

METAPHORICAL ROLE OF DOG (*NKITA*) AMONG THE IGBO

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ABSTRACT

Dog is a common domestic animal among the Igbo. People rear dog for varied reasons: guarding the house and the owner, hunting, searching for something, commercialisation (rearing it for sale) and recently serves as a pet to some people. Proverbs among the Igbo are not merely linguistic embellishments, but vital instrument of communication, moral instruction, and collective memory. There are many proverbs associated with animals, dog inclusive. This study examines the metaphorical role of dogs (*nkita*) in Igbo proverbs, highlighting how the animal serves as a cultural mirror for human behavior, values, and social expectations. The data for the study were collected from primary and secondary sources. For primary source, 32 elderly people were interviewed (who were between the ages of 56 and 81). Some proverbs were also extracted from published materials: Ubesie (1973), Achebe (1987), and Onwudufor (2013). The total of twenty-five (25) proverbs associated with dogs formed the corpus for this study. The study employed Conceptual Metaphor Theory which was developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) to examine how the characteristics associated with dog are mapped onto human experiences and social realities in Igbo society. The results reveal that the Igbo use dog as a source domain for teaching about the society, power, character, abuse of social system when there is no control. The findings reveal the belief that over-familiarity breeds contempt, as well as the fact that society judges visible wrong doing, and suppression or elimination of opposition before performing harmful act. The study further reveals that the proverbs mirrored some social values perform by human beings: wisdom in knowing when to refuse or reject unreasonable demand, ignoring warning can lead to downfall, and that age and wisdom are important in making key life decisions. The study concludes that proverbs associated with dog function as a powerful conceptual metaphor for both positive and negative human qualities.

Keywords: Proverbs, conceptual metaphor theory, Igbo language, metaphor, culture, Dog metaphor

1. Introduction

According to Thet (2019), proverbs are not only effective language devices which are sometimes used in the forms of metaphor or simile but also cultural carriers from generation to generation. Proverb according to *Oxford Advanced dictionary* is, “a short pithy saying in general use, stating a general truth or piece of advice”. Proverb is among the indispensable genres in the day to day discourse situation of the culturally sensitive members of the speech community (Mensah, 2010). Proverbs express the wisdom, culture and everything worth knowing about the people. One can say that proverbs are unwritten history of the people. In other words, proverbs serve as the medium through which much can be learnt about the people. It embodied their ideology, experiences, way of life, belief system and religion. Proverb is an effective device of truth about culture, religion, tradition, custom and belief. Proverb reflects the culture of people, and every culture has proverbs which are unique to it. The use of proverbs is inevitable because they are highly prized in the traditional African society and are used to portray certain actions or events in picturesque manner (Alimi, 2012). Every language community, especially in Africa, possesses a collection of proverbs formed from their vocabularies, which reflect the cultures and worldviews of the people (Esimaje, 2009). Proverbs are important aspects of verbal discourse within the socio-cultural contexts in which knowledge, ideas

and emotions are communicated. The language of proverb is commonly figurative, colourful, pithy, grammatically insightful and condensing the wisdom and experiences. Proverbs are metaphorical. In other words, people understand one thing in terms of another. The things, objects or images in proverbs are representations of people or abstract ideas that we want to refer to. “It is a system of metaphor that structures our everyday conceptual system, including most abstract concepts, that lies much of everyday language” (Lakoff, 1992:3). Proverbs have meanings that cover all aspects of life and, this in turn makes them important elements in people’s speech. They are so wide in scope that they could cover different themes such as hardwork, love, wealth, infidelity, loyalty, obedience, friendship, among others. Proverbs are of great importance in studying the people and culture of a nation according to Aung and Mya (2020). There are various reasons for the use of proverb which according to Prahlad (1996:33) is to give advice or warning or to hand on a piece of wisdom.” Thus, it is obvious that the task of defining a proverb is not easy and straightforward.

Among proverbs, animal proverbs are distinctive to describe human beings figuratively. The most common animals in the environment, community or language boundaries are often used to coined different proverbs to address varied issues. This may reflect the fact that these animals tend to be well known by everyone (Landmann & Ganz, 2023:5). People have used animal images in their daily lives to express their ideas and feelings explicitly. The behavioral traits, personality qualities and attitudinal reactions of human beings are considered animal like. People interpret animal behavior or other attribute based on cultural aspects, shared knowledge and social experience.

Among the Igbo people, proverbs, folklore and cultural practices reflect a deep relationship between humans and natural world. Animals, in particular, are given a symbolic significance and are often employ as a metaphor to illustrate human behaviour. Animals such as tortoise, dog, goat, sheep, monkey, partridge, lizard, chameleon, snail, eagle, chicken, cow, elephant, lion, and the hare represent people of different characters (such as wisdom, greed, patience, courage, laziness, loyalty, and humility), and positions in the society. Animals have been in harmony with human beings from time immemorial. Among the local animals among the Igbo, dog plays significant roles. Everyone is familiar with dog even when a person does not have the animal in his family.

According to *Oxford Dictionary*, dog is, “a domesticated carnivorous mammal probably descended from the wolf, with a barking or howling voice, an acute sense of smell, and non-retractile claws”. Among the Igbo, dog serves many different purposes such as guarding the house and the owner, hunting, searching for something, and recently serves as pet to some. The dog (*nkita*) occupies a unique somewhat ambivalent place. It is both a trusted companion and subject of ridicule admired for loyalty yet mocked for shamelessness. In Igbo oral tradition, proverbs, and even ritual practices, the dog becomes a cultural figure through which moral values and social norms are expressed.

According to Chima (2005), “proverbs in the Igbo society are highly revered and taken as the language of the elders who by virtue of their age have become too close to the ancestors and have become too familiar with the Igbo customs and traditions”. Igbo proverbs are accumulation of Igbo experiences throughout the history of the Igbos. Among the Igbo, “*ilu bu mmanu ndi Igbo ji eri okwu*” (proverb is the palm-oil with which words are eaten, Achebe, 1958). The importance of proverbs among the Igbo cannot be overemphasized as they permeate all aspect of Igbo life and thought.

The present study tries to find out the proverbs associated with dog among the Igbo. It also identifies semantic and pragmatic functions of the animal among the Igbo.

2. Previous Study

There have been several scholarly works on proverbs in general with varied focus. The study of proverbs is a multidisciplinary field that has occupied the attention of varied researchers. Some of the studies focused on the analysis of proverbs as one of the figurative expressions, some works looked at

the position of women in Igbo as portrayed in the proverbs (Oha, 1998). Some of the works have pointed the significant of proverbs in discourse.

Landmann and Ganz (2023) assessed the animal proverbs in English which have a foreign equivalent in French, Latin, Greek, Japanese and Arabic. The data for their study were collected from “*The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs*” edited by Jennifer Speake in 2015. The study relied on a lexicographical sample of 42 animal proverbs listed in the Dictionary. The Dictionary provides information about the etymology of the different proverbs. The study revealed that the most common animals in the linguistic data are those that are native within the geographical boundaries of the language community in which the proverbs were coined. This may reflect the fact that these animals tend to be well known by everyone; it may also be that they are often attributed stereotypical characteristics in the respective culture.

In another study, Thet (2019) found out the cultural differences in the concept of animals through English and Myanmar proverbs. He compared and analyzed some proverbs which are identical in meaning but are different in animal images and proverbs with identical in meaning and animal images. From his study, eleven proverbs from English and Myanmar were collected and analyzed. It is identified that some proverbs share similar semantic function with different animal images. These proverbs reflect different cultural, social and cognitive values of the two nations. The study revealed that animal proverbs in both languages reflect the similarities and differences of culture, way of life, and way of thinking, religious beliefs, social values and worldview of two nations.

Aung and Mya (2020) investigate which animals are used in Myanmar proverbs, and the most common animals used in the proverbs and the role these animals play in everyday life of Myanmar People. The findings reveal that there are 291 metaphors used for 40 animals in 251 proverbs selected for the study. These animals include domestic animals, wild animals, insects and also mythical creatures such as Dragon and Garuda. The most common animals are birds, fish, elephant, cattle, tiger, dog, chicken, cat, mouse and buffalo. Popular and prominent examples of these ten most common animals are put forward for interpretation under The Contemporary Metaphor Theory and it is found out that the animal metaphors describe a lot about the conceptual mind of Myanmar people and Myanmar historical, geographical, cultural, social, economic and religious conditions.

Kobia (2016) conducted a metaphorical analysis of domestic animals in selected Swahili proverbs with a focus on chicken metaphor, based on their source domains. The paper examined the socio-cultural and economic background that shapes the Swahili proverbs and their underlining meanings inherent in them. A corpus of over 200 Swahili proverbs that have animal metaphors was used for this study. Twenty-seven (27) Swahili proverbs that have chicken metaphors were analysed within the tenets of Conceptual Metaphor Theory. This study reveals that the chicken is mapped onto human beings to depict human behavior in Swahili community. It is evident that chicken metaphor is used in a positive manner to depict human characteristics in Swahili community. The data reveal that chicken is associated with positive connotations in Swahili community like caring, protective, motherly, gentle, and peaceful. However, some negative characteristics of chicken can be identified in Swahili proverbs analyzed like cowardice, foolish, deceitful, laziness, stupidity, worthless, ignorant, easily manipulated, dull and promiscuous. The paper reveals that the Swahili proverbs are used metaphorically as a repository of traditional wisdom of the Swahili people and a vehicle to articulate their worldview.

From literature, there are lots of works in Igbo proverbs and few on animal proverbs. Such works include: Azubuike and Nwode (2017), Igono and Ogudu (2018), Obika and Ojiakor (2019), Nwaichi (2019), Emeka-Nwobia and Ndimele (2019), Anyabuike (2020), and Ideh (2023). However, none of these works has focused on proverbs associated with dog which this study is set to fill.

3. Methodology

The data for the study were collected from both primary and secondary sources. For primary source, 32 (males and females) elderly people (between the ages of 56 and 81) were interviewed. Some proverbs were also extracted from published materials: Ubesie (1973), Achebe (1987), Onwudufor (2013). The total of twenty-five (25) proverbs associated with dogs formed the corpus for this study. These proverbs reflect cultural, religious, social and cognitive values of the Igbo. The data collected were analyzed using Conceptual Metaphor Theory, developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980).

4. Theoretical Framework

The Theoretical Framework employed for this study is Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which was developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980). The theory argues that metaphor is not merely a literary or rhetorical device but a fundamental mechanism through which people understand and structure their experiences. According to CMT, people comprehend abstract concepts by mapping them onto more concrete and familiar domains.

In CMT, the source domain is the familiar concept used to understand another concept while the target domain is actual concept being explained. In the study of dog metaphors among the Igbo, the dog functions as the source domain, while human qualities, behaviours, social relationships, and moral values serve as a target domain. The dog symbolises both positive (loyalty, vigilance, courage, faithfulness) and negative (greed, shamelessness, aggression, and moral deviance) qualities which are metaphorically projected unto people and social situations.

5. Data Presentation and Analysis

This session presents the data for the study; the data follows with the analysis. In the analysis using Conceptual Metaphor Theory, the dog functions as the source domain, while human qualities (which are in bracket) serve as a target domain. The following are the data and their analysis:

Proverb 1: *A chọọ igbu nwa nkịta, a kpọọ ya ajọ aha.*

Literal Meaning: If a dog wants to be killed, it is given a bad name.

Analysis: From the perspective of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, the source and target domains are as follows; Dog (human), bad name (damaged reputation or false accusation), killing the dog (destruction):

The proverb expresses that language and labels can become powerful tools for legitimizing harmful actions against individuals. Negative labels are used to justify harmful actions.

Proverb 2: *Onye sị na ya anaghị ata anụ nkịta, ya arachakwana mmiri ofe ya.*

Literal Meaning: He who abhors dog meat should not lick dog-meat soup.

Analysis: Dog meat (a principle or belief), Dog-meat soup (benefits derived from that principle), refusing dog-meat (rejecting an idea or practice), licking the dog-meat soup (secretly benefitting from what one claims to reject).

Rejecting dog-meat should mean rejecting anything derived from it including its soup. One should be consistent in beliefs and actions. The proverb teaches that genuine convictions must be reflected in one's behaviour, otherwise, one is guilty of hypocrisy.

Proverb 3: *I na-achupụ nwa nkịta na nsị, ị ga-eri ya?*

Literal Meaning: If you pursue dog away from excreta, will you eat it?

Analysis: Dog (a person), excreta (a harmful, undesirable or socially unacceptable situation), pursuing the dog away (confronting the person who is attempting to eliminate a harmful/ undesirable sight or social problem), the rhetorical question, "will you eat it" (challenges the pursuer whose intention is not to help to eliminate the harm/problem himself).

The proverb teaches us that some people are enemies of the community/society. In every community, there are persons who stand to obstruct goodwill of others, or stop people from doing good that can

benefit others. The proverb implied that some are seen as preventing the removal of an evil/bad sight, which the person himself cannot take care of.

Proverb 4: *Nkita nyara akpa, nsị agwụ n'ohia*

Literal Meaning: When a dog carries a bag, excreta finishes in the bush.

Analysis: Dog (a person with undesirable habits), bag (means or opportunity to accumulate), excreta (immoral, worthless, harmful pursuits), carrying the bag (actively seeking opportunities for gain), collecting all the excreta (uncontrolled greed or indulgence).

The central conceptual metaphor is that a person's dominant desires reveal their character which can lead to socially undesirable behavior. In other words, social systems can be abused when there is no control or accountability. When individuals are given unchecked access, they may act without restraint.

Proverb 5: *Nkita na-agbọ uja, anaghị ata arụ*

Literal Meaning: A barking dog seldom bites

Analysis: Dog (person), barking (threatening speech/ boasting), bite (actual action), no bite (failure to act).

The proverb expresses that those who constantly threaten others often lack the courage to act, the louder the barking, the less likely the attack. The proverb suggests that a person's true strength should be assessed through conduct rather than through loud declarations.

Proverb 6: *Nkita anaghị ata okpukpu a nyawara ya n'olu*

Literal Meaning: Dog does not eat the bone hung on its neck

Analysis: Dog (a responsible person), bone (property, wealth, or responsibility, bone hung on the neck (an entrusted resource or office), not eating the bone (self-restraint, honesty, and integrity).

The proverb teaches that true wisdom and integrity is demonstrated by resisting the temptation to misuse what has been entrusted to one's care.

Proverb 7: *Nkita niile na-eri nsị, mana nke a hụrụ nsị n'ọnyụ ya ka a na-akpọ ori nsị*

Literal Meaning: All dogs eat excreta, but only the ones with excreta on their mouth are labeled excreta eater

Analysis: The source domain are; dog (human being), eating excreta (engaging in wrongdoing or undesirable behavior), excreta on the mouth (evidence or exposure of wrong-doing), being called an excreta eater (social labeling, blame or stigma).

The proverb teaches that while many may engage in the same negative, bad, unacceptable behavior, those whose actions leave visible evidence are the ones most likely to be identified, judged, stigmatised, and punished: Society judges based on visible wrongdoing rather than universal guilt.

Proverb 8: *Ọnwụ na-egbu nwa nkita anaghị ekwe ya anụ isi nsị*

Literal Meaning: The cause of a dog's demise, denies it the sense of smell.

Analysis: Dog (human being), sense of smell (wisdom, discernment, foresight), loss of smell (poor judgment or blindness to danger), and death (failure, ruin or destruction).

The proverb teaches that the approach of disaster is often accompanied by a loss of discernment, making people unable to recognise or avoid the dangers that threaten them. Dogs depend heavily on their sense of smell for finding food and detecting danger. The smell is the dog's strongest faculty, losing it makes the dog vulnerable and unaware of danger. In other words, downfall often begins with loss of discernment, ignoring warning signs, and reducing the sensitivity to consequences.

Proverb 9: *Onye chọrọ igbu nkita ga-ebu ụzọ kechie ya ọnyụ*

Literal Meaning: The person who wants to kill a dog should first tie its mouth.

Analysis: Dog (a person, opponent or obstacle), tying the mouth (silencing opposition or removing resistance), killing the dog (achieving an intended act).

The proverb teaches that careful preparation and strategy are essential before undertaking any difficult or challenging task. In human society, harmful acts are often preceded by silencing the opposition, suppressing voices or eliminating witnesses or resistance.

Proverb 10: *O nwere ihe kpatara nkita anaghi agbo uja ji taa aru*

Literal Meaning: There is a reason why a dog that does not bark, bites.

Analysis: The source and (target domain) are; dog (human being), not barking (silence, modesty, restraint), biting (decisive action or real capability).

The proverb shows that genuine strength often lies beneath outward silence, and that quiet people may be the most capable of acting effectively when necessary. In behavior, people who act without noise often have strong motives or serious intent. Quiet people may be more dangerous than noisy ones.

Proverb 11: *O bu onye ma nkita na-amanye ya aka n'onu*

Literal Meaning: It is the one that is very familiar with a dog that puts hand in its mouth.

Analysis: Dog (person in power), dog mouth/teeth (person's power, ability to harm), familiarity with the dog (Knowledge, close relationship, experience), putting hand in the mouth (taking a calculated risk).

The proverb implies that excessive familiarity breeds carelessness; and over-confidence in relationship may lead to risk, disrespect, and unexpected harm. It warns that one should maintain boundaries, even in close relationships.

Proverb 12: *A kpaa nkita eze, ijiji ebie ya n'onu*

Literal Meaning: If the dog teeth are removed, flies perch on its mouth.

Analysis: Dog (human social life), dog with teeth (person with power/authority/resources), removing teeth (losing power, job, money, health, support), flies perching on mouth (opportunists/disrespect, taking advantage).

The proverb implies that loss of power invites disrespect and exploitation. When a person loses authority, strength, influence, others begin to undermine him. The proverb warns that power is essential for maintaining power, respect and dignity.

Proverb 13: *Nkita anaghi ajụ oku, kama o jụ ozi*

Literal Meaning: A dog does not reject a call, but can refuse an errand

Analysis: Dog (human being), call (invitation, summon, or request), responding to the call (showing respect or acknowledging others), errand (responsibility, duty, or assignment), refusing the errand (exercising personal choice or setting boundaries).

The proverb teaches that while respect requires acknowledging others, wisdom requires carefully choosing which responsibilities to accept and the ones to reject. The proverb implies that acknowledging authority does not equal to total obedience. A person may show respect, respond when called but refuse unreasonable or undesirable demands.

Proverb 14: *Oke nkita ji isi anya oku, marakwa na aji di gi n'isi*

Literal Meaning: Matured dog that warms its head with open fire should know that there is fur covering the head

Analysis: Matured dog (an experienced or matured person), open fire (danger, risky situation), fur on the head (personal weakness or vulnerability), warming near the fire (engaging in potentially risky activities), knowing the fur can burn (exercising wisdom, or caution):

The proverb is used to encourage experienced people to act according to their age and wisdom. Experienced individuals are expected to act with knowledge and foresight, failure to do so invite criticism or ridicule.

Proverb 15: *O bu kpọrọrọm mere nkita jiri were gbọọ uja*

Literal Meaning: It is the sound 'kpọrọrọm' that makes the dog to bark

Analysis: Dog (human being), kpọrọrọm sound (provocation, offense or triggering effect), barking (speaking, protesting, reacting or defending oneself).

Human reactions often arise from preceding events. The proverb implies that every reaction has a cause. People do not act (especially react strongly) without provocation. It suggests that before blaming someone's reaction, one should look for the trigger.

Proverb 16: *Eke etihgehị nkịta nso nso, ọ dighị esodebe*

Literal Meaning: When the python has not struck and nearly missed a dog that is always trails behind the owner, it will never stop following.

Analysis: Dog (a person), owner (habit, ambition, or life journey), python (danger, adversity, consequences), dog continuing to follow (persistence in risky behavior until experience teaches caution), python's near strike (a painful or frightening experience).

The proverb suggests that advice alone may not change behaviour, but direct experience often has a strong impact. The proverb implies that negative, painful, hardship or dangerous experience, brings caution, and either modify or brings behavioural change.

Proverb 17: *Ihe tagburu nkịta na-ata ajọ arụ*

Literal Meaning: Whatever bites dog to death, bites aggressively

Analysis: Dog (strong, stubborn, and resilient person), biting to death (completely defeating or overcoming), aggressively biting (seriousness)

The proverb implies that serious harm or failure rarely comes from minor or weak forces. The thing that destroys something strong must itself be stronger.

Proverb 18: *E sowe ihe nkịta riri, anụ ya adọrọ erighi eri*

Literal Meaning: Thinking of what the dog eats makes its meat uneatable.

Analysis: Dog (Person with questionable background), what the dog eats (person's past, family or weakness), dog meat (benefits/ help or opportunity from person with questionable background), meat becomes uneatable (rejection of benefit from the person)

If one is obsess over where someone came from or what they did, you will despise them and loss out on what they can give you. Awareness of background can influence acceptance or rejection; some things become undesirable when their true nature is revealed. In other words, knowledge can change perception and acceptance.

Proverb 19: *Nkịta tara ọkpụkpụ a nyabara ya n'olu, ga-ajụ onye?*

Literal Meaning: The dog that ate the bone that was hung on its neck, will ask who?

Analysis: Dog (person), bone on neck (the resource you control), eating bone (greed, impatient, or lack of self-control), ask who? (Taking up responsibility)

Among human, people sometimes commit obvious acts, yet, pretend ignorance or innocence. In other words, wrongdoers may attempt to deny responsibilities even when evidence is clear.

Proverb 20: *Nkịta ọha nwe na-anwụ n'agụ*

Literal Meaning: A dog which belongs to everyone dies of hunger

Analysis: Dog (person/project that needs care), belongs to everyone (responsibility is not assigned to one person), dies of hunger (the person collapses or the thing fails).

Shared ownership without clear duty leads to neglect. Human society sometimes suffers from collective irresponsibility. When responsibility is not assigned, no one takes action, and the object or situation suffers. This can be called collective negligence or failure of shared responsibility.

Proverb 21: *Nkịta a na-azụ n'obi eze, anaghị eri anụ n'ụzọ*

Literal Meaning: A dog raised in the king's palace does not eat meat on the road

Analysis: Dog (person), king's palace (good home, quality training, high standard), being raised in palace (exposure to dignity), road food/scraps (shameful, shortcuts, corruption, begging), refusing to eat on road (maintaining standard).

A person from a refined or disciplined background will avoid low-quality or dishonourable things, but always maintain dignity and self-control.

Proverb 22: *Onye rere nkịta goro enwe, ihe ntukwu ka nọkwa n'ụlọ ya*

Literal Meaning: He who sells a dog to buy a monkey, still has a squatting thing in his house

Analysis: Dog (current problem), monkey (new problem), selling to buy (abandoning one thing for another), both squats (the core issue remains unchanged).

In life, people sometimes make changes that are only superficial, not substantive. Replacing one thing with another does not always solve the underlying problem.

Proverb 23: *Tupuru nkita okpukpu n'ezi ma hapuzie ogu ya na ndi mmuo*

Literal Meaning: Throw a bone out for the dog and leave its contest with the spirit

Analysis: Throw bone to dog (fulfill your duty or give what is due), dog (person under your care or authority), bone (resources, payment, support or opportunity), contest with the spirit (consequences, fate, problems they must face alone), leave it (do not intervene).

The proverb emphasises the need for healthy detachment after one has done his duty. One should handle what is within one's control and leave the rest. Some struggles are beyond human power and should be left alone, mapping out boundaries.

Proverb 24: *Nkita richaa nsị, eze eree ewu*

Literal Meaning: Dog eats excreta, but goat gets rotten teeth

Analysis: Dog (the actual offender, culprit), eating excreta (committing a shameful act, sin, crime), goat (innocent or vulnerable person), rotten teeth (suffering, punishment, bad reputation, negative consequences).

Innocent people often suffer for the actions of others, injustice, or social imbalance. The proverb functions as a warning against assuming that the person who suffers a consequence is not necessarily the person who caused the problem.

Proverb 25: *Nkita ahughị odudu ya na-asi ewu dozie odudu ya*

Literal Meaning: A dog which does not see its own tail, advises the goat to put its tail in order

Analysis: Dog (the hypocritical adviser), tail (character, reputation, flaws, or weaknesses), not seeing own tail (being blind to your own faults, lacking self-awareness), goat (the receipt of advice), advising to put tail in order (criticizing, correcting, giving moral instruction).

The proverb implies that people often notice the faults of others while remaining blind to their own weaknesses. The proverb criticizes hypocrisy, self-righteousness and double standards; but encourages personal accountability, and self-reflection.

6. Conclusion

Animals play an important role in construction of proverbs and are part of language, an indispensable element of culture. The Igbo often project human trait unto animals. The dog, in particular, becomes a metaphorical figure representing both virtues and vices. Using Conceptual Metaphor Theory to assess the metaphorical roles of dog among the Igbo, the results reveal that the Igbo do not use dog as just an animal, but also as a source domain for teaching about the society, about power and character, abuse of social system when there is no control, and that those who constantly threaten others rarely act. It is evidence that the selected proverbs associated with dog also reflect religious beliefs, social values and worldview of the Igbo. Examples of these beliefs includes: over-familiarity breeds contempt, quiet people can be more dangerous, society judges visible wrong doing, suppression or elimination of opposition before performing harmful act, and resistant of temptation maintains integrity, as well as maintenance of dignity regardless of the situation. Each time the term *nkita* is mentioned, it carries not just the literal referent (the animal) but a network of cultural meaning built through shared knowledge and experiences and transmitted through language. The proverbs mirrored some social values perform by human beings. For example, there is need for consistency among the people, wisdom in knowing when to refuse or reject unreasonable demand, the risk which human face on daily basis. The proverbs further reveal that ignoring warning can lead to downfall, and that age and wisdom are important in making key life decisions.

Finally, the metaphorical role of the dog among the Igbo reflects the people's rich cultural knowledge, values, and worldview. Through proverbs, the dog functions as a powerful conceptual metaphor for both positive and negative human qualities. Viewed through the lens of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, the study shows that dog-related metaphors are not just figures of speech but cognitive tools that

shape perception, moral instruction, and social interaction. Preserving and documenting these metaphors contribute to the understanding of Igbo linguistic and cultural heritage and highlights the close relationship between language, cognition, and culture. When the dog appears in a proverb, its meaning is not literal; instead, it activates a cluster of culturally recognise semantic features that the audience immediately interpret.

Dogs are often portrays as greedy, and lack of self-control as shown in this proverb, *Nkita tara okpukpu a nyabara ya n'olu, ga-aju onye?* (The dog that ate the bone that was hung on its neck, will ask who?). Proverbs associated with dog sometimes portrays collective human negligence or irresponsibility. For example, the proverb, *Nkita oha nwe na-anwu n'agu* (A dog which belongs to everyone dies of hunger) warns against failure by all people involved.

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