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# Proverbs in the Service of Humanity: The Case of Khana Local Government Area of Rivers State

Barigbon Gbara Nsereka<sup>1</sup>

Concerned for the dwindling fortunes of social development and a seemingly declining interest in cultural affairs in Khana Local Government Area (KHALGA) of Rivers State, this study set out to examine the place of proverbs, an important ingredient of oramedia (a coinage for traditional communication) in the service of humanity, with a focus on KHALGA. To accomplish this objective, this survey research drew a sample of 400 subjects from the Khana population of 311,144 - using the Taro Yamane's formula for determining sample size - to participate in the study. The data generated by a 21-item structured questionnaire were analyzed using frequency distribution tables, percentages and weighted mean scores (WMS). Findings showed that the people of Khana are aware of the functionality of existing proverbs and also happily use them; that of these proverbs that have wide applicability across communities in Khana area, and the people know the ones most commonly used in the LGA. It was also found that proverbs are used to publicize development messages; to crack jokes that evoke health-enhancing laughter; to enliven messages during discourses on communal development; and to teach moral lessons. The study concluded that there are well-known proverbs in Khana that can be used to enrich messages and used to publicize events and disseminate development messages. It was then recommended, among other things, that for peace and sustainable development to be the lot of the people, proverbs should be used to spice messages that can bring about educational advancement, sports development, good health, cultural re-awakening and security.

**Key Words:** Proverbs, Humanity, Khana LGA, Rivers State, Development

i

## Introduction

Folk media such as story-telling, legends, folktales, myths, riddles, parables and proverbs are not just forms of oral literature but also constitute what Ogbuaja (1985) calls oramedia. The beginning of literature in all societies was basically oral, where people chanted songs, for instance, at community gatherings, social occasions or even at work (Olugbenga, 2001). Oral literature is the vehicle of transmission of culture, beliefs, thoughts and customs of a given community from one generation to another. It is the way traditional people express themselves which is the foundation of their existence.

As Ugwu (1998) writes, legends talk about the origin of a people; the heroes who have overcome many difficulties to see a country or town founded. The story of a legend is usually romantic and fascinating. Folktales are used for entertaining and moralizing. They deal with situations which the listeners are familiar with or recall ancient customs like birth and marriage. The tales are often made to have happy endings and involve triumph over difficulties by heroes. Myths deal with past events relating to the creation of heaven and earth. They explain life and death and the great forces of nature. Riddles are metaphorical expressions of the basic concerns and interest of a people. The contents of riddles are usually vulgar and touch on sexual and obscene allusions through their rich imagery. Story-telling sessions often start with riddles as a set induction. Parables are short stories with their meanings placed side by side with the stories. A classical example is the biblical Parable of the Sower. Of all these channels of folk communication, proverbs which are used mostly by the elderly to express themselves tactfully and concisely while giving warnings, moral lessons and advice, stand out. It is the importance of proverbs in human society which is the thrust of this article.

In the African communication situation, proverbs as an oramedia form, constitute an important traditional communication content. Nwanne (2006) observes that such proverbs, which are deeply rooted in the people's way of life and experiences are similar to idiomatic expressions in English. Doob (1966) also observes that "the subtleties of communication which proverbs represent presumably occur so frequently in a society that insiders comprehend them quickly and without error" (p.264), noting that idiomatic expressions are very economical because they convey information in a condensed form. However, what is gained through a condensed message may be lost through difficulty in decoding the meaning by those outside the cultural setting of the proverbs (Nwanne, 2006).

Akpabio (2003) notes that in many societies in Nigeria, there is a prevalence of the use of proverbs in that many of the rules of society are conveniently expressed in proverbs, "which span almost every human endeavour while expressing time-tested truths" (p.77).

Etymologically, the word *proverb* is derived from the Latin word *proverbium* meaning a saying supporting a point. *Pro* means on *behalf of* while *verbum* means *word*. Literally then, proverb means "words used to stand on behalf of something" since a proverb is used to intensify and thus clarify the import of a statement.

Proverbs are, therefore, described as short traditional sayings of a didactic or advisory nature in which a generalization is given a specific metaphorical expression.

Proverbs express the thoughts, wisdom, moral codes and cultural heritage of a people or culture. Generally, proverbs are inherent in the cultures of the world and are generally seen as succinct and pithy sayings in general use, expressing commonly held ideas and beliefs.

### Statement of the Problem

Khana, like other local government areas (LGAs), is faced with many challenges. Among these are decaying social infrastructure (like the neglected public secondary schools across the land) and the erosion of the cultural practices and values that welded the people together in the past in their search for growth and prosperity.

Knowledge and information are essential for people to respond to the opportunities and challenges of social, economic and cultural changes. Regardless of the type of development challenges, the communication of vital information, using the right channels can yield the expected result of redressing the challenges.

This study, therefore, sought to explore the place of proverbs which are culture-based in enriching the messages being transmitted among the Khana people towards the socio-cultural development of the area.

### Objectives of the Study

Broadly, the objective of this study was to investigate the possible role of proverbs in reawakening the socio-cultural consciousness of the people of Khana Local Government Area with the view to harmonizing and galvanizing the people who seem to have lost mutual trust, love and friendship as was the case with their forbears because of the high level of crime, violence and other untoward socio-cultural practices that are perpetrated by the people, especially the youths.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

- (i) Determine the levels of awareness and the use of proverbs among the Khana people.
- (ii) Identify some proverbs and wise sayings that are commonly used by the people to communicate with one another.
- (iii) Determine the effectiveness of proverbs in transmitting development messages among the people of Khana LGA.
- (V) Suggest possible ways by which proverbs as a traditional communication content can engender peace, prosperity and sustainable development in the area.

### Research Questions

- (i) What are some proverbs and wise sayings that are commonly used by the people to communicate with one another?
- (ii) What is the level of consciousness and understanding of proverbs among the Khana people?
- (iii) How effective are proverbs in transmitting development messages among the people of Khana LGA?
- (v) What are the possible ways by which proverbs as a traditional communication content can engender peace, prosperity and sustainable development in the area?

### ii

### Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

As a folk communication content, proverbs are used to illustrate and spice messages to make meanings clearer in traditional settings. Since the thrust of the article is on how proverbs could function in promoting human causes like development programmes and projects through

effective transmission of messages in the stakeholder communities, this work was anchored on the development communication theory.

For it to be effective and relevant, development communication seeks to integrate people's culture, attitudes, knowledge, practices, perceptions, needs and problems in the planning and implementation of development projects and programmes. An important objective of development communication is to ensure that information from development agencies is useful, relevant and packaged in such ways that will be attractive and understandable to people. It also ensures that people's perception and knowledge are rendered in ways that will be comprehensible to development agencies.

Development communication refers to the organized efforts to use communication processes and the media to bring about social and economic improvements. It encompasses many different media and approaches such as the folk media, traditional social groupings, rural radio, video and multi-media modules (for farmer training, for instance,) and global information sources like the Internet which link the locals to researchers, educators, extension and producer groups living far away.

According to Quebral (1973), development communication, simply defined, is the use of communication to promote social development. "More specifically, it refers to the practice of systematically applying the processes, strategies, and principles of communication to bring about positive social change." (P.15)

There is copious literature on *oramedia*, within which proverbs are found. For Ugboajah (1985), *oramedia* are "functional" and "utilitarian," the most important purpose of which is to provide teaching and initiation with the object of imparting traditional, aesthetic, historical, technical, social, ethical and religious values. Ugboajah says bedecked with oratory, *oramedia* help sharpen people's awareness of their own history, magnify past events and deeds of illustrious ancestors. Proverbs are, therefore, a utilitarian traditional communication content.

Proverbs are "short witty expressions used to refer indirectly, but usually more vividly, to a situation, an idea or to describe a person or an act" (Ukonu, 2008, p.). Proverbs most often carry with them moral lessons as they are employed in offering advice, praise, information, and in rebuking. They are more appreciated or lauded when applied in the right context in which they have meaning or are suited (Ukonu, 2008).

Fennigan (1970) quoted in Enighe (2006) defines a proverb as "a saying from a more or less fixed form, marked by shortness, sense and 'salt' and distinguished by truth..." (p.322). Agreeing with Fennigan, Essien (1978) also quoted in Enighe (2006), sees a proverb as "a saying full of wisdom intended as a rule of conduct and behaviour among people of the same speech community" (p.323).

Jones (1980), distinguishing between a proverb and a wise saying, states that a wise saying is a statement which is full of wisdom but which does not need an interpretation like a proverb.

Proverbs are necessities and essential ingredients in communication, especially in traditional societies. Though the place of proverbs in modern communication, especially in Western and developed countries, has been relegated to the background, proverbs are an element of folklore (<http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ujah.v13i1.2>). Like some other elements of folklore, a proverb plays several significant roles in the literary works of writers who choose to blend their works with the touch of African oral tradition and to give their creative works a stamp of uniqueness, authenticity, and identity as they reflect and project their culture, tradition, outlook on life. Proverbs serve as an important tool of story-telling in the re-creation of a genuine and believable African side of stories (<http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ujah.v13i1.2>).

Nsereka (2007) chronicles the life and times of a legendary figure, incidentally his father, who postulated a myriad of proverbs before he died in 2007, and states some of the proverbs and wise sayings. According to him,

There lived in Kaani Community (this writer's hometown) in Khana Local

Government Area of Rivers State of Nigeria, a sage, nay, a legendary figure, Mr Akoba Yeeh (1916 - 2007). He was an embodiment of confounding philosophies and a mill of proverbs. He radiated native intelligence and exuded wisdom. More often than not, his utterances were inspirational. I was blessed to have him as my father.

My late father, Papa, Akoba Yeeh, did not as much as hear any of such names as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, Napoleon Hill (all philosophers) but he endorsed their sophistry, ideas and views about life and he led a life pattern which was in conformity with their philosophy - a lifestyle that was widely adjudged a model.

More interestingly, although the levels of education of those philosophers and his were worlds apart, he and those big names were all philosophers, he being of the born, not made, breed of thinkers(p. 6).

Nsereka recalls that the retentive memory of the legend made him a rallying point for people who wanted to make some historical incursion into certain past events within and outside the Kaani community. He was meticulous, highly oratorical, proverb-friendly, curious, courageous, confident, cautious, circumspect and often controversial (especially when he was sure of the flawlessness of his viewpoints or argument). And he had ready answers to so many riddles of life that inquirers who came to tap from his knowledge were only short of asking him to tell them the secret of the lion's limbs, the truth of the baboon's bottom, the truth of the tiger's tail and the secret of the jackal's jaw.

According to Nsereka, the philosophical reflections of Elder Akoba Yeeh were encapsulated in the myriad of proverbs which he originated and spoke. Below are a few of the proverbs and wise sayings (rendered in Kaani dialect of the Khana language) with their meanings and in some cases, backgrounds. Each proverb is rendered in vernacular and italicized, translated in English and then given the literary meaning.

1. *Bem ga da ye zia aabee zu kuma a ko bee.*  
I cannot peel a yam from the bottom to the head.  
**Meaning:** One should not do things in a disorderly form. There is need for conventionality.
2. *Kere ii kue na nee kiira kea a ga lege a dem nee.*  
If one is able to turn the log of a raffia palm tree, is it one's tongue that cannot be easily turned?  
**Meaning:** If one can exert the effort of physically turning a log of wood, it is much easier to tell a white when one is under pressure.
3. *Abinakpa taa nee a le deesi nee a le dee deme suanu.*  
When the person in front is stung by 'Abinakpa', the person behind becomes wise. *Abinakpa* is a stinging insect in the class of warps.  
**Meaning:** One person's bitter experience serves as a lesson to other persons.
4. *Nee oor a lo bee lo na a we nyeghia bu lo lo mkpini bari a bee aa daa alo sa dor maa a.*  
It is he who is not favoured by his fishing expedition that regrets the only fish that fell from his hook to the river.  
**Meaning:** It is the one in lack who keeps remembering the little material loss he previously experienced.
5. *Nee a kii wii kpe deme na a we kue kue lo usua ke bia nee a bee za dee si lea.*  
It is a late comer to the farm who makes a call of alarm to early arrivals.  
**Meaning:** A new comer into a business asks many questions.
6. *Nee maa mue na maa we str a*  
The river drowns him who is in the river.  
**Meaning:** He is hurt who does not avoid danger.

7. *Nee bia we dii lee be te lee a ga worn am.*  
 One does not trim the plants on a bush before the bush is cleared for farming.  
**Meaning:** One does not count two before one.
8. *Nu bo opara ii o.*  
 It marries you what you are ignorant of.  
**Meaning:** More effort is required to perform an unfamiliar task.
9. *Koor bie bu kue ba aa e nua kpaamu.*  
 The domestic fowl which stays longer than necessary in the bush is mistaken for a bush fowl and caught as such.  
**Meaning:** One should not overstay one's welcome lest one be given a dishonourable treatment.
10. *Pio wua bee wua ip le zoo.*  
 Some brotherhood is like that of the palm nut.  
**Philosophical Background:** Between the outer red substance of the palm nut and the innermost kernel is a boundary, that is, the hard part. Thus, although there is a relationship between the palm nut the kernel, a very hard substance separates them, making one not see the other.  
**Meaning:** Although some people are naturally related, their behaviour does not exhibit the affection that should show they are relatives. Whereas the people are related, they operate at opposite extremes. The interest of one is not the concern of the other. They are related by birth, not in deed.
12. *Nee taa bi bia we sua lo nam ba sip laga lo.*  
 The one who is under pressure of passing out faeces is ignorant of the piece of land into which entry for defecation is prohibited.  
**Philosophical Background:** In many rural areas, people go to the bush to pass faeces. When the bowel is full and one is pressed, one may not notice any sign on a particular piece of land indicating prohibition of entry until one is back to oneself (i.e. when the person has eased out the pressure).  
**Meaning:** One who is under much pressure can make mistakes,
13. *Ke a kpooge kpigi a ina me si.*  
 I have now got a place to save coins on my face.  
**Meaning:** When one is old, one could have wrinkles deep enough to accommodate a small object.
14. *Msia tam aa loore mme oone, nu a bia na adoo me yaa.*  
 I have worked from morning to night; what remains now is my appreciation.  
**Meaning:** A parent who has laboured hard to keep a family on its feet, deserves an appreciation, such as in being given a good care in old age by the children.
15. *Ke m ga kii awara ee ke m aa.*  
 Where I have come from is longer than where I'm going.  
**Meaning:** I have lived the better part of my life. That is to say, by my present age, I am nearer to death now than hitherto.
16. *Nu weekie nee a ere kpooge sor zoo yee lo zi kum*  
 The man who has a blunt machete becomes sad when he has more than one palm bunch to cut.  
**Meaning:** One with limited resources is saddened by increasing responsibilities.
17. *Mkira bee nu m bee le ee bi*  
 I'm gone as if I were in attendance of a cultural display

**Meaning:** I am now old and about to quit this life like one who goes back to one's house at the end of an event one has gone to witness outdoor.

18. *Beme si oone bia dor logor hii.*

A frown made in the night has no consequence.

**Meaning:** Because a frown cannot be noticed in the dark, its purpose is defeated.

19. *Be ba we yere sag bu nee, aba a gbon.*

Anger cannot be imputed in anybody but appeased.

**Meaning:** It is he who has a reason to be angry that can be angry; and one's anger can be appeased by another.

20. *Nee a sua nu lu wia saa*

A wise man is a suffering man.

**Meaning:** It takes a wise person to detect faults in various activities of other persons in society and feel concerned about them. This reinforces the saying that it is not the mad man but the relatives of the mad man that are ashamed of his insane actions. It is the wise man who more often than not serves as counsellor to other men, sacrificing his time and expending his energy.

21. *Pya zuguru lo sua ma ep lo pya neewa.*

Young men of this generation taste girls.

**Meaning:** The young men of this age date prospective wives before deciding on possible marriage as opposed to just going to ask for the hand of a young woman and marrying her before having legal sexual relations with her.

21. *Nee bia le ke ba e kue bia we kor a doo e bee korp.*

When a call is made to one who is out of the sight of the caller, the one so called does not respond by nodding but by the use of words, otherwise, there was no communication by the person called.

**Meaning:** A nonverbal communication which is not noticed by the target audience is no communication.

22. *Lue doa na ba gba nuu bie sa aa alea.*

What has the rabbit done for the hunter to skip the rat and go for the rabbit when both of them look alike and live in the same hole with even the rat itself in front.

**Meaning:** Distance may not be a barrier in one's search for a genuine thing.

23. *O bee lu kue i ka bee kor bo o le na si.*

If you were a raffia palm tree, your wine-producing side would be changed by now.

**Philosophical background:** The palm-wine-producing raffia palm tree has a particular direction that produces the substance most. Whenever the tree fails to perform (i.e. produce wine) up to expectations, the right direction is looked for and used.

**Meaning:** You now require being adjusted for lack of usefulness.

24. *Lo bia bee lu naa kaani ba ka orba o ba lee.*

If not for the lack of firewood, you would have been roasted and eaten by now.

**Meaning:** You are so foolish that your presence in any gathering is not significant.

These proverbs and wise sayings with cross-cultural applicability in Khana LGA are said to have been widely quoted while the legend lived and more so now that he is dead.

A significant thing about proverbs, like the foregoing, to note is that they are generally much shorter than their translated versions let alone the meanings they convey.

Now, Khana, one of the largest and most thickly populated of the 23 LGAs of Rivers State, is

located at 4°42'N 7°21'E and covers an area of 560 km<sup>2</sup>. Its time zone is WAT (UTC+1) and the postal code is 504. It has numerous communities spread across 19 electoral wards.

Considering the controversy over the origins of the people and the variegated nature of the history of the Ogoni, it is only safe to leave the issue of the natural roots of the people to anthropologists, archaeologists and historians to tackle.

Established in the three kingdoms of Babbe, Ken-Khana and Nyo-Khana, with 73 very large communities, the people speak Khana language. By the count of the 2006 Nigerian National Census, the people numbered 294,217.

Still on the population of Khana, Needam (2015) writes that:

according to a Fact Sheet on Water Supply and Sanitation Facilities and Services produced by the Rivers State Government and facilitated by the Ministry of Water Resources and Rural Development with the support of UNICEF "A" Field Office, Enugu, the population of KHALGA as at December 2010, was 311, 144. The Fact Sheet also projects that "judging by the 2006 National Population Census with a growth rate of 3%, the population of the LGA by December 2015, using the same projection parameters, will be 383, 886.

Farming, trading and fishing are the major occupations of Khana people while the minor ones include basketry, pottery, weaving and canoe-carving.

Carvings, music and masquerading, dressing mode, pottery, religion, method of transportation and drawing patterns on buildings (now obsolete) are some cultural practices and activities of the Ogoni, particularly Khana, which are stated and adequately explained by Igbara and Keenam (2013) in their drawing of similarities between the Ogoni culture and those of other nationalities, principally Efik, Ibibio, Anang and Oron, to prove that the peoples have a common ancestral origin.

iii

**Methodology**

The survey design was adopted for this research work. By the count of the 2006 National Population Census, the population of Khana LGA is 294,217. This population covers the three kingdoms that make up KHALGA, namely Ken-Khana, Babbe and Nyo-Khana. These kingdoms together have 73 very large communities from which other communities have evolved. From this population, an appropriate sample was drawn for the study.

The Taro Yamene formula for determining the size of a sample was used to draw a sample of 399 from the projected Khana population of 311, 144 as at December 2010. This sample size was computed thus:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

- n = sample size sought
- N = population size (311,144)
- 1 = constant
- e = level of confidence (0.05)

Substituting,

$$n = \frac{311,144}{1 + 311,144(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{311,144}{778.86} = 399.48643$$

$$= 399$$

The 399 above constituted the sample for the study.

The quota sampling technique was used to draw the sample of 399 subjects from the three kingdoms of Khana: Babbe, Nyo-Khana and Ken-khana. Although quota sampling is a non-probability sampling technique, it was considered a bit convenient given the complexity of the study conditions.

The main research instrument used for the study was a 21 item questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. Part one aimed at collecting personal data of the respondents, while part two was designed to collect information relating to the subject matter.

The researcher helped by two assistants, administered the instrument to the respondents while the two assistants stayed back to guide the respondents and retrieve the questionnaire.

The data were analyzed, using simple frequency distribution tables, percentages, weighted mean scores (wms) from Likert-type questions. "A Likert scale measures the intensity or degree of agreement or disagreement by the respondent to a statement that describes a situation, phenomenon, item or treatment" (Asika, 1991).

In analyzing data from the five-point-scale Likert-type questions in the instrument, responses to items were weighted as follows:

Strongly agree (SA) = 5 points

Agree (A) = 4 points

Undecided (U) = 3 points

Disagree (D) = 2 points

Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point.

From these, the WMS is 3.00 (i.e. 5+4+3+2+1 divided by 5, using the formula:

$$WMS = \frac{\sum fx}{\sum f}$$

Where

WMS = Weighted Mean Scores,

$\sum fx$  = Summation of frequency x score and

$\sum f$  = Summation of frequencies

### Data Presentation and Analysis

Although the completion of the questionnaire by the respondents was well monitored by the researcher's assistants, not all the copies of the instrument administered were returned. The table below shows the distribution of the instrument and the rate of retrieval.

**Table 1: Questionnaire Administration and Retrieval**

Kingdom	Questionnaire Copies Administered	Percentage of Sample Size	Questionnaire Copies Retrieved	Mortality Rate (%)	Percentage of Retrieved Copies
Babbe	133	33.33	124	2.26	33.33
Nyo-Khana	133	33.33	122	2.75	32.79
Ken-Khana	133	33.33	126	1.75	33.87
<b>Total</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>6.76</b>	<b>100</b>

As it can be seen clearly from the table above, of the 399 copies of the questionnaire distributed to respondents in Babbe, Nyo-Khana and Ken-Khana kingdoms of Khana, 372 copies were returned. This number yielded a retrieval rate of 93.23% and a mortality rate of approximately 6.76% (i.e. 100 - 93.23).

the analysis of data was, therefore, based on the 372 copies of the instrument which, for the data computation, represented 100%.

**Research Question One**

What are the levels of awareness and of the use of proverbs among the Khana people?

**Table 2: Respondents' Level of Awareness and Use of Proverbs in Khana LGA**

<b>Psychographic Characteristic</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage of Sample Size</b>
<b>Awareness of Proverbs</b>		
Yes	372	100
No	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Level of Awareness:</b>		
High	295	79.30
Low	77	20.70
<b>Total</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Use of Proverbs:</b>		
Yes	295	79.30
No	77	20.70
<b>Total</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>100</b>

As table 2 above shows, all the respondents said they were aware of the functionality of proverbs. What varied were the levels of awareness: while 295 accounting for 79.30% were highly aware of the place of proverbs in their communities, 77(20.70%) of them were just aware of the practice of using proverbs in communication. The majority that were highly aware of the service of proverbs in society also said they use and enjoy the potency of proverbs in communicating.

**Research Question Two**

What are some of the proverbs that are commonly used to communicate among the Khana people?

**Table 3: Mean Responses on Common Proverbs in Khana LGA**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Proverb(In English transition)</b>	<b>Responses in Mean Scores</b>					<b>WMS</b>	<b>Decision</b>
		<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>		
(a)	What has the rabbit done for the hunter to skip the rat and go for the rabbit when both of them look alike and live in the same hole with even the rat itself in front	100	25	120	101	26	3.19	Agreed
(b)	That a man is short does not mean he has a short lifespan	106	86	111	38	31	3.53	Agreed
(c)	The tongue cannot resist visiting where there is a sore in the mouth	300	60	1	10	1	4.74	Agreed

(d) The one who cannot climb the fully mature palm tree with a great height for fruit, goes for the young one.	302	55	10	2	3	4.74	Agreed
(c) If as a cultural dance group member you don't have your relatives among the spectators, who will honour you?	100	80	90	100	2	3.47	Agreed

There was no form of disagreement among the respondents on the issue of common proverbs. This position is evidenced by the high weighted mean score recorded for each of the five sample proverbs (except the one in item (a) which does not have such a high wms). The proverbs in items (c) and (d) took the lead as the commonest proverbs. The implication is that the respondents have the ability to identify the common proverbs in their communities and, by extension, their communicative potency.

### Research Question Three

How effective are proverbs in transmitting development messages among the people of Khana LGA?

**Table 4: Levels of Effectiveness of Proverbs in transmitting Development Messages**

	Type of Development Message	Very effective	Effective	Fairly effective	Not effective
(a)	Publicizing events through town-crying	250(67.20%)	100(26.9%)	20(5.4%)	2(0.53%)
(b)	Social discourses on communal development	100(26.9%)	240(64.5%)	20(5.47%)	12(3.2)
(c)	Teaching moral lessons during story-telling sessions with children	230(61.82%)	100(26.88%)	20(5.38%)	22(5.91%)
(d)	Cracking jokes during comical encounters to evoke health-enhancing laughter	250(67.20%)	100(26.9%)	20(5.4%)	2(0.53%)

From table 5 above, it is clear that in the areas of publicizing events through town-crying and cracking jokes during comical encounters to evoke health-enhancing laughter, proverbs very effectively enrich messages that are transmitted among the people of Khana. Besides the majority of 250 who endorsed the view of "very effective" in the two areas stated above were the 230 respondents who said proverbs were also very effective in teaching moral lessons during story-telling sessions with children. On their own part, 240(64.5%) of the respondents accounting also for a majority of the sample size of 372 subjects, believed that proverbs were effective in influencing communication during social discourses on communal development. In the opinions of the other respondents to the four areas stated in table 4, proverbs were effective, fairly effective and even sometimes not effective in influencing the transmitted development messages.

### Research Question Four

In what ways can the use of proverbs in communication engender peace, prosperity and sustainable development in the area?

**Table 5: Ways by which Proverbs can engender Peace and Development**

Item	How Proverbs can sustain Development in KHALGA	Responses in Mean Scores					WMS	Decision
		SA	A	U	D	SD		
(a)	Use them increasingly to address gatherings at town or village hall meetings.	150	90	50	40	42	3.71	Agreed
(b)	Use them increasingly to spice discussions in social and cultural associations and clubs.	156	100	30	30	56	3.51	Agreed
(c)	Use them increasingly to spice sermons in churches.	100	60	100	40	72	3.20	Agreed
(d)	Use them to teach moral lessons, especially to children.	250	50	20	20	32	4.25	Agreed

As in other cases above, there was a consensus among the people that the views in table 5 above were valid. This means that for peace, prosperity and sustainable development to be the continuous experience of Khana people, proverbs that spice and season communication are required.

iv

#### Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study are highly curious. Except where the respondents' views varied slightly with respect to the levels of effectiveness of proverbs in transmitting development messages among the Khana people, there was a unanimity of views on the awareness and use of proverbs; proverbs commonly used among the Khana people; and on how proverbs could be used to engender peace, prosperity and sustainable development in Khana Local Government Area of Rivers State.

It is thus a riddle to be resolved that even with the full awareness and great use of proverbs among the people and with a good knowledge of the effectiveness of proverbs in transmitting development messages, in Khana communities, until very recently under the current caretaker local government administration, violent crimes like kidnapping, hostage taking, armed robbery, rape and other terrorist acts occasioned by cultism, were on the increase. The experience in Bori Town and its environs where people were robbed and kidnapped on daily basis, is a case in point.

This could be due to the present situation where the use of proverbs to teach moral lessons during moonlight story sessions with children in their formative years, is now relaxed by the elders. Generally, in Khana communities today, moonlight story sessions have fallen out of popularity.

The high agreement of the respondents with the view that some proverbs are commonly used in Khana is a valid position. They thus agreed with Akpabio (2003) who says that in many societies in Nigeria, there is a prevalence of the use of proverbs and that many of the rules of society are conveniently expressed in proverbs, "which span almost every human endeavour while expressing time-tested truths" (p.77).

Also significant was the respondents' agreement with the view that town-crying in publicizing events was one of the areas where proverbs were very effective in transmitting development messages. This position of theirs reinforces the importance of the town crier. The town crier, as

Ugboajah (1977) believes, typifies the model communicator who possesses both empathy and cultural undertaking of his audience. In fact, Etukudo (1989) notes that the town crier is an important link between the opinion or town leaders and the rest of the people. Postulating that the town crier must be a person "of impeccable character," he believes that the town crier will continue to play a prominent role in the rural areas both as a communicator and as a medium.

By publicizing events, the town crier makes people aware of the existence of a change agent which is a giant step towards embracing social change. This idea is akin to Salcedo, Read, Evans and Kong's (1974) observation that exposure to (that is, awareness of) a message is a critical factor in information campaigns. The idea also echoes Ebeze's (2002) explanation that awareness leads to comprehension (or understanding) which may lead to attitude change that, in turn, may motivate the audience to action (i.e. a change in behaviour).

#### Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

Findings of the study showed that the people of Khana are aware of the functionality of existing proverbs and also happily use them; that of the proverbs that have wide applicability across communities in Khana area, the people know the ones most commonly used in the LGA. It was also found that proverbs are used to publicize development messages; to crack jokes that evoke health-enhancing laughter; to enliven messages during discourses on communal development; and to teach moral lessons.

The study concluded that there are well-known proverbs in Khana that can be used to enrich messages and used to publicize events and disseminate development messages. It was then recommended that for peace and sustainable development to be the lot of the people, proverbs should be used to spice messages that can bring about educational advancement, sports development, good health, cultural re-awakening and security.

It was then recommended that more use should be of proverbs, riddles, folk-tales, legends and myths as folk modes of communication, to teach moral lessons in Khana LGA. This means returning to the fading era of engaging in telling stories under moonlight that teach good behaviour and the benefits of peace, obedience to parents, senior members of society and to constituted authority, a practice that is germane to prosperity and long life, according to the biblical provision in Ephesians 6.

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