

## Exploration of Afaan Oromoo Proverbs that Express Unity in East Wollega Zone, Oromia

 Alima Jibril

Institute of Languages Study and Journalism, Wollega University, Ethiopia

## Abstract

*This study explored Afaan Oromoo proverbs that express unity in the East Wollega zone, Gidda Ayana District. In Oromoo people, the proverbs remain powerful and effective in transmitting ideas, knowledge, and social morality from one generation to another. Afaan Oromoo's proverbs are rich and dynamic and have grown over the years. The study embraced a qualitative research design under which functional theory is used to analyze and interpret data. The sample used in this study was selected from native elders of the Oromoo people in the research area. Accordingly, 10 respondents were selected through the purposive sampling method. The instruments used for data collection were in-depth interviews and observation to gather the required data. Hence, the proverbs collected via in-depth interviews and observations were examined and analyzed using functional Theory. Thus, the study explored that proverbs for unity were used by society to create unity and agreement, establish a common goal as well as love and respect for each other, condemn bad acts, and enhance morality. Moreover, proverbs were used to advise each other, to strengthen their unity, and for reconciliation to convince the conflicting bodies. Therefore, Oromo proverbs should be collected and made available to the public in written form.*

## Article Information

## Article History:

Received: 16-10-2024

Revised : 22-01-2025

Accepted : 30-03-2025

## Keywords:

*Folklore, Afaan Oromoo, Oromoo culture, proverbs, norms, values*

\*Corresponding Author:

Alima Jibril

E-mail:  
[alimajibril@gmail.com](mailto:alimajibril@gmail.com)

Copyright©2025 STAR Journal, Wollega University. All Rights Reserved.

## INTRODUCTION

The Oromoo people have ways of expressing their culture, traditions, and daily activities. One of these ways of expressing these issues is by using their folklore. Folklore is the way of expressive culture shared by a particular group of people, which includes oral traditions such as tales, myths, legends, proverbs, poems, jokes, and other oral traditions (Akinyemi & Falola, 2021). This also includes material culture, such as traditional building styles common to the group. Folklore also encompasses customary lore, taking actions-

- for folk beliefs, including folk religion, and the forms and rituals of celebrations such as Christmas, weddings, folk dances, and initiation rites, (Akinyemi & Falola, 2021; Nugraha, 2023).

The Oromo people have their self-governing system called the 'Gada System' and have been governing each other by the system. In this governing system, they used proverbs, tales, etc. to give various advice to their children and to mature and expand their children's minds without having modern

*Alima J.*

education. In the present reality, however, this process has been forgotten and the content of this folklore has been reduced in modern education so that the new generation does not have an understanding of this folklore.

Folklore is not something one can typically gain from a formal school curriculum or study in the fine arts. Instead, these traditions are passed along informally from one individual to another, and from generation to generation either through verbal instruction or demonstration. (Raj & Paudyal, 2025) explain that “Folklore is the body of expressive culture shared by a particular group of people, culture or subculture sharing the culture in their day-to-day life and living.

Folklore, in its broadest sense, is part of the culture, customs, and beliefs of a society that is based on popular traditions. It is produced by the community and is usually transmitted orally or by demonstration. As folklores emerge out of social circumstances, they change as the circumstances and value systems of society change (Raj & Paudyal, 2025). Markos (2018) expresses that “Every group bound together by common interest and purposes whether educated or uneducated, rural or urban, possessed abbacy of traditions which may be called its folklore”. This indicated that any group of people who are living together has its folklore which he/she learned informally through experience and practice. Supporting this idea Bronner (2012) defines it as “Folklore is informally learned, unofficial knowledge about the world, ourselves, our communities, our beliefs, our cultures, and our traditions that is expressed creatively through words, music customs, actions, behaviors and materials”. Moreover, Ghosh and Mullick (2020) explain a comparative study of the folklore of different countries reveals that the ideas of the people

*Sci. Technol. Arts Res. J., Jan. – March. 2025, 14(1), 169-181*  
about the creation of the world are similar, to a great extent, everywhere in the world.

Different scholars divide folklore into different categories based on their forms. Among them, Nugraha (2023) divides folklore into four categories. These are oral literature, material culture, social folk customs, and the performing folk arts. From these four categories, oral literature refers to the verbal heritage of mankind and is transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth.

This has led to missing the lack of benefits that were gained from folklore that our society has benefited from without having modern education. Raising the limitations that the Oromo research faced, Sayed (2023) explains, “Several studies have been conducted on different genres of folklore. However, as compared to other genres of folklore, the Oromo oral literature is not studied well”. This suggests that though much research has been conducted in other fields of folklore, research on Oromo folklore has not been conducted properly. Accordingly, the limitation of research on the Oromo Proverbs for unity in Gidda Ayana District led the researcher to choose this topic. In addition, proverbs are a vital part of cultural heritage and communication, a significant gap exists in understanding the evolving meanings and applications of proverbs in contemporary society, particularly regarding how they reflect changing social norms and values, which necessitates a deeper analysis to preserve and interpret this important linguistic tradition.

Maikano (2020) describes that oral literature is a general term that includes, songs, tales, ballads, proverbs, riddles, legends, etc. From these categories, the main concern of this research is about Afaan Oromoo proverbs, which is called

*Alima J.*

‘mammaaksa’ in Afaan Oromoo. They are short expressions used in common conversation, debate, and others to guide the listener towards the central idea of what the speaker intends to say. On the other hand, the speaker tries to dwell upon the nitty-gritty rather than involving himself in around about discussion. Mammaaka also summarizes the content of the discussion and the theme of what the speaker trying to express. Sometimes, it is better to say one ‘verse’ of mammaakaa than tell a story of several pages. Thus, mammaaksa is a simple, concrete, traditional saying that expresses a perceived truth based on common sense or experience. It is often metaphorical and uses formulaic language. Accordingly, the main concern of this study is to linguistically describe Afaan Oromoo proverbs which are used for expressing unity in East Wollega, Gidda Ayana District.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Different scholars studied Afaan Oromoo proverbs for different purposes and in different contexts. Among them, [Ashenafi \(2014\)](#) studied Oromoo proverbs in environmental discourses and made an eco-critical analysis. Its specific concern was with the analysis of place accorded to nature and the role of human relations with the physical environment. Similarly, [Megersa and Dejene \(2019\)](#) explored Oromo Proverbs and proverbial expressions in conflict resolution and peace-making. The proverbs were collected from Jimma. Likewise, [Megersa \(2019\)](#) collected Oromoo proverbs from Jimma and discussed their roles in conflict resolution and/or management as a peace-making verbal communication principle in the cultural context. Additionally, [Dibaba \(2013\)](#),

*Sci. Technol. Arts Res. J., Jan. – March. 2025, 14(1), 169-181* made an investigation into the manifestation of Oromo culture in Folklore. His focus was on the Oromo cultural elements reflected in some selected Afaan Oromoo Proverbs (Mammaaksa).

[Makolkin \(2023\)](#) explains that studying proverbs is one of the major issues that have overwhelmed not only linguistics and folklore studies but also literary studies. The proverb challenges people's thinking, particularly that of the youth, and aids in the development of assets such as honesty, trustworthiness, hard work, self-sacrifice, courage, determination, and perseverance. Hence, the current study was focused on the exploration of Afaan Oromoo proverbs in the Gidda Ayana District. The Oromoo people of the Gidda Ayana District of East Wollega have been using oral literature, particularly proverbs, for different purposes in their day-to-day life and living. However, because of different reasons, using proverbs has been becoming very rare. According to the researcher's observations, only elders have been using their communications to transfer messages in a very symbolic manner. This leads the proverbs to be forgotten and become extinct. Thus, the main focus of this research is linguistically analyzing Afaan Oromoo proverbs for unity and recording them in a written form to prevent them from being lost.

## **Research Questions**

1. What type of proverbs do people in the study area use to describe unity?
2. What messages do the proverbs convey in the study area?

## **Review of Related Literature**

Different scholars define proverbs in an almost similar manner with different purposes

*Alima J.*

they play in society. Ūgienė (2020) explains that “A proverb is a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorable form, and which is handed down from generation to generation”. Agyekum (2017) also considers proverbs as the salt of a language, without which the real taste of the language dish is not felt. Likewise, (Akinyemi & Falola, 2021) describes the content and definition of African proverbs as follows:

Since proverbs can refer to practically any situation, it would be impossible to give any comprehensive account of the content of African proverbs. Something of their variety can be gathered from the headings under which they are classed in many collections (in terms either of explicit content or implied allusion), for these headings include every aspect of human affairs.

The crucial role proverbs play in understanding a culture's values, beliefs, social norms, and worldview, as they act as a powerful tool for transmitting wisdom, offering advice, and reflecting the collective experiences of a community through concise and metaphorical language, (Simon, 2016, Akinyemi & Falola, 2021). More importantly, studying proverbs provides insight into a person's way of life and thinking, often revealing nuances not readily apparent in other forms of communication. Thus, one of the key significances of studying proverbs is cultural transmission, which is a means of passing down cultural knowledge, morals, and social customs from generation to generation. They can also subtly critique social behaviors, highlight societal values, and express concerns about issues within a community.

Moreover, proverbs are linguistically rich. Nugraha (2023) enlightens that the

*Sci. Technol. Arts Res. J., Jan. – March. 2025, 14(1), 169-181*  
metaphorical and figurative language in proverbs adds depth and complexity to communication, which often conveys multiple layers of meaning. They can be used to reinforce arguments, provide guidance, or add weight to a statement due to their shared understanding within a culture, which makes communication effective. Additionally, Oli (2021) describes that proverbs are the linguistic components of the African people employed in speech to provide excitement and interest.

Every proverb connected to a language or a nation is a unique example of folk oral creativity that expresses the knowledge of the people, concentrated over centuries of experience, national pride, and cultural uniqueness (Makolkin, 2023). Proverbs, as a brief representation of collective knowledge, have profound historical roots that reflect the cultural, social, and philosophical values of their period (Gulshan & Umida, 2024). They are brief expressions of wisdom and cultural knowledge, often capturing societal values, life lessons, and general truths.

Proverbs are extremely deep-rooted in the history and experiences of several cultures and are transmitted to generations, contributing important insights into the experiences and worldviews of the society, Gulshan and Umida (2024). Moreover, Gulshan and Umida (2024) explores the importance of proverbs as reflections of the collective wisdom of a community which have played an essential role in guiding individuals and shaping social norms. In general, proverbs are short forms and well-known expressions that the community uses for advice, wise themes and cultural experiences, which is well-known among people for their fluent wording, clarity of expression, simplicity,

*Alima J.*

expansiveness and generality, (Bonsu & Kate, 2023).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework used in this research is functional theory. Nugraha (2023) describes that the main purpose of functional theory is to analyze oral literature from different perspectives such as social, and to identify the benefits of existing knowledge types in social life. It is one of the types of folklore research theory that focuses on the benefits of folklore to society. It is used to analyze the significance of folklore to the society. Accordingly, the proverbs which are collected and selected for this study were analyzed and the findings and conclusions were set using functional theory.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The research design that was adopted for the study was qualitative research which is used to collect participants' experiences, perceptions, and behavior on a subject of research. This is because, qualitative research answers the how and whys instead of how many or how much (Sayed, 2023). It could be structured as a standalone study, purely relying on qualitative data. As a result, the researcher used qualitative research methods to analyze the proverbs that the society used to describe unity.

#### **Research Participants**

The study was conducted in the Gidda Ayana District of East Wollega in a predominantly farming community. The site was selected for the investigation purposively based on the researcher's knowledge about the cultural life and living of the community. The researcher purposively sampled the research participants who have rich knowledge about Afaan Oromoo proverbs and are very instrumental in

*Sci. Technol. Arts Res. J., Jan. – March. 2025, 14(1), 169-181*  
their delivery as well as their interpretations. In all, 10 participants were selected and interviewed thoroughly to get rich and in-depth data.

#### **Instruments for Data Collection**

Data gathering instruments used for the research were interviews and observation.

#### **Interview**

The research uncovered the philosophical epistemologies behind Afaan Oromoo proverbs and how they contribute to the unity and development of the Oromoo people as a whole, and in East Wollega, Gidda Ayana District, in particular. To acquire the qualitative data, six interview guide questions were used. Creswell and Poth (2014) explain that "interview is a one-on-one conversation between an interviewer and an interviewee. The interviewer asks questions to which the interviewee responds, usually providing information". Accordingly, in the interview, 10 elders participated to gather rich data.

#### **Observation**

In addition, the researcher used observation to gather qualitative data that supplements the interview data to enrich the study. For this purpose, the researcher observed different reconciliations and negotiations while the elders used proverbs to negotiate and reconcile the conflicting parts.

#### **Methods of Data Analysis**

Ten research participants were interviewed and different observations were held to ascertain the needed data for the study. The data collected from elders were identified and categorized into themes. Then, the data were analyzed qualitatively using functional theory.



## **Ethical Considerations**

Participants in the study were assured that the information they submitted would be kept private and used only for this research. Additionally, they were told that they may stop participating at any time or choose not to submit their answers if they are not comfortable.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Results**

Data analysis started with the selection and identification of Afaan Oromoo proverbs that are used for unity in society. According to the in-depth interview among the elders from the research area, the researcher selected 12 proverbs for unity and analyzed and interpreted them accordingly.

#### **Proverb 1**

Elder 02: “Warri marii qabu arba qabee, warri marii hinqabne tafkii qabuu dadhabe.” That means: (Deliberation can catch up elephants and those who are not cannot flee).

According to the interview made with elders (05), the contextual implication deduced from this proverb is that it is used to teach families or neighbors or villages as well as individual communities to participate in personal, social, economic, political, etc. discussions. The objective is to mobilize the societies together to achieve a set goal. As is well known, the elephant is the largest and strongest animal than any other. Flee, however, is a very small insect that is easily squeezed. Those who believe in discussion and live in agreement develop the ability to catch this big animal, the elephant; while those who do not discuss

(those who do not agree) cannot catch the little insect: the flea. The other interviewed elder (02) added that this proverb is intended to explain the benefits of discussion and agreement to encourage people to live together and support each other knowing the harms of disagreements. The proverb, therefore, is used to emphasize the power of unity in a place where many people live together, and, is usually uttered by elders in the form of advice to prevent them from fighting when conflict appears between them.

#### **Proverb 2**

Elder 03: Qunceen walgargaartee arba hiiti. That means: (If bundled, strips of bark can tie an elephant.)

The idea of this proverb is to explain that if small things come together and unite, they can do great things beyond the power of each other. Such kinds of proverbs are used to advise people to understand the power of unity and working together. It is a proverb to encourage people who have been divided and despaired to come together and unite. For instance, the sisal alone is fragile if pulled apart a little. The elephant is a powerful animal. Thus, just as the weak sisal can tie the big elephant, it is proverbial to convey the advice that gentle people can do great things if they organize themselves and act together in unity.

#### **Proverb 3**

Elder 08: “Mixiin walqabatee laga ceeti.” That means: (United together, ants cross the river).

According to data from Elder (08), the message of the above proverb is that what is impossible alone can be accomplished by being united to each other by agreement. The

*Alima J.*

interviewee (elder 08) well explained as “Mixiin qofaa ishee laga ce’uu dhiisii, bishaan cobni tokkoyyu ishee liqimsuu danda’a. Yoo tokkooman garuu laga guddaayyuu ce’uu ni danda’u,” jechuudha. According to the quotation above, as it is well known, if an ant is single, let alone the river, it cannot pass over a drop of water. But, if they are connected and united, they can cross a big river together. Accordingly, the proverb teaches and advises people that if people work together and have unity, they can do great things that seem impossible. Thus, unity is very important for the success of individuals to achieve the required goal.

#### **Proverb 4**

Elder 01: “Waliin ta’an, waliif ta’an.” That means: (Those in harmony are sympathetic to each other).

The interview data with Elder (01) is interpreted as that, if there is no agreement and unity, one cannot get anywhere alone. A single individual, who cannot cooperate, cannot benefit even oneself not alone others. Hence, the main message of this proverb is that unity and agreement are the basis of success.

This proverb advises and teaches the community the need for unity and agreement for the well-being of society. According to the proverb, if people live together in agreement, they can share problems and provide solutions to the problems. On the contrary, if there is no agreement and unity between them, there is no mutual help. Therefore, according to the proverb, if there is unity, there will be mutual understanding.

#### **Proverb 5**

Elder 09 and 10: “Kan nama tokkoof gaalaa, nama hedduuf baala.” That means: (What is as

*Sci. Technol. Arts Res. J., Jan. – March. 2025, 14(1), 169-181*  
heavy as a camel for one person is as light as a leaf for many).

The contextual implication of this proverb, according to the interview with elders (09 and 10), is that unity can make whatever is difficult to be easy. As it is well known, camels are physically large domestic animals and are used for transportation. Leaves are thin plant parts that can be driven around by light wind. Hence, what is as heavy as a camel for one person becomes as easy as a leaf if people work hand in hand and together by agreement and unity. Therefore, the proverb is used to teach the community to work together to ease the work that seems difficult to acquire the inspired result.

#### **Proverb 6**

Elder 03: “Harki dabaree waldhiqa.” That means: (On washing, hands take turns).

This proverb explains that just as one hand takes turns washing the other hand as it cannot wash itself alone, it is essential to make people learn that be united and do things together for themselves. In addition, according to the interviewee (03), “Harki dabaree waldhika jechuun waliin ta’uu qofa osoo hintaane, wal gargaaruun akka dhala namaaf barbaachisu akeekkachiisa. This means that hands take turns washing each other reminds us not only of the need for unity and cooperation but also advises us on the importance of helping each other. The elder also underlines that it is not always necessary to seek help from others, but it is also essential to learn to help others. Thus, the proverb is proverbial to advise that just as two hands cannot wash each other if they are not together, people cannot help each other if they do not cooperate.

#### **Proverb 7**

Elder 04: “Warri Marabbaa hinqabne, osoo hincufatiin bulu.” That means: (Those who are not compassionate, remain at night open door).

According to the data gathered from elders (04 and 05), proverbs like the above are very important for negotiation when the disagreement is at the family level. They briefly explained that the Oromo community of Gidda Ayana District uses such kinds of proverbs when people in a family constantly quarrel over benefits and other issues. The elders who sit for reconciliation use this proverb to advise the quarrelling family to reconcile. Although the word “Marabbaa” is used by the elders as a whole in the district, the new generation nowadays does not know it except for the word “tole” which means (That is ok) according to the evidence from the interview, elder (04). Nevertheless, the proverb is used to reconcile disagreements and conflicts at the family level and to advise people to live together in harmony.

### **Proverb 8**

Elder 06: “Sareen walnyaattu, waraabessa walirraa hindhorkattu.” That means: (Fighting dogs cannot guard themselves from hyenas).

Almost all elders who participated in the in-depth interview described the message and purpose of Proverb 8 in a nearly similar manner. To start with, proverb (8) explains the fact of life; that is, fighting dogs cannot guard themselves from hyenas. This means according to Elder 06, a person raises a dog to guard the home and domestic animals. If they forget this purpose and start squabbling, it will mean that they cannot fight the hyenas

*Sci. Technol. Arts Res. J., Jan. – March. 2025, 14(1), 169-181*  
themselves, not to protect the home. This proverb is not proverbial for dogs; however, it is for human beings. Therefore, if people do not agree, cooperate, and have no unity, just as dogs, they will expose themselves to the enemy.

Thus, such proverbs are used to advise people who have often been in conflict in the same house, neighborhood, community, and country. According to the proverb, those who do not agree with each other cannot defend a stranger (enemy). These are likened to dogs to mean that dogs are given a low status in society; and that a person who disagrees with others is like this dog. Therefore, the message of this proverb is to advise society to unite by explaining that the only way to prevent enemies from each other and themselves is by agreeing to each other and acting accordingly together, not by hating and disagreeing with each other.

### **Proverb 09**

Elder 07: “Warra waljaallatu, irbaanni hinhanqatu.” That means: (For those who are in harmony there is no shortage of dinner).

According to data gathered from research participants, proverb 9 is very common in the research area and everybody usually uses it to describe the power of love and unity. More importantly, elder (07) enlightened that such types of proverbs are used to reconcile when there is hatred between family members or people living together. When there is agreement, even a small thing can sustain many people; but, if there is no agreement, a lot of wealth is useless. Therefore, this proverb is meant to advise the community to live together in unity by pointing out the harmful effects of hatred and showing the



benefits of love and unity. Thus, this community also uses such kinds of proverbs to strengthen their social life and the value of sharing and living in unity.

### **Proverb 10**

Elder 02: “Mukni tokko ni’aara malee hinboba’u.” That means: (A single stick cannot be flamed other than smoke).

According to different interviewees who participated in the research, the above proverb has a very significant message that teaches the importance of unity and cooperation for human beings in a very symbolic way. One of the interviewees stated that: “Akkuma mukni tokko qofaa ifa kennuu hindandeenye, dhalli namaas rakkoolee hedduuf furmaata akka ta’uuf lamaafi isaa ol ta’anii tokkummaa uumuun socho’uun baayyee barbaachisaa akka ta’e mammaaksa kanarraa barachuun nidanda’ama,” (Elder 02). This means that, as many people know, a single stick cannot be flamed. There must be two or more sticks to make a flame and give light. Likewise, what we should learn from this proverb is that it is more important for human beings to act in unity to find solutions to many problems. Thus, the proverb teaches the benefits of living together in harmony. In this case, loneliness is likened to a lonely stick in the fire to show that it is smoking. To make light, there should be more trees to burn and give the expected benefits that are light. Just as a tree cannot burn alone, so a human being cannot succeed unless he/she works with others. This indicates that people have to cooperate and act together to achieve the expected result.

### **Proverb 11**

Elder 03: “Kaannisni faca’e titiisa.” That means: (Dispersed bees are no more than flies).

*A Peer-reviewed Official International Journal of Wollega University, Ethiopia*

As it is well known, the cooperation of bees is very essential for human beings and the bees themselves. Bees spend their time preparing honey by collecting nectar from flowers; and eat the honey they prepared when different flowers are not available. They are busy creatures which they perform together by cooperating to prepare this special and very important food for human beings. The flies, however, do not cooperate and benefit themselves; except that they live their lives on various (dirty) things. If the bees had not been organized and cooperated, they would not have produced this important food for themselves and human beings. Similarly, interviewee (01) stressed, that this proverb recommends pointing out that without cooperation and unity, man cannot produce the desired results like a scattered bee. In this way, it is proverbial to advise people to work together like organized bees.

### **Proverb 12**

Elder 04: “Mari’ataniiti malee maraatanii biyya hinbulchan.” That means: (Effective administration of a country emanates from discussions rather than being despotic).

According to the proverb, it is impossible to rule the country by running alone and it indicates that discussion, consulting, and cooperating with the people whom they are ruling is mandatory. In the sketch, ‘country’ is in the syntactic context of the proverb establishment and can also represent the family, village, district, state, region, and country itself. It is proverbial to advise people to negotiate and agree; stating that nothing done will produce the needed results if there is no agreement among the ruling classes and the people. Proverbs like this are used when a

*Alima J.*

person in power or authority tries to act according to his own will rather than the will of the people he is ruling.

According to the data collected from the research participants and analyzed, proverbs that teach unity have great importance to almost all bodies of society. Elders usually use proverbs during reconciliation to convince conflicting parties in reconciliation. It also helps the counsellors as well as the counselled bodies to easily agree. Elders who sit down for reconciliation use proverbs that teach unity to convince and bring conflicting parties together. In addition, the elders who participated in the interview explained that it is possible to advise people to use proverbs to convey a powerful message rather than using long sentences and many words.

The main purpose of Oromo proverbs is to teach unity. The proverbs are not proverbial from the ground up but stand on the message or messages they want to convey. Accordingly, the overall message of the Oromo proverbs is used to teach unity and this unity can be unity at different levels. They can be classified as proverbs that create a message of unity at the family, neighborhood, village, community, region, and country levels depending on the context in which the proverbs are well-known.

Proverbs are used to convey messages to society for many purposes such as advice, education, criticism, anger, hate, love, beauty, hope, unity, generosity, and the like. When proverbs convey these messages, they serve to present them more clearly and repetitively than other folklore. What makes the proverb convey these messages clearly and shortly is its beauty and sweetness, as well as its summary and conciseness when it explains something based on philosophy and knowledge of society. Furthermore, because

*Sci. Technol. Arts Res. J., Jan. – March. 2025, 14(1), 169-181*  
of its longevity, the proverb preserves the experiences of a society since ancient times in an easy-to-remember manner. Therefore, it is necessary to study proverbs and put them in writing for they transmit the history, culture, situation, and social life from generation to generation in an efficient manner more than other folklore. That is because what is passed on by word of mouth changes and disappears.

In general, the research participants clarify that the community has many proverbs describing unity from which the community has learned the benefits of having unity. The proverbs also encouraged unity in society and used such kinds of proverbs to reinforce unity. Furthermore, the society in the research area understands that lack of unity results in disagreement, lack of common goal as well as hatred and contempt for each other, and condemns such acts by their proverbs to prevent this from happening. Thus, the society uses proverbs to advise each other to strengthen their unity.

## **Discussions**

In this section, the researcher tried to respond to the research questions. The data gathered from the elders through the interviews were analyzed and interpreted thoroughly using folkloric functional theory. Accordingly, the following findings were set.

Regarding the importance of proverbs that describe unity, it was found that the Oromo community of Gidda Ayana created various contents and gave advice to each other by understanding the benefits of unity and explaining the shortcomings of dispersion or lack of unity. According to the data analyzed, the importance of proverbs is to create unity and agreement, establish a common goal as well as love and respect for each other, and condemn bad acts by their proverbs. In light of

*Alima J.*

this, [Gulshan and Umida \(2024\)](#) explores the importance of proverbs as a reflection of the collective wisdom of a community which have played an essential role in guiding individuals and shaping social norms. Thus, it can be concluded that proverbs that teach unity have great importance to almost all bodies of society. Moreover, elders usually use them during reconciliation to convince conflicting parties to come to an agreement.

Concerning the messages of the proverbs that explore unity, the research participants stated that what makes the proverbs more effective in reconciliation is that they convey powerful messages clearly and quickly, and their beauty and sweetness, as well as their summary and conciseness when they describe something based on philosophy and knowledge of the society. In relation to this, [Nugraha \(2023\)](#) explains that the metaphorical and figurative language in proverbs adds depth and complexity to communication, which often conveys multiple layers of meaning and messages. In general, the findings of the study revealed the roles that proverbs play in the unity and development among Oromoo in general and Gidda Ayana District in particular, and the need for their revival, preservation, and more importantly, their incorporation into modern life and unity to live in harmony.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Proverbs have a specific cultural orientation, significance, and interpretation based on the socio-cultural environment that makes the proverb. Human beings use proverbs to express their behavior, hopes, aspirations, strengths, weaknesses, fears, and failures. Afaan Oromoo proverbs are the products of

*Sci. Technol. Arts Res. J., Jan. – March. 2025, 14(1), 169-181*  
the socio-cultural, economic, and political experience of the Oromoo people.

In particular, proverbs are used to teach or advise, conclude, and bring about the history, culture, traditions, and lifestyle of the Oromo. They are used to warn against immorality, adultery, incest, and other social ills within the Oromoo community. Furthermore, proverbs are important for conveying the knowledge and experience of the community.

## **Recommendations**

There are countless proverbs with layers of messages in Oromia in general and in the Gidda Ayana district in particular. However, not all of these proverbs are expressed in writing in a way that conveys messages and lessons beyond being passed down orally from generation to generation. And what is passed on by word of mouth is quick to be distorted or extinct. On the other hand, proverbs written in different books in Oromoo are not satisfactorily interpreted and divided based on the messages they convey in our community.

The Oromoo proverbs analyzed in this paper are embedded in the mental capacity and their understanding depends on the culture and context in which they are produced, reproduced, and used. From the given conclusions, it could be recommended that Oromo proverbs should be collected and researched and made available to the public through books and various social media.

## **CRedit authorship contribution statement**

The author confirms the sole responsibility for the conception of the study, presented results and manuscript preparation.

Alima J.

### Declaration of competing interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

### Data availability statement

All data are available from the researcher upon the request of the researcher.

### Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank the elders, who took part in the study for their commitment and desire to engage in the interview. The author would also like to thank everyone who helped and supported her during the study process.

### REFERENCES

- Agyekum, K. (2017). The Ethnosemantics and Proverbs of ohia, “poverty” in Akan1. *Legon Journal of the Humanities*, 28(2), 23-47. <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ljh/article/view/163867>
- Akinyemi, A. & Falola, T. (2021). *The Palgrave Handbook of African Oral Traditions and Folklore*. Palgrave: Macmillan. <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-030-55517-7>
- Ashenafi, B. (2014). Exploring Environmental Discourses in Oral Literature: Ecocritical Analysis of Oromoo Proverbs. *Journal of Languages and Literature*, 5(2), 24-35. <https://doi.org/10.5897/JLC2013.024>
- Bonsu, R., & Kate, M. Q. (2023). Semanticity of Akan Proverbs Promoting Unity and Development. *European Modern Studies Journal*, 7(1), 391-401. [https://doi.org/10.59573/emsj.7\(1\).2023.36](https://doi.org/10.59573/emsj.7(1).2023.36)
- Bronner, S. J. (2012). Practice Theory in Folklore and Folklife Studies. *Folklore*, 123(1), 23–47. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0015587X.2012.642985>.

- Sci. Technol. Arts Res. J., Jan. – March. 2025, 14(1), 169-181*
- Creswell, J.W., & Poth, C.N. (2014). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design Choosing among Five Approaches* (4<sup>th</sup> Edition), Thousand Oaks: SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v12n5p40>
- Dibaba, A. (2013). Ethnographic History of Oromo Folklore Study: Ethiopia. *ASA 2013 Annual Meeting Paper*. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2236955>
- Ghosh, K., & Mullick, P. D. (2020). Anthropology and Folklore Studies in India: An Overview. *International Journal of Science and Research*, 9(6), 528-531. <https://www.ijsr.net/archive/v9i6/SR20607091927.pdf>
- Gulshan, T.M., & Umida T.S. (2024). The Reflection Of National Culture And Mentality In Proverbs And Sayings. *International Conference Onmedicine, Science, and Education* volume, 01(10), 2024 <https://universalconference.us/universalconference/index.php/icmse/article/view/2804/3894>
- Maikano, A. L. (2020). Traditional Oral Art Forms and Contemporary Contexts: A Study of Themes and Functions of the Folktales of Tangle People in Gombe State, Nigeria. *Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 1(1), 144-153. <file:///C:/Users/wu/Downloads/IJASSV>
- Makolkin, A. (2023). Universality Of Proverbs And Aristotle’s Universals. *Biocosmology(2023) Neo-Aristotelism*, 13, 81-94. [https://biocosmology.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Anna-MAKOLKIN\\_2.pdf](https://biocosmology.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Anna-MAKOLKIN_2.pdf)
- Megersa, R. (2019). Oromo Proverbs in conflict resolution and/or management as a peace-making verbal communication principle in the cultural context. *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics*, 13(2), 84-104. <https://doi.org/10.2478/jef-2019-0016>

Alima J.

- Megersa, R., & Dejene, G. (2019). Oromo Proverbs and Proverbial Expressions. The Customary Judicial System in Ethiopia. *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics*, 13 (2), 108–123. <https://doi.org/10.2478/jef-2019-0016>
- Markos, M. (2018). The Role of Context in Determining the Meaning of Proverbs: Dawro Proverbs in Focus. *International Journal of Science and Research*, 7(6), 860-862. <https://www.ijsr.net/archive/v7i6/ART20183236.pdf>
- Nugraha, S. (2023). Exploring the Linguistic Expressions of Anger in Indonesian Proverbs: Uncovering the Underlying Cognitive Metaphorical Mappings. *Science and Education*, 3(11), 2169-2183. <https://doi.org/10.55677/ijssers/V03I11Y2023-01>
- Oli, A. (2021). Thematic Analysis of Oromo Proverbs Said About Women. *International Sci. Technol. Arts Res. J.*, Jan. – March. 2025, 14(1), 169-181  
*Journal for Innovation Education and Research*, 9(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.31686/ijer.vol9.iss1.2911>
- Raj, K. B., & Paudyal, M. (2025). Rhetoric of some Nepali Folklore and their Changing Modes of Expressions. *THE BATUK: Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 1 (1), 69-85. <https://doi.org/10.3126/batuk.v1i1i1.74444>
- Sayed, M. A. (2023). Introduction to research: Mastering the basics. *Scholars Journal of Research in Social Science*, 3(1), 01-24 <https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/jz4wn>
- Simon, J. B. (2016). *Folklore: The Basics* (1<sup>st</sup> Edition), London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315688381>
- Ūgienė, L. (2020). *The Storytelling Human: Lithuanian Folk Tradition Today*. Boston, USA: Academic Studies Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1zjg2v0>