

Proverbs as Instruments of Cultural Soft Power: A Comparative Study of Proverbs 22:6 and Yoruba Sayings in the Upbringing of Children

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**Abstract**

*This study investigated the use of Proverbs 22:6 and Yoruba cultural proverbs as diplomatic tools for public teachings in the upbringing of a child. Rooted in the intersection of religious and indigenous moral education, the research addressed the problem of declining transmission of traditional wisdom due to modernisation and globalisation. The study aimed to examine how these proverbs influenced child moral development, promote peaceful conflict resolution, and serve as tools of diplomatic communication within families and communities. Guided by the soft power theory, the study explored how children internalise moral values through cultural and religious proverbs. Employing a mixed-methods design, the study sampled 300 participants from selected Yoruba communities within Ondo City in Ondo State, Nigeria, utilising surveys and interviews to gather data. Findings revealed that the integration of Biblical and indigenous proverbs significantly shaped children's ethical behaviour and interpersonal diplomacy. However, challenges such as reduced proverb usage in formal education and urbanised contexts were identified. The study recommended policy actions including the formal incorporation of proverbs into school curricula, community programmes to revitalise proverb use in child upbringing, and the promotion of cultural diplomacy initiatives that leveraged proverbs in international relations. The aim of these policies was to preserve cultural heritage while enhancing moral education and Nigeria's soft power globally. In conclusion, Proverbs 22:6 and Yoruba proverbs remained vital diplomatic tools that bridged cultural and religious teachings to nurture ethical, socially responsible children. Their strategic integration in education and diplomacy can foster harmonious social relations and cultural pride amid rapid modernisation.*

**Keywords:** *Proverbs 22:6, Yoruba cultural proverbs, Child upbringing, Moral education, Diplomatic tools*

**Introduction**

In a rapidly globalising world, where cultural boundaries are constantly negotiated and redefined, the use of proverbs as tools of moral instruction and cultural diplomacy has gained renewed significance. Proverbs, rich in metaphor and wisdom, are integral to the cultural heritage and value systems of many societies, functioning as instruments for moral education,

conflict resolution, and the subtle transmission of social norms. This study investigated Proverbs 22:6 “*Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it*” in conversation with Yoruba cultural proverbs, situating both within the broader framework of soft power and cultural diplomacy in the moral upbringing of children. The Yoruba people of south western Nigeria have long employed proverbs as a pedagogical and diplomatic tool in socialisation processes. Proverbs such as “*Ìwà l'èwà*” (Character is beauty) and “*Ọmọ tí a kò kọ ní yóó gbé ilé t'èkò lọ*” (A child not trained will sell the family compound) reflect a deeply ingrained belief in the communal responsibility of raising morally upright children (Akinyemi, 2016; Owomoyela, 2005). Similarly, biblical literature, particularly in the Wisdom tradition of the Book of Proverbs, emphasizes the importance of early moral instruction, with Proverbs 22:6 often cited as a foundational text in Christian moral theology and parenting (Clifford, 1999; Longman, 2012).

Both traditions, Yoruba and Biblical converged on the belief that the early stages of child development are critical for moral and ethical formation. Scholars have argued that such cultural and religious frameworks serve as “*moral blueprints*” that are passed on through family, religious institutions, and communal rites of passage (Gyekye, 1997; Oduyoye, 2001; Idowu, 2020). Yet, the diplomatic character of proverbs in their ability to correct without confrontation, advice without command, and persuade without force has not been fully explored in academic literature, particularly in relation to public education and child upbringing. The relevance of this research is also amplified by the increasing interest in soft power theory within the discipline of international relations. According to Nye (2004), soft power is the ability of a country or culture to influence others through attraction and cultural appeal rather than coercion. In this sense, proverbs represent a form of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991), offering societies a non-coercive means of shaping norms, values, and behaviours both internally (among citizens) and externally (in global cultural exchange). As Mazrui (1990) and Adedeji (2021) asserted, Africa’s soft power potential lies not only in its resources or diplomacy but also in its intangible cultural assets, including language, wisdom traditions, and moral philosophy.

This study proposed that the synergy between Proverbs 22:6 and Yoruba proverbs offers a unique model of cultural diplomacy that blends religious universalism with indigenous particularism. While biblical texts often find global resonance due to Christianity’s widespread reach, Yoruba proverbs root moral teachings in context-specific cultural narratives, thus embodying both the universal and the local in moral education (Balogun,

2019; Olatunji, 2023). This makes them strategic tools not just for domestic pedagogy, but also for cross-cultural understanding and identity assertion in postcolonial African societies seeking to decolonize education and reclaim indigenous knowledge systems (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 2009; Asante, 2021). Yet, despite their cultural value, there is a noticeable decline in the use and transmission of proverbs in contemporary Nigeria. Urbanisation, the dominance of Western education models, and the digitalisation of communication have led to the marginalisation of oral traditions in favor of modern, secularised, and foreign pedagogical frameworks (Adekoya & Akinbobola, 2022; Ajayi, 2020). This has created a generational gap in the appreciation and application of proverbs, raising questions about how effectively moral values are being communicated to children in today's pluralistic society.

Moreover, the inter-generational transmission of wisdom through proverbs is not just a local concern, it reflects a broader global issue of cultural continuity, identity preservation, and educational sovereignty. As cultural diplomacy becomes central to global engagement strategies, there is increasing recognition of the role that faith-based and indigenous forms of communication play in advancing peace building, interfaith dialogue, and the shaping of social values (Cull, 2019; Melissen, 2005; Sampson, 2022). This study, therefore, fills an important gap by positioning proverbs not merely as linguistic artefacts or moral slogans, but as strategic tools of cultural soft power that can be harnessed for public teaching, identity formation, and global cultural engagement. By drawing on both Biblical wisdom literature and Yoruba indigenous thought, it contributed to the growing literature on Afrocentric pedagogy, faith-based diplomacy, and culturally grounded child development.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The decline in culturally grounded moral education and value transmission among children in many African societies, particularly within the Yoruba socio-cultural milieu, has raised significant concerns among educators, faith-based institutions, policymakers, and international development actors. In a rapidly globalizing world where Western ideologies dominate educational and communicative paradigms, the role of indigenous knowledge systems, such as Yoruba proverbs, and religious moral codes like Proverbs 22:6, is increasingly marginalised in formal and informal pedagogical settings (Adeyemi & Akinwumi, 2020; Fashina, 2017). This shift not only affected the moral compass of the younger generation but also undermines the soft power potential embedded in African

indigenous communicative traditions. While Proverbs 22:6 "*Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it*" continues to resonate within Christian teachings on child upbringing, its practical interpretation often lacks cultural contextualization when applied in pluralistic African societies. Similarly, Yoruba proverbs, which historically served as pedagogical tools to reinforce discipline, respect, community values, and personal responsibility, are increasingly neglected in both family and educational settings (Ajei, 2018; Adams, 2018). This created a moral vacuum and a disconnection between children and their cultural heritage, weakening the role of traditional diplomacy in shaping ethical citizens.

Moreover, despite the relevance of cultural and religious communication as soft power instruments in international relations (Chakravarty, 2021; Hayden, 2016), there is a conspicuous lack of research examining how African indigenous pedagogies and biblical wisdom literature can function as non-coercive tools for public instruction and value diplomacy. Much of the current discourse on cultural diplomacy is dominated by state-centric or Western paradigms, often overlooking Africa's contribution to normative global communication through non-institutional channels such as folklore, faith, and family systems (Akpan, 2022). Therefore, a critical gap exists in the scholarly literature and policy discourse regarding how the integration of Proverbs 22:6 and Yoruba proverbs as complementary frameworks can serve as effective diplomatic tools for public moral instruction and cross-cultural dialogue in both local and international spheres. Addressing this gap is crucial for enhancing indigenous agency, promoting moral consciousness among children, and positioning African epistemologies within the global discourse on culture and soft power diplomacy.

### **Research Objectives**

This study aimed to critically investigate the pedagogical and diplomatic functions of Proverbs 22:6 and Yoruba cultural proverbs in the moral and social development of children. It further explored their potential as indigenous tools for value communication and soft power projection within local and global frameworks. The specific objectives which address how these proverbial teachings can inform modern frameworks of moral education both locally and globally are as follows:

1. To examine the moral, cultural, and educational relevance of Proverbs 22:6 and Yoruba proverbs in shaping the character and values of children within the Yoruba society.
2. To analyse the role of Yoruba and biblical proverbs as tools of non-coercive communication and cultural diplomacy in the context of international relations.
3. To assess the potential integration of biblical and indigenous pedagogical resources into contemporary parenting, education, and public policy strategies for value re-orientation.

### **Research Questions**

Guided by the research problem in line with the research objectives, the research questions sought to provide clarity on the effectiveness and diplomatic potential of using proverbs 22:6 and Yoruba cultural proverbs in modern moral education and international cultural discourse. They are structured in the following ways:

1. In what ways do Proverbs 22:6 and Yoruba Cultural proverbs influence the moral and social development of children Yoruba society?
2. How can these proverbs be interpreted and applied as instruments of cultural diplomacy in the context of international relations and value transmission?
3. What are the implications of integrating Biblical and indigenous proverbial teachings in contemporary child-rearing practices in multicultural and interfaith environments?

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study lies in its contributions to three major domains: moral education, cultural diplomacy, and international relations. In an era where globalisation and digital culture challenged traditional value systems, this research served to reinforce the importance of indigenous and religious knowledge in shaping ethical consciousness and social behaviour among children. First, the study advanced academic discourse by bridging the gap between Biblical pedagogy and African indigenous knowledge systems, using Proverbs 22:6 and Yoruba proverbs as a case in point. It highlighted how these two sources of moral instruction can complement one another in the upbringing of children, especially in multicultural societies where religious and cultural pluralism coexist. Second, it offered a valuable pedagogical resource for parents, educators, religious leaders, and curriculum developers seeking culturally relevant and faith-based tools for moral instruction.

It encouraged the integration of local proverbs and biblical wisdom into teaching models that reflected community values and ethical development.

Third, and most notably, the study contributed to the field of international relations and cultural diplomacy by demonstrating how indigenous and Biblical proverbs function as instruments of soft power. It proposed that Africa, particularly Yoruba culture, possesses untapped communicative tools that can foster mutual understanding, peace building, and non-coercive influence in diplomatic exchanges. This positions African epistemologies not just as cultural relics, but as dynamic assets in global discourse. Ultimately, the findings of this research will be useful to scholars of African studies, theology, international diplomacy, and education, as well as policymakers and international organisations working on value re-orientation, child development, and intercultural dialogue.

### **Scope of the Study**

This study is primarily focused on the Yoruba-speaking communities in south western Nigeria, where proverbs hold a significant place in daily communication and moral education. Although the research is rooted in this specific cultural and geographical context, its findings are intended to contribute insights relevant to broader African indigenous knowledge systems and global conversations on cultural diplomacy. Thematically, the study examined two interconnected areas: the role of Proverbs 22:6 and Yoruba proverbs in shaping the moral upbringing of children, and their function as diplomatic tools that convey values and foster understanding through non-coercive communication or soft power. The research explored how these proverbial teachings serve both educational and intercultural communicative purposes.

Temporally, the study focused on the period between 2010 and 2024. This timeframe allowed for an investigation of the impact of globalisation, modernisation, and cultural change on the use and significance of these proverbs in moral education and international relations. Conceptually, the study centred on key themes such as moral instruction, cultural diplomacy, indigenous knowledge systems, and Biblical pedagogy. It specifically investigated Proverbs 22:6 alongside selected Yoruba proverbs relevant to child-rearing and social ethics, without extending to a comprehensive theological or pan-African proverb analysis. In terms of limitations, the research is confined to Yoruba culture and Christian Biblical texts, without comparative analyses involving other ethnic groups or religious traditions. The focus is on the practical application of these proverbs rather than detailed theological interpretation.

## **Literature Review**

The use of proverbs in moral instruction and cultural communication is well documented across diverse academic fields, yet the specific intersection of biblical proverbs, indigenous African proverbs particularly Yoruba proverbs and their application as diplomatic tools in child upbringing remains underexplored. Proverbs function as condensed wisdom, offering ethical guidelines and social norms, which have historically shaped African societies' approaches to child-rearing and community cohesion (Moyo, 2021; Okoro & Afolayan, 2022). Recent studies affirmed the pedagogical importance of Proverbs 22:6, which stresses early moral formation as pivotal for lifelong character development (Eze & Nwankwo, 2019; Johnson, 2020). This verse is frequently cited within Christian parenting discourse globally, emphasising the role of faith in shaping a child's values. Parallel to this, Yoruba proverbs are widely recognised for their capacity to encode communal ethics and behavioural expectations that guide children's conduct from an early age (Adebayo & Ogunleye, 2020; Oladipo, 2023). Scholars like Nwachukwu (2021) demonstrated how Yoruba proverbial wisdom functions not only in teaching but also in conflict resolution and social integration, positioning it as a powerful cultural resource.

Despite these affirmations, most extant literature focuses narrowly on the pedagogical or sociocultural roles of proverbs without situating them within frameworks of international relations or cultural diplomacy. This omission is critical because proverbs encapsulate forms of soft power, a concept articulated by Nye (2021) whereby cultures project influence through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion. Akpan & Obi (2022) argued that African indigenous knowledge systems, including proverbs, are largely untapped resources in diplomatic engagements and global cultural exchanges, representing a vital yet overlooked form of non-material influence. In international relations scholarship, cultural diplomacy is increasingly recognised as an essential mechanism for fostering peaceful relations and mutual understanding (Zhang & Smith, 2020; Fisher, 2022). However, much of this research privileged Western cultural products and overlooks African epistemologies. By contrast, Yoruba proverbs, rich in metaphor and moral guidance, offered a unique means of cross-cultural communication that could advance diplomatic goals by promoting shared values and ethical awareness across cultures (Obasi, 2023). This is particularly salient in the upbringing of children who are future citizens and leaders, thereby linking domestic cultural transmission to broader international socialisation processes.

Moreover, globalisation and technological advances have posed significant challenges to the continuity of indigenous knowledge systems. Scholars such as Adeola & Mensah (2021) noted that modernisation often marginalised traditional pedagogies, risking cultural erosion. Yet, integrating biblical teachings with Yoruba proverbs provides a hybridised framework that not only preserves but also adapts indigenous values within contemporary contexts, making them more accessible and relevant to modern families (Ibrahim & Afolabi, 2022). This synergy between religious and cultural wisdom is an area ripe for scholarly exploration, as it offers a model of moral education that resonates across diverse settings. A critical gap in the current literature is the lack of empirical studies exploring how Proverbs 22:6 and Yoruba proverbs operate explicitly as diplomatic tools both informally, within communities, and formally, in intercultural dialogues. While theoretical discussions of soft power abound, the concrete mechanisms through which proverbs function in diplomatic communication, especially regarding child upbringing as a foundation for societal values, are scarcely examined (Kalu, 2023).

Additionally, the potential of these proverbs to foster ethical leadership and social cohesion in multicultural societies remains largely theoretical without practical case studies or interdisciplinary analysis. This study contributed new knowledge by positioning Proverbs 22:6 and Yoruba proverbs as dynamic instruments of indigenous soft power that serve dual roles in terms of educational tools for nurturing morally grounded children and as strategic communicative devices in cultural diplomacy. It argued for a broader understanding of diplomacy that includes cultural pedagogy and moral socialisation as foundational to international peace and cooperation. This perspective challenges dominant paradigms in international relations by foregrounding African epistemologies and advocating for their integration into global diplomatic practices. In conclusion, while the educational value of biblical and Yoruba proverbs is acknowledged, their function as tools of cultural diplomacy and soft power in shaping future generations is an emergent field requiring focused scholarly attention. This study aimed to fill these gaps by offering a multidisciplinary analysis that bridged theology, cultural studies, and international relations.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Soft Power Theory, coined and developed by Joseph Nye in the late 20th century, centers on the idea that influence in international relations and social interactions extends beyond coercive or economic means (hard power) to include attraction, persuasion, and cultural

appeal (Nye, 2004; Nye, 2021). Soft power is “the ability to shape the preferences of others through appeal and attraction rather than coercion or payment” (Nye, 2008, p. 94). It derives primarily from a country’s culture, political values, and foreign policies when these are seen as legitimate or morally authoritative. Unlike traditional power dynamics relying on military or economic might, soft power capitalizes on intangible resources such as language, cultural symbols, educational systems, and moral narratives to foster alignment and cooperation among diverse actors (Melissen, 2005; d’Hooghe, 2017). The theory underscores that cultural diplomacy, education, and public communication are crucial vehicles through which soft power manifests and is operationalized (Cull, 2009). Recent scholarship has extended Nye’s conceptualization beyond states to include non-state actors, communities, and indigenous knowledge systems as carriers of soft power that influence societal values and international perceptions (Akpan & Obi, 2022; Kalu, 2023). This expanded understanding is important for analysing how proverbs rich-repositories of cultural wisdom can serve as instruments of soft power.

This study explored Proverbs 22:6 from the Bible and Yoruba cultural proverbs as forms of indigenous soft power that shaped the upbringing of children, who are future agents in society and international relations. Both sets of proverbs operate as cultural resources transmitting moral values, social norms, and communal identities through public teaching. As educational tools, they appeal not through coercion but by nurturing internalised ethical standards, shaping behavior, and fostering social cohesion. From a soft power perspective, these proverbs embody cultural narratives that attract adherence and respect, promoting a shared moral framework that underpins social order and peaceful coexistence (Nye, 2021; Obasi, 2023). In the international arena, such moral socialisation prepares individuals to engage in intercultural dialogue and diplomacy grounded in mutual understanding and respect for diverse worldviews. The Proverbs 22:6 injunction to “*train a child in the way he should go*” resonates beyond personal development, it symbolically projects a vision for societal harmony and leadership rooted in ethical principles, aligning with Nye’s emphasis on values and legitimacy as sources of influence. Moreover, Yoruba proverbs serve as a localized expression of soft power by encoding indigenous epistemologies that communicate collective wisdom and social expectations without direct force. As cultural artefacts, they enhance cultural diplomacy by offering metaphors and teachings that can bridge cultural gaps in international communication (Zhang & Smith, 2020; Akpan & Obi, 2022). Their deployment in child upbringing constitutes a form of public

diplomacy at the grassroots, fostering moral citizens capable of contributing positively to national development and international cooperation.

The soft power theory is particularly well-suited and justifiable for this study because it directly addressed the ways in which culture, values, and moral narratives influenced individuals and societies through attraction and persuasion rather than force or coercion. Since the study focused on how Proverbs 22:6 and Yoruba cultural proverbs are used as tools for moral education and public teaching in child upbringing, the emphasis on non-coercive influence aligns closely with Nye's (2023) concept of soft power. These proverbs function by appealing to shared values and cultural identity, encouraging voluntary acceptance of social norms, which reflected the core of soft power's mechanism. While the study confirmed the traditional and Biblical proverbs' importance in moral upbringing and diplomacy, it also identified underexplored intersections between indigenous moral education and international relations through the lens of soft power. This connection is rarely made explicit in existing literature, which tended to treat proverbs as purely cultural or pedagogical tools without highlighting their diplomatic potential.

The study pioneered a nuanced understanding of proverbs as micro-level instruments with macro-level diplomatic consequences. Additionally, the fusion of Christian and Yoruba proverbs in child upbringing offered a unique perspective on cultural hybridity and its role in shaping moral and diplomatic identities in postcolonial African societies. This hybridity challenges monolithic views of cultural transmission and calls for more research on how indigenous and imported moral systems interact in education and diplomacy. Moreover, the identified challenges highlighted a pressing need for policy-oriented research on how modernisation can co-exist with cultural preservation, particularly in the formal education sector. There is a gap in effective strategies to integrate proverbs meaningfully into contemporary child-rearing and public teaching practices amid rapid socio-cultural changes. It helped explained how the values instilled in individuals from an early age can shape societal behaviours and attitudes that extend into intercultural dialogue and cooperation. This integrative capacity makes soft power theory uniquely relevant for a study that links indigenous cultural practices with broader diplomatic outcomes.

By applying soft power theory, this study highlighted the diplomatic potential of Yoruba proverbs alongside Biblical teachings, positioning them as important cultural assets in shaping moral citizens and enhancing cultural diplomacy. Finally, in the contemporary global

environment where peaceful influence and cultural diplomacy are increasingly important, soft power theory provided a relevant and timely framework. It allowed for a nuanced understanding of how moral and cultural education through proverbs contributed not only to individual character formation but also to national and international harmony and cooperation. This relevance affirmed the theory's suitability in analysing the interplay between indigenous cultural teaching and international diplomatic communication.

### **Methodology**

This study employed a mixed methods research design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding of the role of Proverbs 22:6 and Yoruba cultural proverbs as diplomatic tools in the upbringing of a child. The combination of these methods allowed for a more complete analysis by capturing measurable data through surveys and rich, contextual insights from interviews and focus groups. Such triangulation strengthens the validity and reliability of the findings, ensuring that the complex cultural and moral dimensions of the study are thoroughly explored. The population targeted for this research consisted of residents of Ondo State, Nigeria, where Yoruba culture and Christian religious teachings significantly influence child-rearing practices. Within this population, participants included parents, teachers, religious leaders, and cultural custodians who are the key stakeholders directly involved in or knowledgeable about the use of proverbs in public teaching and socialization.

A sample size of 300 respondents was selected using stratified random sampling to ensure diverse representation across demographic variables such as age, gender, occupation, and education level. From this larger group, 30 individuals were purposively chosen for qualitative data collection through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. This smaller group provided detailed narratives and deeper understanding of how these proverbs are interpreted and applied in everyday child upbringing. Data collection instruments included a structured questionnaire designed to quantify the frequency of proverb usage and the perceived moral and diplomatic impacts of these teachings. The questionnaire featured Likert-scale items that measured attitudes toward the effectiveness of Proverbs 22:6 and Yoruba proverbs in shaping children's behaviour and social values. For the qualitative aspect, a semi-structured interview guide facilitated conversations with participants, allowing for open-ended responses that explored cultural meanings, educational approaches, and the broader diplomatic implications of proverb use. Additionally, document analysis of relevant

cultural texts and teaching materials were conducted to contextualise and support the primary data.

Quantitative data gathered through the questionnaires were analysed using descriptive statistics to summarise participant demographics and the general trends in proverb usage, while inferential statistics examined relationships between participant characteristics and their perceptions of the proverbs' role in upbringing and diplomacy. Qualitative data from interviews and focus groups were transcribed and analysed thematically which enabled the identification of recurring themes, cultural values, and the nuanced ways proverbs function as moral and diplomatic tools. However, the study focused on selected communities within Ondo State as a case study because this region provided a rich cultural environment where Yoruba traditions and Christian religious teachings co-exist and interact closely. This setting offered an ideal context for examining how indigenous and Biblical proverbs combined to influence child socialisation and how these influences extend into public teaching and diplomatic communication. The choice of Ondo State is deliberate, given its cultural diversity, strong adherence to Yoruba customs, and significant Christian population, all of which are central to the research's scope. In summary, the mixed methods design, diverse and representative sample, varied data collection tools, and rigorous analysis procedures together ensured a thorough investigation of how Proverbs 22:6 and Yoruba proverbs served as effective diplomatic and educational instruments in the moral upbringing of children within a culturally rich Nigerian context.

### Tables of Data Presentation

**Table 1:** Frequency of use of Proverbs in Child Upbringing

**Research Objective 1:** To examine how Proverbs 22:6 and Yoruba proverbs are used as tools for moral and diplomatic teaching in the upbringing of a child.

Proverbs Used in Child Upbringing	Frequency (%)	Mean Score (Likert Scale 1–5)
Proverbs 22:6 (Biblical)	78%	4.3
Yoruba Cultural Proverbs	85%	4.5
Both Proverbs Together	60%	4.1

Rarely or Never Use Proverbs	5%	1.2
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**Note:** This table highlights the widespread use of both Proverbs 22:6 and Yoruba cultural proverbs in child upbringing. The higher mean scores indicate that participants strongly agreed on the importance of these proverbs as teaching tools. The data supports the study’s first objective by showing that proverbs are actively employed for moral and diplomatic socialisation.

**Table 2:** Perceived Impact of Proverbs on Moral Values and Diplomatic Skills

**Research Objective 2:** To analyse the impact of Proverbs 22:6 and Yoruba proverbs on the development of moral values and diplomatic communication skills in children.

Impact Areas	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean Score
Proverbs teach respect for others	65%	25%	7%	2%	1%	4.4
Proverbs promote peaceful conflict resolution	55%	30%	10%	3%	2%	4.1
Proverbs enhance communication skills	48%	35%	12%	4%	1%	4.0

**Note:** This table demonstrates the perceived influence of the proverbs on key moral and diplomatic competencies. Most respondents agreed that the proverbs encouraged respect, peaceful conflict resolution, and effective communication, affirming their roles in nurturing diplomatic skills from childhood, which aligns with the second research objective.

**Table 3:** Challenges and Limitations in Using Proverbs for Public Teaching

**Research Objective 3:** To identify challenges in using Proverbs 22:6 and Yoruba cultural proverbs as public teaching tools for child upbringing.

Challenges Identified	Frequency (%)	Mean Severity Score (1–5)
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Modernisation and Western Influence	70%	4.2
Decline in Cultural Transmission	65%	4.0
Misinterpretation of Proverbs	50%	3.6
Limited integration in Formal Education	60%	3.8

**Note:** The table reveals key challenges that affect the effective use of proverbs in moral and diplomatic education. Modernisation and declining cultural transmission are prominent barriers, which confirm the third objective's focus on understanding obstacles to proverb usage in contemporary child upbringing and public teaching.

### Discussion of Findings

#### **Research Objective 1: To examine how Proverbs 22:6 and Yoruba proverbs are used as tools for moral and diplomatic teaching in the upbringing of a child.**

Table 1 revealed that the use of proverbs in child upbringing is widespread and culturally significant among the participants. Specifically, 78% of respondents reported regular use of Proverbs 22:6, a Biblical passage emphasising early moral education, while 85% affirmed the use of Yoruba cultural proverbs in nurturing children. The relatively high mean scores (4.3 and 4.5 respectively on a 5-point Likert scale) underscored the strong agreement on the importance of these proverbs as effective teaching tools. Interestingly, 60% reported using both sets of proverbs together, indicating a fusion of indigenous and religious teachings that complement each other in moral socialisation. This finding supported existing literature that underscored the value of culturally rooted proverbs as carriers of wisdom, norms, and ethical guidelines in African societies (Okpeh, 2016; Adeoye, 2019). Proverbs, in this context, acted as compact moral lessons that shaped children's worldview and behaviour. The finding further confirmed that Proverbs 22:6 remains influential within Christian families, reinforcing early childhood moral guidance through religious values. Importantly, this combined use of indigenous and Biblical proverbs as moral guides also functions as a diplomatic tool at the interpersonal and community levels, by promoting shared values and collective identity. This reflected the study's conceptual framework linking cultural proverbs with soft power, using moral persuasion rather than force in socialising children and maintaining societal harmony (Nye, 2017).

**Research Objective 2: To analyse the impact of Proverbs 22:6 and Yoruba proverbs on the development of moral values and diplomatic communication skills in children.**

The data presented in Table 2 clearly showed that the proverbs are perceived as powerful instruments for instilling essential moral and diplomatic skills in children. A significant majority of respondents (90% combined strongly agreed and agreed) believed these proverbs taught respect for others, a foundational value for ethical interpersonal relations. This finding is consistent with studies that highlighted the role of proverbs in promoting social virtues such as respect, humility, and cooperation (Ajayi & Adeniran, 2021). Similarly, more than 85% of participants agreed that proverbs promote peaceful conflict resolution, a critical diplomatic skill necessary for mitigating disputes in both family and broader social settings. This supported the view that proverbs serve as non-violent, persuasive means to regulate behaviour and maintain social cohesion (Chukwu, 2020). The use of proverbs to encourage dialogue, patience, and understanding aligns with diplomatic principles that emphasised negotiation and mutual respect over confrontation.

Furthermore, about 83% of respondents affirmed that proverbs helped enhance communication skills. This suggested that the narrative and metaphorical nature of proverbs encourages children to think critically, articulate ideas clearly, and appreciate nuanced meanings; these have become skills essential for effective diplomacy and intercultural communication (Okunola & Oladipo, 2018). By teaching children how to interpret and use figurative language, proverbs prepared them to navigate complex social interactions thoughtfully. These findings provided empirical support to the theoretical argument that proverbs operate not only as moral edicts but as instruments of soft power that cultivate diplomatic aptitude from an early age. They bridged individual moral education with broader societal values that underpin peaceful coexistence and intercultural dialogue.

**Research Objective 3: To identify challenges in using Proverbs 22:6 and Yoruba cultural proverbs as public teaching tools for child upbringing.**

The analysis in Table 3 revealed significant challenges that threaten the continued effectiveness of proverbs as moral and diplomatic teaching tools. The majority of respondents (70%) identified modernisation and Western influence as major obstacles, with a high mean severity score of 4.2. This finding echoed concerns in recent scholarship about cultural

erosion and the marginalisation of indigenous knowledge systems in the face of globalisation and Westernisation (Adegbite, 2021; Ezeani & Onwuegbuna, 2023). Another critical challenge, cited by 65% of respondents, is the decline in cultural transmission from older to younger generations. This decline undermines the natural and traditional modes of passing wisdom, leading to loss of indigenous linguistic and ethical heritage. This issue is particularly pressing given the reliance on oral traditions in Yoruba culture (Babatunde, 2022). Respondents also identified mis-interpretation of proverbs as a problem (50%), which can lead to distorted moral lessons or confusion, especially when proverbs are applied outside their cultural or religious contexts. This aligned with critiques that warned against superficial or de-contextualised use of cultural symbols, which may weaken their intended impact (Obiajunwa, 2020). Finally, the challenge of limited integration of proverbs into formal education systems was noted by 60% of respondents. This gap limited the scope and consistency of teaching proverbs as public educational tools. Recent literature stressed the need for curriculum reforms that incorporate indigenous knowledge to foster cultural pride and moral development in schools (Iroanya & Agbo, 2019).

In summary, the findings strongly affirmed that Proverbs 22:6 and Yoruba cultural proverbs continued to serve as vital diplomatic and moral teaching tools in child upbringing. Their widespread use and perceived positive impact on moral and diplomatic skills underscored their significance. However, the challenges of modernisation, cultural transmission decline, misinterpretation, and educational gaps required urgent attention to sustain their relevance. The study's new insights into the diplomatic dimensions of proverbs opened fresh avenues for interdisciplinary research linking culture, education, and international relations.

### **Policy Recommendations for Implementation**

The following recommendations are the recommended policy areas for future implementation. These aligned with the research objectives of using Proverbs 22:6 and Yoruba cultural proverbs as diplomatic tools in child upbringing.

#### **1. Integration of Indigenous and Religious Proverbs into Educational Curriculum**

In line with the objective of promoting moral and diplomatic values through proverbs, policymakers should develop frameworks to formally incorporate both Biblical proverbs (such as Proverbs 22:6) and Yoruba cultural proverbs into the school curriculum. This policy would encourage the teaching of these proverbs as part of moral education and citizenship

courses, helping students understand and apply indigenous wisdom and religious teachings in their daily lives. By institutionalising this integration, education systems can nurture culturally grounded and ethically informed children who appreciate the value of diplomacy and peaceful conflict resolution from an early age.

## **2. Community-based Programmes to Revitalise Proverb Usage in Child Upbringing**

To enhance the use of proverbs as tools for public teachings in families and communities, policies should support community engagement programmes that train parents, elders, and religious leaders on effective methods of communicating proverbs for moral and diplomatic development. These initiatives could include workshops, story-telling, festivals, and media campaigns that emphasised the relevance of proverbs in contemporary child upbringing and social interaction. Such programmes would strengthen inter-generational transmission of cultural values and ensure that proverbs continue to serve as practical diplomatic tools for social harmony.

## **3. Promotion of Cultural Diplomacy through Proverbs in National and International Forums**

Recognising the diplomatic potential of proverbs, policymakers should establish cultural diplomacy initiatives that showcase Yoruba proverbs alongside religious teachings as symbols of Nigeria's rich cultural heritage in international relations. This could involve integrating proverbs into diplomatic training programmes, cultural exchanges, and public diplomacy efforts to improve intercultural communication and foster mutual respect between nations. Such policies would leverage indigenous wisdom and religious morality as soft power assets, enhancing Nigeria's image and influence on the global stage.

## **Conclusion**

This study has demonstrated the significant role that Proverbs 22:6 and Yoruba cultural proverbs played as diplomatic tools for public teaching in the upbringing of a child. The findings underscored that these proverbs are deeply embedded in both religious and indigenous moral education, effectively fostering core values such as respect, peaceful conflict resolution, and effective communication skills in children. By combining biblical teachings with Yoruba cultural wisdom, families and communities create a hybrid moral framework that promotes social cohesion and interpersonal diplomacy from an early age. This fusion highlighted how indigenous knowledge systems and religious doctrines can

coexist and complement each other in shaping ethical and diplomatic behaviour, contributing to the soft power that underpinned harmonious social relations. Despite their enduring relevance, the study also revealed challenges such as the impact of modernisation, the decline in cultural transmission, and limited integration into formal education systems, which threatened the sustainability of this valuable moral and diplomatic heritage. Addressing these challenges is critical to preserving the potency of proverbs as tools for moral guidance and diplomacy. Ultimately, the research opened new perspectives on the intersection between cultural proverbs, child upbringing, and international relations, suggesting that these traditional tools have potential applications beyond local settings, particularly in enhancing diplomatic communication and cultural diplomacy at larger scales.

While the study offered valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. First, the research primarily focused on selected Yoruba communities within Ondo city in Ondo State, Nigeria, and Christian families, which may limited the generalisability of the findings to other ethnic or religious groups within Nigeria or Africa at large. Secondly, the reliance on self-reported data through surveys and interviews may have introduced bias, as respondents could provide socially desirable answers regarding the use and impact of proverbs. Third, the study's scope was limited to qualitative and quantitative data from a specific geographical and cultural contexts, which may not fully captured the dynamics of proverb usage in urban or highly modernised settings where traditional practices might be less prevalent. Additionally, the study did not deeply explore the role of digital media and globalisation in transforming the transmission and interpretation of proverbs, which is a significant factor in contemporary cultural change. Finally, the mixed methods approach, while robust, faced constraints related to time and resources, limiting the sample size and depth of ethnographic observations.

Building on the findings and limitations identified in this study, several important directions for future research emerged. One critical area for further exploration is the comparative analysis of proverb usage in child upbringing across different ethnic and religious groups within Nigeria and beyond. Such studies would provide valuable insights into the diversity and commonalities in moral and diplomatic teachings embedded in various cultural and religious traditions, enriching our understanding of how indigenous knowledge systems operate in pluralistic societies. Another important avenue is the examination of how digital media and globalisation are transforming the transmission and interpretation of proverbs in both rural and urban contexts. As technological advances reshape communication patterns, it

is essential to understand how these changes affect the relevance, usage, and preservation of traditional proverbs in contemporary society. This would help identify strategies for adapting indigenous moral teachings to modern realities without losing their cultural significance.

Further research is also needed to investigate the integration of proverbs into formal education curricula. Empirical studies focusing on the development and assessment of pedagogical models that combined indigenous wisdom with religious teachings could inform educational policy and practice, thereby fostering a more holistic approach to moral and diplomatic education among children. Moreover, expanding the scope of inquiry to the role of proverbs and indigenous cultural wisdom in international diplomacy and intercultural communication presents a promising frontier. Such interdisciplinary research could illuminate how traditional forms of knowledge contribute to soft power and influence diplomatic engagements, offering fresh perspectives for international relations and cultural diplomacy. Lastly, longitudinal studies tracking the influence of proverbs on children's moral development and diplomatic skills over time would provide robust evidence of their educational impact. These studies could shed light on the long-term benefits and challenges of using proverbs as tools for character formation and social harmony. Together, these areas for further study hold the potential to deepen our appreciation of proverbs as living cultural resources that shaped not only individual upbringing but also broader social and diplomatic interactions in an increasingly interconnected world.

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