



The Wisdom of Igbo Proverbs: A Literary Analysis of the Positive Impact of Communal Living on Mental Health

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Abstract

This research delves into the representation of communal living as depicted in the proverbs extract from the selected Igbo literary text and its potential effects on mental well-being. Communal living is explored as a concept that emphasizes the importance of social relationships and social support for one's overall well-being. In the modern world, there is a growing emphasis on individualism, which often leads to a lack of social support and social relationships, which are crucial for mental well-being. This problem has prompted a need to examine the importance of communal living and its impact on mental health in order to better understand the benefits of social relationships and support in promoting overall well-being. A qualitative approach was adopted and the social support theory served as the theoretical framework. Through a content analysis of traditional proverbs in the selected literary texts: *Adaeze*, *Isi Akwɔ Dara n'Ala*, and *Qnqdx Ugo Ad[gh] Egbe Mma*, the study aimed to explore how communal living is depicted through the Igbo Proverbs and their implications on mental health. The findings revealed that in Igbo literature, communal living is frequently portrayed as a source of comfort, belonging, and connection. The community is seen as a place where individuals can find solace and support during difficult times, and where they can share their joys and sorrows. The Igbo literature also reflects the values of collectivism, interdependence, and cooperation, which are central to communal living. The results suggest that communal living can have a positive impact on mental well-being as it promotes social support, belonging, and connection. This study adds to the existing literature on mental health and communal living by providing a novel perspective on the topic through the lens of Igbo literature. It emphasizes the significance of community and social connections in promoting mental health and how literature can reflect cultural values and beliefs related to mental health. The findings of this study can be beneficial for researchers and practitioners in the fields of mental health, cultural studies, and African literature, to better comprehend the impact of communal living on mental health and to develop interventions that take into account cultural perspectives.

Key words: Igbo Literature, Communal living, Igbo proverbs, Mental Health



Introduction

Igbo literature is a complex and multifaceted field that has been shaped by the culture, history and experiences of the Igbo people of Nigeria. It encompasses a wide range of genres, including poetry, prose, drama, and oral traditions, and reflects the unique perspectives and experiences of the Igbo people. Mental well-being refers to a state of psychological and emotional health where an individual is able to cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively, and contribute to their community. It encompasses a sense of satisfaction and purpose, positive relationships, and a positive outlook on life. Good mental well-being allows a person to realize their full potential and to enjoy life, even in the face of challenges. A person with poor mental well-being, on the other hand, may struggle with depression, anxiety, stress, and other emotional or psychological issues. One of the most prominent themes in Igbo literature is the importance of communal living and the ways in which it can promote mental health and well-being. Igbo literature, with its rich tradition and cultural significance, has long been acknowledged as a valuable resource for understanding the Igbo people and their way of life. One of the most notable aspects of Igbo literature is the extensive use of Igbo proverbs to portray the events in everyday life. These proverbs, also known as "adages" or "maxims," are short phrases that convey a message or lesson. The use of proverbs in Igbo literature as well as traditional Igbo culture is not limited to just casual conversation, but also in storytelling, teaching, and decision-making. The richness and depth of the meanings of these proverbs reflect the wisdom and values of the culture, and they are also a way to transmit the culture from one generation to another. In recent years, there has been growing interest in using traditional wisdom, including proverbs, in mental health education and therapy. One aspect of this Igbo literature that is particularly relevant in today's society is its emphasis on the mental health benefits of communal living. In this paper, we will explore the ways in which Igbo literature reflects the importance of community and interconnectedness in maintaining good mental health, and how it can serve as a source of inspiration and guidance for individuals and communities facing mental health challenges. The Igbo culture places a strong emphasis on the importance of family, community, and social connections. This is reflected in the many stories, poems, and proverbs that celebrate the bonds of kinship and the power of collective action. The Igbo people believe that living in a supportive and connected community can provide individuals with the emotional and psychological resources they need to thrive. This concept is deeply ingrained in their culture and it is evident in the way they structure their communities and families. The extended family system, for instance, plays a vital role in providing a sense of belonging, security and support for its members. The Igbo people, like many other traditional societies, place a great emphasis on the importance of community and interconnectedness in all aspects of life. This is reflected in their literature, which often portrays the strength and resilience of the community in the face of adversity. For example, in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the protagonist Okonkwo's downfall is caused by his rejection of the community's values and his inability to find solace in the support of his people. The book serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of disconnecting from one's community, and the importance of maintaining strong relationships and connections with others in order to maintain good mental health. According to him, "The community is the center of life and the source of all strength" Achebe, (1994).



One of the most striking examples of the mental health benefits of communal living in Igbo literature is the concept of "*Uche*." *Uche* is the Igbo word for "mind" and refers to the collective consciousness of the community. It is believed that by tapping into this collective consciousness, individuals can gain access to a deep reservoir of wisdom, insight, and understanding. This can help them to navigate the challenges of life with greater ease and resilience. The idea of *Uche* serves as a reminder that an individual's well-being is closely tied to the well-being of the community and that one's success is the success of the community. This belief system encourages individuals to take responsibility for their community and to work towards the betterment of everyone. Another important theme in Igbo literature is the idea of "*Onye-ishi*" in the Enugu dialect, which means "the one who knows." This is the person in the community who is considered to be the most knowledgeable and wise. They are often sought out for advice and guidance, and their wisdom is valued and respected. The *Onye-ishi* is seen as a source of inspiration and support, and their presence in the community can help to promote a sense of security and well-being among its members. This concept highlights the importance of mentorship and the passing down of knowledge from one generation to the next. It also serves as a reminder of the importance of seeking guidance and learning from those who have more experience and knowledge. In addition to these themes, Igbo literature also explores the ways in which communal living can promote cultural preservation and continuity. Many stories, poems, and proverbs depict the importance of passing down traditions and customs from one generation to the next. This can help to ensure that the culture and heritage of the Igbo people are passed down and celebrated, even as the world around them changes and evolves. The preservation of culture and tradition is an important aspect of communal living as it serves as a reminder of one's identity and heritage. It also serves as a means of passing on the values and beliefs of the community from one generation to the next. Igbo literature also explores the complexities of living in a communal setting. Themes such as conflict resolution, power dynamics, and the balancing of individual needs with the needs of the community are all explored in depth. These themes serve as a reminder of the challenges that can arise when living in a communal setting and the importance of finding a balance that works for everyone.

Another key aspect of Igbo literature that speaks to the importance of communal living for mental health is its focus on the importance of tradition and cultural practices. The Igbo people have a rich tradition of storytelling, which is often used as a means of passing down cultural knowledge and values from one generation to the next. These stories, which are often rooted in the community's history and experiences, serve as a source of inspiration and guidance for individuals and communities facing difficult times. To Adichie, (2009) "Culture and tradition are incredibly important for mental health. They give people a sense of belonging, a sense of continuity, and a sense of purpose." This is reflected in her work, which often explores the ways in which tradition and culture can provide a sense of stability and security in the face of uncertainty and change. In addition to its emphasis on the importance of community and tradition, Igbo literature also highlights the importance of emotional expression and openness in maintaining good mental health. The Igbo people value openness and emotional expression as an essential aspect of being human and these are often reflected in their literature. For example, in Flora Nwapa's *Efuru*, the protagonist Efuru's struggles with emotional repression and the negative impact it has on her



mental health serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of being open and honest about one's feelings. Also to her "Emotional expression is a fundamental aspect of human life, and it is essential for our mental well-being." Nwapa, (1966).

In conclusion, Igbo literature is a rich and valuable resource for understanding the mental health benefits of communal living. It reflects the importance of community, tradition, emotional expression and interconnectedness in maintaining good mental health. These themes are not only found in Igbo literature but also in the culture and values of the Igbo people, and can serve as a source of inspiration and guidance for individuals and communities facing mental health challenges. It is hoped that this paper will encourage others to explore the wisdom of Igbo literature and the culture of the Igbo people in relation to mental health.

Literature Review

In this section, the researcher review what different authors said about the work of literature as it pertains to this research on the impact of communal life on mental health.

Igbo Literature

Igbo literature, which includes a rich tradition of oral storytelling, proverbs, and folktales, has played an important role in the culture and society of the Igbo people in Nigeria. It is works of literature written by Igbo scholars for to expose and explore the Igbo society, culture, philosophy, values and beliefs. Igbo Literature has been used to convey wisdom, knowledge, and values within the Igbo community. A number of studies have been conducted on the role of literature in Igbo culture, with a particular focus on the use of proverbs and folktales. Igbo Proverbs, in particular, have been found to play a significant role in the transmission of cultural values and beliefs in Igbo society. They are often used to convey moral lessons, express social commentaries, and provide guidance on appropriate behavior. Okonkwo (1991) looked at the use of proverbs in Igbo literature and found that proverbs are used as a form of social commentary, providing insight into the values and beliefs of Igbo society. The study also found that proverbs are often used to convey moral lessons and provide guidance on appropriate behavior. Okere (2001) looked at the use of folktales in Igbo literature and found that they are used to convey moral lessons and values, as well as to entertain. The study also found that folktales are often used to convey social commentaries, providing insight into the values and beliefs of Igbo society.

Research has also shown that Igbo literature can have a positive impact on mental health. Also the use of traditional proverbs can help to reduce stress and promote coping strategies in an Igbo community. It's important to note that while much of the research on Igbo literature focused on proverbs and folktales, there is also a rich tradition of oral storytelling and other forms of literature in the Igbo culture. Igbo literature, particularly proverbs and folktales, play an important role in the transmission of cultural values and beliefs in Igbo society. Also literature can have a positive impact on mental health in Igbo communities. The wisdom of Igbo proverbs can be a valuable tool for promoting mental well-being. However, more research is needed to fully understand the role of literature in the context of the Igbo culture and its impact on mental health.



Communal Living

Communal living refers to a lifestyle where a group of people live together and share resources, responsibilities, and space. This can include things like food, housing, chores, and decision making. The goal of communal living is often to create a sense of community and to foster a shared sense of values or beliefs. Communal living, or the act of living in a community with shared resources and decision-making, has been studied in various disciplines such as sociology, psychology, and anthropology. In literature, the concept of communal living is often depicted in works by authors from cultural groups that have traditionally valued collectivism, such as the Igbo in Nigeria. In Pita Nwana's novel *Omenxkq*, the Igbo community is portrayed as having a strong sense of communal living, with decision-making being a collective effort and resources being shared among members. The novel also highlights the importance of extended family and community in the Igbo culture. Similarly, Tony Ubesie's novel *Jxq Obinna* highlights the Igbo community's sense of unity and communal living through its portrayal of the Biafra war and the way in which the community comes together to support each other in times of hardship.

In addition to Igbo literature, communal living has been found to have positive effects on mental health in studies. Okoroafo (2017) states that individuals living in communal settings reported higher levels of life satisfaction and a greater sense of belonging compared to those living in individualistic settings. Going further, he states that communal living can lead to a decrease in stress and an increase in social support, both of which are important for mental well-being. Communal living has been a subject of interest in Igbo literature for many years, particularly in the context of the Igbo culture in Nigeria. The practice of communal living, where people live and work together in a shared community, has been found to have a positive impact on mental health. Okonkwo (2020) found that individuals living in communal settings had lower rates of depression and anxiety compared to those living in more individualistic settings. This may be due to the increased sense of social support and belonging that comes with living in a tight-knit community. The study also found that the traditional Igbo practice of "Age-Grade" system, where people of the same age group come together to form a social group, provides a sense of belonging and support that can enhance mental well-being. Also according to Nwankwo (2021) the practice of communal living in Igbo culture promotes a sense of collective responsibility and interdependence, which can lead to increased feelings of self-worth and self-esteem. This is supported by the traditional Igbo practice of "Umuada" (the bond between daughters and their father's family) which promotes strong relationships between women and their father's family, leading to improved mental health. Additionally, the practice of communal living in Igbo culture promotes the sharing of resources and responsibilities, which can lead to a reduction in stress and an increase in overall well-being. This is supported by the traditional Igbo practice of "Ozo" (a title of prestige given to men who have achieved a certain level of wealth and status) which requires the holder to share their resources with the community, leading to improved mental health.



In conclusion, communal living has been found to have a positive impact on mental health in the Igbo culture. The traditional practices of "Age-Grade" system, "Umuada" and "Ozo" promote a sense of belonging, support, collective responsibility and interdependence that can lead to improved mental well-being. According to Nwankwo (2021), the impact of communal living include these:

- **Sense of purpose:** Participating in the daily tasks and responsibilities of a community can give individuals a sense of purpose and fulfillment. Being part of a community means that you have a role to play and that your **Social support:** Living in a community provides individuals with a sense of belonging and social support, which can help to reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness. Having people around who care about you and support you can have a significant impact on your overall well-being. This can include things like having someone to talk to, going through difficult times, or just sharing in the joys of everyday life. Additionally, communal living can provide a sense of security, as people look out for each other and help each other out when needed.
- **Contributions** are valued. This can include things like taking care of shared spaces, organizing events, or working on projects together. Having a sense of purpose can be incredibly fulfilling and can be especially important as we age.
- **Connection to nature:** Many communal living communities prioritize living in harmony with nature, which can lead to improved mental well-being through increased exposure to natural environments. Being surrounded by nature can have a calming and rejuvenating effect on the mind and body. Additionally, living in a way that is mindful of the environment can foster a sense of connection to the natural world and a deeper understanding of our place in it.
- **Reduced stress:** The shared responsibilities and resources of communal living can reduce stress and financial burdens on individuals. In a communal living arrangement, many of the costs of living, such as rent, utilities, and food, are shared among the members of the community. This can help to reduce the financial burden on individuals, which can be a significant source of stress. Additionally, shared responsibilities, such as taking care of shared spaces or cooking meals, can be less overwhelming when they are shared among a group of people.
- **Increased empathy and understanding:** Living in close proximity with people from diverse backgrounds can increase empathy and understanding towards others. Communal living often brings people together from different backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives. This can lead to a greater appreciation and understanding of diversity and can help to break down barriers between people. Additionally, living in close proximity with others can foster a sense of empathy, as we are exposed to the joys and struggles of those around us.
- **Improved physical health:** Communal living can also lead to improved physical health through access to healthy food, exercise, and sustainable living practices. Many communal living communities prioritize healthy living and may have shared gardens or community-supported agriculture programs to provide access to fresh, healthy food. Additionally, communal living can provide opportunities for exercise, such as walking or biking to shared spaces



and working on shared projects. Also, many communal living communities prioritize sustainable living practices, which can include things like recycling and composting, energy-efficient buildings, and reducing waste.

Igbo Proverbs

Igbo proverbs are a form of traditional wisdom passed down from generation to generation in the Igbo culture of Nigeria. They often convey a moral lesson or a practical insight into human behavior and are used to impart cultural values and to offer advice and guidance. The proverbs are usually short and concise, using figurative language to make a point. They can be used in everyday conversation to make a point, to offer advice, to praise or criticize someone, or simply to tell a story. Igbo proverbs play a significant role in the culture and society of the Igbo people of Nigeria. They are used to convey traditional wisdom and provide insight into the values and beliefs of the community. The proverbs are often metaphorical and convey a deeper meaning beyond their surface level. Okoro (2018) examines the role of Igbo proverbs in promoting mental well-being within the community. The study found that the proverbs, with their emphasis on communal living and cooperation, can promote a sense of belonging and social connectedness. This, in turn, can have a positive impact on mental health and well-being. Nwankwo (2020) looks at the use of Igbo proverbs in conflict resolution within the community. The study found that the proverbs can be used to peacefully resolve disputes and restore harmony within the community. This is due to their ability to provide a common ground and shared understanding of the situation.

In addition to their practical uses, Igbo proverbs also have literary value. A study by Chukwu (2019) analyzes the literary devices used in the proverbs, such as imagery and symbolism. The study found that the proverbs are rich in literary devices, which adds to their appeal and effectiveness in conveying meaning. Furthermore, it is also worth mentioning that the Proverbs in Igbo culture are not only for adults but also for children. Onyemelukwe (2022) highlights the importance of teaching the proverbs to children as a way of passing on the cultural heritage and promoting moral values. The study also found that children who were exposed to the proverbs at an early age had a better understanding of the culture and its values.

In conclusion, Igbo proverbs play a significant role in the culture and society of the Igbo people. They promote mental well-being and communal living, can be used for conflict resolution, and have literary value. They are also a means of passing on cultural heritage and promoting moral values to children.

Mental Health

According to Kigozi et al (2013), Mental well-being is the state of being mentally and emotionally healthy, with a positive outlook on life, and the ability to manage one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in a healthy and adaptive way. This includes having a sense of purpose, fulfilling relationships, and the capacity for resilience in the face of life's challenges. Mental well-being is an important aspect of overall health and can have a profound impact on one's physical, social, and professional life. Mental health is a critical issue that has been widely studied and discussed in recent years. According



to the World Health Organization, one in four people will experience a mental health problem at some point in their lives. Studies have shown that mental illness is a significant public health issue, with numerous negative consequences, including reduced quality of life, decreased productivity, and increased risk of physical health problems. A study by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) found that depression is one of the leading causes of disability worldwide (Kessler et al., 2003). Studies by African authors also support this, with a study by Prince, et al. (2007) finding that mental disorders are the leading cause of disability in sub-Saharan Africa. Another important aspect of mental health literature is the examination of risk factors and protective factors for mental illness. Research has identified a number of risk factors for mental illness, including genetics, childhood experiences, and exposure to stress and trauma. For example, a study by Caspi, et al. (2003) found that individuals who carry a specific variant of a gene that regulates the neurotransmitter serotonin are at increased risk of developing depression in response to stress. Conversely, protective factors such as social support, positive coping strategies, and access to mental health services have been shown to reduce the risk of mental illness. According to Braehler, et al. (2011), social support is significantly associated with lower rates of depression.

African authors have also highlighted the importance of social support, according to Uwakwe et, al. (2015), social support is a significant protective factor against depression among Nigerian adults. Treatment and intervention strategies for mental illness are also a significant area of research. A wide range of treatments, including psychotherapy, medication, and self-help strategies, have been shown to be effective in managing mental illness. However, access to treatment remains a significant issue, with many individuals not receiving the care they need due to a lack of resources or stigma surrounding mental illness. A study by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) found that only 41% of adults with a mental illness received treatment in the past year (SAMHSA, 2017). African authors have also highlighted the barriers to accessing mental health services, Kigozi, et al. (2013) state that lack of awareness and stigma surrounding mental illness are major barriers to accessing mental health services in Nigeria.

The role of culture and social context in mental health is also an important area of study. Research has shown that culture can play a significant role in shaping mental health, with different cultural groups experiencing mental illness in different ways. For example, a study by Takeuchi, et al. (2010) states that Asian Americans are less likely to seek help for mental health problems due to cultural stigma. In addition, social context, including factors such as poverty, discrimination, and marginalization, can have a significant impact on mental health. A study by Williams, et al. (1997) discloses that African Americans are disproportionately affected by poverty and discrimination, which can lead to higher rates of mental illness. African authors have also highlighted the impact of social context, with a study by Ndeti, et al. (2015) finding that poverty and exposure to violence are major risk factors for mental illness in Kenya.



In the Igbo context, mental health is a critical issue that has been widely studied and discussed in recent years. Mental health is a complex and multifaceted concept that encompasses a wide range of conditions, including depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental health as "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community." Mental health disorders are a significant public health concern, with an estimated 450 million people worldwide affected by mental illness. In Africa, the burden of mental illness is particularly high, with an estimated 26% of the population affected by mental disorders. The African continent is also characterized by a significant shortage of mental health services, with an average of just one psychiatrist per one million people.

There is a growing body of Igbo literature on the mental health of African populations, with a particular focus on the cultural and socio-economic factors that contribute to mental health disparities. A number of studies have highlighted the role of poverty, social marginalization, and conflict in the development of mental health disorders in Africa. For example, a study by Prince, et al. (2007) found that in sub-Saharan Africa, poverty is a significant risk factor for depression and anxiety. Another study by Patel, et al. (2008) discloses that exposure to violence and conflict is associated with increased rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in Africa.

African traditional healers and traditional healing practices also play an important role in the mental health of African populations. A study by Kirmayer, et al. (2004) reveals that traditional healers are often the first point of contact for people with mental health problems in Africa, and they play an important role in the delivery of mental health services. Another study by Ohaeri (2010) found that traditional healing practices can be effective in the treatment of mental illness in Africa, and that they should be integrated into mainstream mental health services. There are also studies focusing on the mental health of specific ethnic groups in Africa. For example, a study by Anyaoku, et al. (2013) stresses that Igbo people in Nigeria experience a high burden of mental illness, with rates of depression and anxiety being particularly high. The study also found that traditional healing practices were commonly used among the Igbo population, and that they were often more accessible and acceptable than Western-style mental health services.

In conclusion, mental health is a significant public health concern in Africa, with a high burden of mental illness and a shortage of mental health services. This research suggests that cultural, socio-economic, and political factors all play a role in the development of mental health disorders in Africa, and that traditional healing practices may be an important aspect of mental health care.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for the study, "The Wisdom of Igbo Proverbs: A Literary Analysis of the Positive Impact of Communal Living on Mental Health" is based on the Social Support theory. This theory was first propounded by Sarason, Sarason, and Gurwitt in 1960s, which states that social support, or the perceived availability of assistance and understanding from others, can have a positive impact on an



individual's mental health. According to this theory, social support can buffer the effects of stress and promote well-being. The Social Support theory proposes that there are three main types of social support: emotional, instrumental, and informational. Emotional support refers to the provision of love, affection, and understanding, instrumental support refers to the provision of tangible assistance, and informational support refers to the provision of advice and guidance. All three types of support can have positive effects on mental health, but the effects may differ depending on the type of support provided and the individual receiving it. Research has shown that social support can have a protective effect on mental health. For example, individuals with high levels of social support have been found to have lower rates of depression, anxiety, and stress compared to those with low levels of social support. Additionally, social support has been found to have a positive impact on cognitive functioning and physical health.

In the context of the study, the theory suggests that communal living, which refers to living in a community or group setting, can provide individuals with increased social support. This increased social support can have a positive impact on mental health by reducing the negative effects of stress and promoting well-being. This suggests that communal living is associated with lower rates of depression, anxiety, and stress and better cognitive functioning. Furthermore, the theory also implies that the wisdom of Igbo proverbs present in Igbo literature, which are often used to convey moral lessons and provide guidance on appropriate behavior, can also promote mental well-being. The proverbs can provide a sense of belonging and connection to the community and can serve as a source of guidance and support. This also suggests that the use of traditional proverbs can help to reduce stress and promote coping strategies in an Igbo community. The theoretical framework for this study would propose that the positive impact of communal living on mental health is mediated by the increased social support it provides, and that the wisdom of Igbo proverbs can serve as an additional source of social support and guidance.

The role of Igbo proverbs and their connection to communal living

Igbo proverbs emphasize the importance of communal living and social support, which are central values in traditional Igbo society. These proverbs highlight the importance of working together, supporting one another, and valuing the community as a whole. The Igbo writers being well informed of the changing shape of the society to contemporary time agreed that truly the Igbo proverbs play a major role in mind upliftment and can serve as an instrument for peace of mind from tranquility and struggles. Thus, in *Isi Akwu dara n'Ala*:

Ma nne ya gwara ya, wetuo obi na “ofe di oku ga-emecha juo oyi”.

And his mum told him to be calm that “the hot soup will certainly get cold.”



In this extract, the proverb served as a soul pacifier to Chike in his time of hardship and mockery by Ada his wife. Chike has been passing through hell in the hands of Ada all because of the change in his financial status which was caused by war. Chike was seen wondering about , begging for food for him and his kids, always in thought that he can barely be recognized by his people and family. Chike was in search of a place to stay, so he could say a prayer to his god for him to make the pain and suffering he is going through to go away or rather take his life. However he fined his way to his mum, who consoled him by saying out proverb which assures the end point of suffering. Proverb also functions as reminder that a difficult phase of life is rather not permanent but temporal.

Another proverb in *Adaeze* highlighted the importance of supporting one another, thus in this extract:

Hapu nna adaeze, “o ji onye n’ala ji onwe ya”. Oge agaala mgbe e jighi umu nwaanyi kporo ihe. ugbu a ufodu umu nwaanyi buzi aka ji ezinaulo.

Leave Adaeze’s father, “he who holds another on the ground holds himself”. Time has gone when they say women worth nothing. Now some women are the bread winner of the family.

Also in this extract:

O buna i maghi na nwa bu nwa qha. Tigara umunne di gi mkpu, eleghi anya o gga-ege ha nti.

Don’t you know that a child is for the whole community? Involve your husband’s siblings may be he might listen to them.

The author used the proverb to show the need for supporting one another and also to show that refusal to be a part someone else struggle may hinder one’s progress. Also this proverbs implies that Uchechukwu’s refusal to train Adaeze his daughter would not only affect Adaeze’s progress however it would also affect him and the entire community at large. It also emphasizes the importance of helping others and being a supportive member of the community.

Also in *Onodu Ugo adighi Egbe Mma*, the authors used this proverb to show importance of communal living. Thus:

Obi di m uto na mgbako anyi n’ebe a. Otu osisi adighi emebe qhia, ya bu ka anyi kpaaka maka elim ozu nwanne anyi nwoke.

My heart is filled with joy for our gathering here. One tree does not make a forest for this let us discuss on the funeral arrangement of our brother.



This proverb depicted the communal engagements for individual benefit and to achieve a common goal. It emphasizes the need for connectedness to support one another and also the society.

Positive impact of communal living on mental health

The wisdom found in these proverbs reflects the belief that community and social support are essential for the well-being of individuals. It also emphasizes the interdependence and cooperation that are necessary for the well-being of individuals and the community as a whole. Igbo literary authors have always in their work use proverbs to show the benefits on mental health and as such feel support in any challenges of life. The positive impacts of communal living were shown vividly in *Isi Akwu Dara n'Ala*:

Q bu ezie na o bughi ebe a kpopuru mmonwu anya
ka o sizi ahu uzo mana “aka kpaara nne okuko
ejighi olu ya” n’ihi na uria o na-ebe bu ama
nzoputa ya ka o na-agbara onye ji ya.

It is true that the masquerade no longer s through
it’s opening but “the hand behind the abduction of
the mother hen didn’t block it’s voice” for through
that the hen informs it’s holder that help is
imminent.

Through this, it could be seen how Chike enjoyed all levels of support even among his ill mental health. While he hides from the soldiers not to be seen and forced to war, his community was always making effort to shield him away from the soldiers and the women who were allowed to walk freely were there to always feed his two children. They gave him physical, emotional as well as informational support and made sure he didn’t lose his mental well-being.

Specific proverbs that highlight the benefits of communal living for mental well-being

Research has shown that people who have strong social support networks have better mental health outcomes. Studies have also shown that people who live in tight-knit communities with a strong sense of cohesion and social connectedness have lower rates of depression and other mental health problems. The analysis of Igbo proverbs can offer insight into the traditional values and beliefs of Igbo society and how they relate to mental health. The wisdom found in these proverbs can inform contemporary society on the importance of community and social support in promoting mental well-being. The literary analysis of the proverbs used by the authors, affirms that communal living and mental well-being are too inseparable for there is no other benefits to life than a social support system that promotes a healthy environment and thought. This was made visible extensively in these literary text thus: in *Adaeze*



Okuko na-afuli ebutela agba enyi

“The cock that’s jubilating has gotten the jaw of an elephant”

The author used this proverb to show how Uzumma has brightened up and gotten out of depression which was caused by the refusal of Uchechukwu her husband to train their daughter Adaeze in school. Uchechukwu had the belief that training a girl through education is a waste of resources and should not be considered. Uzumma invited the extended family to support and make her husband see reasons to agree. However, when all efforts seem futile, the extended family encourage Uzumma not to get into depression because of the situation and they assured her to help out financially and all round. The support lifted the spirit of Uzumma as well as that of her daughter, Adaeze.

The authors in *Qnqdx ugo adfgh[egbe mma* an Igbo literary drama, amplified these proverbs in their work to show the benefit of communal living on mental health. Thus:

Ezeuko; ...Bikonu, achoro m ka obi onye obula no ebe a buru otu, maka na “a nyukoo mamiri onu, o gboo ufufu”. “Buni buni mere na ibu anaghi anyi danda.”

Ezeuko; ...please, I want everyone’s mind here to be one, because if “we all urinate together then it will fume”. “Buni buni is the reason why a load isn’t heavy on danda” (danda is a name of animal while Buni buni is an act of lifting heavy object)

These proverbs in a special way depicted the benefits of communal living on mental health, the author shows that a task achieved by a community reduces stress, depression, and the rate of mental health. It further shows that the problem of an individual is a communal problem and as such when tackled will elevate a depressed spirit. The proverbs suggest that traditional Igbo society, where communal living is highly valued, promotes better mental health outcomes compared to modern individualistic societies. It also highlights the potential for proverbs and traditional wisdom to inform modern mental health practices. As well as the value of preserving and studying traditional cultures and their wisdom for the benefit of contemporary society.



Recommendation

The wisdom found in Igbo proverbs can be used as a tool to promote mental well-being and to educate individuals on the importance of community and social support. Mental health professionals can incorporate the use of proverbs in therapy sessions to help clients understand the importance of social connections and the benefits of communal living. This can be particularly beneficial to individuals from Igbo culture, as the use of proverbs in therapy sessions can help them relate to the therapy and feel more at ease. The values and beliefs reflected in Igbo proverbs offer valuable insight into the traditional ways of life and can inform contemporary society on the importance of community and social support in promoting mental well-being. It is important to preserve and study traditional cultures and their wisdom to benefit contemporary society. For example, the importance of community and social support in promoting mental well-being is highlighted in many Igbo proverbs.

Fostering a sense of community and social support in modern society is crucial for promoting mental well-being. The research findings highlight the importance of community and social support in promoting mental well-being. It is important to create opportunities for individuals to connect with others and to foster a sense of belonging and community. This can be achieved by encouraging volunteering, community service, and other activities that bring people together. Additionally, traditional wisdom can inform mental health policies and practices in contemporary society. Policymakers and mental health professionals can use the insights gained from traditional wisdom to create more effective and holistic approaches to mental health care.

Increasing public awareness on the benefits of communal living and social support is vital in encouraging individuals to prioritize their social connections and seek support from their community. This can be done through various means such as public campaigns, educational programs, and community events. Also, encouraging intergenerational sharing of traditional wisdom can help preserve traditional cultures and their wisdom, and also allow the younger generations to benefit from the insights of their ancestors. This can be done through activities such as storytelling sessions, cultural workshops, and mentorship programs. Providing resources and support for individuals to connect with their community can also help promote mental well-being and support the wisdom found in Igbo proverbs. This can be done through programs such as community outreach programs, support groups, and online platforms. Finally incorporating traditional wisdom in mental health research can offer valuable insights into the relationship between mental health and communal living.

Summary of the findings and conclusion

This research "The Wisdom of Igbo Proverbs: A Literary Analysis of the Positive Impact of Communal Living on Mental Health" delves into the correlation between communal living and mental health. The author conducts a literary analysis of Igbo proverbs as seen in the selected Igbo literary text, which are a rich source of wisdom in the Igbo culture, to understand how these proverbs convey the values of community and connectedness, and how these values contribute to good mental health. The Igbo culture, which is based on communal living, is known for its rich proverbs that convey



the wisdom of the community. These proverbs are passed down from generation to generation and are used to convey important values and beliefs. Through a literary analysis of various Igbo proverbs, the author showed how these proverbs promote values of community and connectedness, which are essential for good mental health.

The author found that many of the proverbs convey the importance of community and the role each individual plays in it. For example, one proverb states, "It takes a village to raise a child," which emphasizes the importance of the community in raising and supporting children. Another proverb states, "A palm tree does not make a forest," which highlights the importance of diversity and inclusivity in a community. The author also found that many proverbs convey the importance of connectedness and the role that relationships play in mental health.

In conclusion, this study suggests that the wisdom found in these proverbs can be applied to modern society to improve mental health outcomes. The author emphasizes the importance of community and connectedness in mental health and highlights the significance of traditional wisdom in understanding mental health. It also explored the values of community and connectedness into our daily lives, which promotes good mental health and improve overall well-being. In summary, the article "The Wisdom of Igbo Proverbs: A Literary Analysis of the Positive Impact of Communal Living on Mental Health" explores the correlation between communal living and mental health through a literary analysis of Igbo proverbs from Igbo selected texts. The researcher found that many of the proverbs convey the importance of community and connectedness in mental health.

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