍርድ ሰለስተ አይልወጥ (The sky cannot be peeled away as a judgment by three cannot be changed.) As the proverb showcases, the decision made by three judges is final and not reversible. To reverse this final decision is like endeavoring to peel the sky away. It implies that the decision is sound and fair as chances are high for the three judges to critically examine all possible evidence from different angles and discover facts that can balance their judgment.

Against the views stated above, other proverbs show judges are not free from misdeeds. Though there are expectations that judges should serve justice, there are views, as disclosed by these proverbs, that judges themselves can be obstacles for justice to prevail. The ensuing proverbs illustrate this practice: 24) ዝበልዕ ዳኛ፣ ዝወግአ መንገኛ (A bribed judge is like a devil that stabs), 25) ክበልዕ ዝበለ ዳኛ፣ ክቐትል ዝበለ ደመኛ (A judge who inclines to accept a bribe is like an enemy who has the intent to murder), 26) ዳኛ ዘፍሰሰሉ፣ ፈረስ ዝከስከሰሉ (A judge sides with those who pay much, and a horse with those who give much to consume), 27) ክጠፍእ ዝበለ ገንዘብ ኣብ ቅድሚያ ዳኛ ይስዕስዕ (The

money to be lost dances in front of a judge), 28) ዓመፀኛ ዳኛ፣ በዓል ነገርካ ከዊሉ ይምጉተካ (A Rebellious judge protects your opponent and argues against you), and 29) ዳኛ ዝዘረዮን፣ ሓዊ ዘቆረዮን ሓደ (Those whose cases are partially judged are akin to those who are disabled due to fire).

As described in the 24th proverb, there is a belief that judges can take bribes and make unfair decisions, putting the victim in a difficult situation. In this proverb, a bribed judge is considered as a devil who mercilessly stabs. The 25th proverb also shares the same sense. It describes that a judge who has the intent to accept a bribe is like a brutal murderer. This indicates that a bribed judge has no plight for a victim and does not give weight to ensuring justice other than pursuing personal gain. The 26th and 27th proverbs give the belief that a judge can be influenced by bribe-paying. A judge can take a bribe and make inappropriate decisions for those who pay.

In the same vein, both the 28th and the 25th proverbs share the view that judges can misuse their judicial power. The 29th proverb indicates that a rebellious judge argues on behalf of an opposing party; it implies the belief that a judge can be lopsided and damage impartiality which is one of the tenets of justice. In consonance with this, the 25th proverb shows that the effect of a judge's partial decision is considered the same as the effect of a fire burn which turns out a victim to be disabled. Briefly, these proverbs give stories of multiple insights about judges; they spell out the views that judges can exercise misuse of judicial power, bribery, corruption, and partiality.

Furthermore, there are other proverbs, along the same line, which render instructions and warnings that can raise awareness to respect the law, maintain justice, and rectify the views constructed in the above proverbs. Following are these proverbs: 30) ነበረ የኖብር፣ ሕገ የክብር (The lived stays with us, as the law protects citizens), 31) ሸግግለ ከምዝኸነሉ፣ ዳኛ ስርዓቱ ይሓሉ (The arbitrators have to do their part with all possibilities, and a judge has to protect the law.) and 32) ብሓሶት ዝፈረደ፣ ዕውር ወለደ (Judging based on falsehood is like begetting a blind child.), and 33) ብዘይ ፍርዲ ምእሳር፣ ኣብ ልዕሊ ፈጣሪ ምምራር (To put a suspect in prison without judgment is to call upon God's rage.). The proverbs mentioned above (30-33) give weight to respecting law and order and maintaining fairness. The 30th proverb instructs that the law protects citizens. For the law to be obeyed, the judge has to protect the legal system, as described in the 31st proverb. If this is not happening, there are forewarnings, as indicated in the 32nd and 33rd proverbs. The 32nd proverb equates disobedience with begetting a blind child. It marks a red line for judges not to misuse judicial power. In a similar vein, the 33rd proverb warns against the practice of detaining a person without judgment. It reflects that such a practice calls upon God's rage. What if a judge does not respect such instructions and warnings? Other proverbs give insight into what to do. Such proverbs include the following: 34) ንዳኛ ዳኛ ኣለዎ፣ ነንበሳ ተኸላ ኣለዎ። (There is a judge for a judge, and a wolf for a lion.), and 35) ዳኛ ከዝብል ብዳኛ፣ ኣድጊ ከዝብል ብመፅዓኛ (If a judge takes a side, another judge can rectify; if a donkey lets its load slip, a leather-made strap can solve.)

Though a judge is believed to have judicial power, these two proverbs show that reversing a decision made by a judge through appeal is still possible. The 34th proverb underscores appeal through a hierarchy of power as a solution. A decision made by a judge can be reversed by another, as by analogy, a lion can be won by a wolf. This juxtaposition of a judge and a lion implies that both a judge and a lion have power. However, the proverb also shows that those with might can be defeated by others mightier than them. The 35th presupposes the possibility of correcting a judicial error through appeal. If a judge makes an inappropriate decision, favoring a party or making a judicial error, the decision can be reversed through appeal. Appeal or an alternative judge is viewed metaphorically as a leather-made rope that can help fasten a load that slips from a donkey's back.

Community of Justice: Claim Addressee and Claim Holder

The community of justice consists of actors whose claims are at stake. While endeavoring to win or defend a claim, and after losing or defending a case, these actors are expected to share views and underlying beliefs and comply with the dictates of society.

Among these shared views and underlying beliefs are cases involving parents, as reflected in the following proverb: 36) ሰማይ አይሕረስ፣ ወላጅ አይኸሰስ (The sky cannot be plowed, as a parent cannot be accused). It is believed to be wrong to accuse a parent. Parents are believed to be everything to a child, and expectations are high that parents sacrifice themselves for their children's well-being and well-becoming. Besides, there is a strong belief that parents, family members, or close relatives can manage to resolve conflicts with children. Seen in this way, the proverb normatively claims that a parent is immune from accusation. The impracticality of accusation is tantamount to the impossibility of plowing the sky.

Another expectation, as reflected in the proverb 37) ተአሚኑ ዝማገጦት፣ አይርታዕን (One who argues in truth cannot be won.), is that the community of justice should be honest. Claim holders are expected to avoid baseless and false allegations. In the same vein, claim addressees are reasonably expected to defend their case honestly, refuting allegations. In either party, one who truthfully argues will not be defeated. Proofread the text:

Yet, claim holders are viewed negatively; the following are proverbs that discourage standing to sue: 38) ከሳሲ፣ ኣብ ሓዊ መላሲ (A claim holder sets one on fire), 39) ንኸሳሲ፣ የብሉን መላሲ (A claim holder has nothing to stand in his/her way.), 40) ከሳሲ ይመርኽ፣ ልጓም ይገርኽ (As a claim holder leads, a harness breaks), and 41) ከሳሲ ደው የብል፣ ፀዋሒ ውሆይ የብል (A claim holder lets one to stand up, as one who calls out lets someone else respond).

As stated in the 38th proverb, a claim holder is defined as one who sets people on fire. Metaphorically, it gives a view that a claim holder causes severe pain to a claim addressee, a pain that is tantamount to the pain of a fire burn. Moreover, the 39th proverb indicates that

claim-holders are positioned as unstoppable and viewed as people who do not listen. This implies that such people are viewed as self-focused and interested in embittering others' lives. The same is true with the 40th and 41st proverbs; claim holders are regarded as actors who can dictate and trouble others.

Against the views reflected in the foregoing, some proverbs showcase another dimension of a claim holder and a claim addressee. These include 42) ከኸሱ ይኸሰሱ፣ ከኸዱ ይምለሱ (When you sue, you can be sued, when you go, you will return.) 43) ብአፎም ዝግበአም ከይመልሱ፣ ምስ ዳኛ ይበአሱ (Better to give a proper answer than to get quarrel with a judge.), and 44) ነገር ምእንቲ ኪጣፋእ፣ ዳኛ ቕተል (Kill a judge to get a case evanesced.).

According to the 42nd proverb, as there is a time for going, there is also a time for coming back. Similarly, the proverb lets claim holders consider that the case can turn out differently from their expectations and that they can be claimed addressees themselves. The 43rd proverb comments on both claim holders and addressees, for wittingly or unwittingly getting into quarrels with a judge. Instead, it instructs them to give a due response. The 44th proverb is used from the context of the claim addressee. This proverb implies that in times of anger, or when the claim addressee is blinded by personal interest, such views can dictate the claim addressee to commit such misdeeds. This further indicates that judges can be vulnerable to death.

Witnesses

To prove one's case and make sound judgments, there is a need to have a reliable source of truth. Unreliable sources, such as gossip, hearsay, and rumor, can be verified based on eyewitnesses. For this to succeed there is a need to receive quality evidence from a witness. One of the concerns that must be maintained is receiving evidence in a timely manner. Following is a proverbial expression that testifies to this issue: 45) ምስክር እንተሓደረ ይልወጥ፣ ሸንፍላ እንተሓደረ ይምለጥ (After a night, a witness changes, and omasum peels away.) This proverb reflects the concern that witnesses must share what they saw or heard in a timely manner when they have fresh memories of the event or case. If the witness delays until the next day (as indicated by the proverb), a change is inevitable. Just as omasum can rot away if not prepared fresh, witnesses are of no use if they delay; they should appear on the scheduled date and give their testimony. This implies that a delay can cause witnesses to forget details, give distorted or false information, and result in omissions of evidence, distortion, or false information. They can be exposed to bias and manipulation, ultimately affecting the due process of ensuring fairness. Testimony provided by a delayed witness may contain an unbelievable story that can adversely affect justice. To prevent fraud and maintain credible evidence from witnesses, religious beliefs play a crucial role. Witnesses take oaths to show that their testimony is true.

Proverbs such as 46) ምስክር ንጎረሮኻ፣ ዕላል ንብገይካ (Witness is for being faithful and chatting for a friend.) similarly emphasize the strong tie between witnessing and faith. Although there are

possibilities for people to lie, manipulate, or deceive for various reasons such as relationships, personal gains, fear, or forewarning, witnesses are expected to stick to what they saw and speak the truth with unwavering effort, acting as stewards of justice. They do this not for anything else but to serve their faith, a reward that gives weight to the soul rather than the flesh.

Witnessing is closely tied to one's faith or conscience. It is believed that witnesses must give their testimony in a timely manner and without any trace of impartiality. Furthermore, witnesses must respect the required manners and remain faithful accordingly. Witnesses in the due process should be administered with orderliness and time order taken into account. In light of this, the proverb: 47) ምስክር ምስተፀወዐ፣ ምስተጸቀተ ምስ ተሰርዐ (Witness shall rise when called for, and an offering is put when ready.) aligns the essence of orderliness in witnessing with the order of offering, which is religious. The juxtaposition of witnessing and offering in this proverb reminds readers that both share the same essence: they showcase acts of giving freely but giving with the purity of heart and manner, serving the truth. Both also showcase orderliness. Witnesses must do good by freely giving their true words about cases they are called for. They willingly have to present their observations to serve justice and satisfy their conscience. Judgment will be in effect as long as witnesses give their words. Likewise, those who sacrifice offerings to God must do so truly and ensure all important things are in place in a way that can please God. Yet both are used to cleanse personal and social fraud that might take place before the threshold - the act of witnessing or offering. The virtue of orderliness and timing for undertaking witnesses contributes to the quality of justice, just as they testify to the purity of heart in times of offering.

In addition to setting witnesses' due dates, maintaining faithfulness and orderliness, the quality of evidence can be maintained through constructing proverbial norms: (48) "Pay tax based on your income, testify based on what you have heard." (49) "Cut not with two knives, and testify not with double tongues." (50) "Better to lose your child than to break your words (A promise is a debt)." These proverbs commonly encourage witnesses to maintain their moral duty and avoid deception. As reflected in the 48th proverb, witnesses should tell what they hear, no more, no less, just as taxpayers should not evade taxes or pay taxes according to their income. In the 49th proverb, witnesses should ward off double tongues, which is a metaphor for lacking integrity, just as using two knives at the same time (with one hand) is not worth cutting and can reduce the quality of the cut. It is not good to speak hypocritically about two different things, as it can damage fairness. The 50th proverb encourages witnesses, as it does for any other people in other matters, to maintain their perseverance and stay true to their word. This gives much weight to fairness and maximum determination not to change their thoughts for any reason, as changing what has been said or promised equals the pain of losing a child. These normative proverbs are used to encourage users to safeguard and maintain the quality of witness evidence, thereby doing justice to victims and maintaining fairness in society.

Discussion

The proverbs function to describe principles to be kept, fairness, forewarnings and instructions to be noted, values of justice to be adhered to and maintained, the qualities judges and witnesses need to have, and weaknesses to be rectified. Some proverbs give instructions, views, and forewarnings about possible dangers, the importance of peace and fairness, and precautions for safety in a neighborhood. They provide insight into shared responsibility, understanding, and empathy to prevent injustice, as everyone can be susceptible to common pressing causes. The proverbs emphasize that justice heals as food satisfies hunger. They provide respite and repose in bed as seeds give life to a field, and a sense of hope and happiness to a field owner.

More importantly, judges are considered cornerstones that uphold the foundation of fairness. They are believed to hand down judgment based on sound evidence that ensures care, balance, and fairness between two opposing communities of justice. For this to happen, a judge is required to exercise judicial power considering the standards governing the practice of judgeship, such as independence, impartiality, competence, diligence, and equality (FDRE Constitution articles 78(1) and 79(2&3); UDHR under article 10, & ICCPR under article 14). They are deemed to run the course of the law. Without them, damages cannot be fairly repaired, and restitution cannot be realized.

What is more, the decision made by three judges, by contrast with a single judge, is believed to be by far final and not changeable. The proverbs take the view that the decision is sound and fair, as chances are high for the three judges to critically examine all possible evidence from different angles and discover facts that can balance their decision. As stated in the Ethiopian Criminal Procedure Code of 1961, judges are recognized as the ultimate guardians of justice in the process of adjudicating disputes, whether criminal or civil matters, in the Ethiopian legal system.

Needless to say, other proverbs show that judges may not be free from misdeeds and that they may turn aside from the law. Though there are expectations that judges should serve justice, there are views that judges themselves can be obstacles for justice to prevail. There is a belief that judges can misuse judicial power, engage in judicial misconduct, take bribes, get involved in corruption and partiality, and make unfair decisions, putting the victim in a difficult situation and degrading the value of justice. The study conducted by Patoari, Murad, and Mahmud (2014) corroborates these views. According to them, though judges are crucial in the judiciary system, they are still prone to making faults, showing weaknesses, and causing devastating consequences for the community of justice.

In line with such possibilities, other proverbs provide instructions and warnings that can raise awareness to respect the law and maintain justice. If a judge does not respect such instructions and warnings and makes inappropriate decisions, favoring parity or engaging in judicial misconduct, the proverbs show that reversing a decision made by such a judge through appeal is still possible. Once a case is in the hands of a judge, proverbs warn, both claim holders and

defendants are expected not to quarrel with the judge. Instead, they are deemed to reasonably defend their case honestly and refute any allegations.

Regarding claim holders, proverbs discourage the act of standing to sue as they are considered troublemakers who are unyielding and unwilling to listen. They are viewed as self-centered individuals interested in making others' lives bitter.

Yet, other proverbs emphasize the importance of the justice community opening their minds and considering the suffering from other perspectives. Well-being, fairness, and justice can be achieved when opposing parties practice empathy, stepping out of their own worldview, and considering the feelings, beliefs, and points of view of others.

Family members, as defendants, are considered immune from accusations. They are thought to be capable of resolving conflicts with their children; therefore, addressing claims to them is seen as impractical.

Witnesses, a crucial component of the justice system, are expected to provide relevant and credible evidence. In the Ethiopian legal system, witnesses, along with written documents, are recognized as the most reliable sources of evidence for the administration of justice. A witness who has knowledge of a crime is required to report it and testify truthfully according to the FDRE Criminal Code Proclamation no. 414/2004. Taylor (2017) highlights the significance of witnesses as a vital source of oral evidence.

However, witnesses are required to present their evidence in a timely manner, as delays can cause them to forget details and provide distorted or false information, leading to injustice. Similarly, Taylor (2017) acknowledges that witnesses are vulnerable to memory failure, bias, dishonesty, death, and incapacity. In agreement with this, Wheatcroft, Wagstaff, and Manarin (2015) express concern that delays can negatively impact witnesses' memory accuracy and the truthfulness of their testimony. Furthermore, delays can expose witnesses to manipulation, bias, omissions, and undermine the reliability of their statements. Rahangdale (2020) also highlights the adverse effects of delays on witnesses, such as increased exposure to potential adversaries, harassment, ill-treatment, pain, and loss of life, which can undermine the credibility of their testimony.

Nevertheless, witnesses are expected to remain truthful, fulfill their moral duty, and avoid lying, as doing so contradicts their religious faith. They are expected to make unwavering efforts to maintain their integrity despite any external pressures or challenges. Failure to testify truthfully can result in criminal punishment, as perjury is considered a crime.

Conclusion

This study aims to investigate the cognition of justice, views on the community of justice, judicial behavior, ideational functions of witnesses and sureties, and principles of justice constructed in proverbial expressions. Accordingly, it has been found that witnessing, as one of the arms of justice, should be given in a timely manner; a witness who testifies promptly is identified as an antidote to inaccurate testimony. Furthermore, witnesses, no matter how hard they are tried, are instructed to remain faithful and give credible evidence. More than any other actors in the justice system, judges are seen as uniquely crucial for ensuring justice. However, this only holds true if they can set aside their personal views and interests. Accordingly, they are expected to make impartial judgments. To make the judgment sounder and final, judges are supposed to be three in number. Yet, this should not prevent further appeals, as judges can make judicial errors or become involved in misusing their judicial power for personal gain. Regarding the community of justice, the study indicates that they are expected to sensibly and justly pursue their case without unduly arguing with the judge. However, standing to sue is viewed negatively, and claim holders are seen as troublemakers. Furthermore, the need for empathy, providing parents or family members with immunity from accusation, the importance of fairness and safety precautions, the need for shared responsibility in preventing oppression and ensuring justice, the importance of peace and safety in a neighborhood, and the bold move to confront those who try to subvert justice are all salient concerns.

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- ተኸለ, ፀጌረዳ, አስመላሽ ወልደማርያምን, and አስመሮም ገብረስላሴ. 1985 E.C. *ምስላታት፡- የትግርኛ ምሳሌያዊ ንግግሮች*. አዲስ አበባ: አካዳሚ ቋንቋታት ኢትዮጵያ .