

FACEBOOK IN THE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH IN ZIMBABWE

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- The writing of this paper was motivated by the observation that was made about the twist in form, content and function that has taken place in 'modern' folklore that is shared through social media.
- The focus of the paper is on narratives, and idioms and proverbs that are circulated via facebook particularly by the youth in Zimbabwe.
- Forms of socialisation amongst the youth have taken a new dimension in terms of how the youth interact and how folklore was and is now used as means of socialisation, and thus this paper interrogates the effects that those new dimensions have on youth.



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- The paper also interrogates whether proverbs and narratives that are shared on facebook still serve the same function as they used to do in traditional Zimbabwean societies.
- Brunvald (2012) argues that complications arise when we consider the transmission of these narratives since nowadays the transmission occur via print, broadcast or electronic media as well as oral tradition.
- The paper then scrutinises the effects that these new forms of transmitting narratives and proverbs have on the youth.
- The contents of these proverbs and narratives seem to also have changed and that is also debated in this paper.

METHODS AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

- A total of forty students; twenty from the university of Zimbabwe and twenty from Midlands State University who are between the ages of twenty and thirty years were used as research participants through self administered questionnaires.
- The functionalist approach was used since focus is mainly on function although form and content are also part of the paper.

EMERGING FUNCTIONS OF FACEBOOK PROVERBS AND NARRATIVES

- The youth especially those that are between the ages of twenty and twenty-five were seen to be more interested in those proverbs and narratives that are about love.
- From the proverbs that they indicated that they share on facebook what emerged is that there is some kind of uncertainty that surrounds their lives regarding marriage in their lives.
- These are in the critical age of courtship and even in the past children slightly below this age would play moonlight dances where they would sing '*nyamayembongolo khth' omthandayo*' and this indicates that nothing has changed even amongst the youth of today as they still use proverbs and idioms in the age of courtship.



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- In the past boys would make remarks such as '*ayiqome ntombazana*' and the existence of proverbs such as '*ihlonipha lalapho engayikugana khona*'; '*umendo awuthunyelwa gundwane*'; and '*olungaziwayo aluthezwa*' indicated that the age of courtship was a critical one which determined one's fate in life.
- The proverbs that used to be there were mainly directed directly or indirectly to females.
- Today the proverbs that are shared on facebook are mainly directed to males (suitors) as this was indicated by the results that were obtained through the questionnaires.



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- These are proverbs that were given by female youths regarding relationships with their male counterparts:
 - *Boys are dogs, you just have to choose the domestic one and not the wild one.*
 - *A guy who tells that you are a flower in his garden does not seriously consider how many flowers are in the garden.*
 - *The course of true love has never been smooth.*
 - *Love is like wind, you cannot see it but you can feel it.*
 - *True love never dies.*
 - *Love is beautiful before things get twisted.*



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- From the above idioms it is clear that it is now girls who are concerned about their lives when it comes to relationships with men, yet in the past it used to be men and society as a whole that directs proverbs and idioms to young women.
- What is deduced from the idioms above is also that young women have now created their own space through social networks to show that they are not the ones who should be blamed for flaws that are encountered in marriages but it is men who are at the forefront in creating problems when it comes to marriage.
- These young women also conscientise one another through facebook that they should be careful of some of these cunning young men.
- It is also clear from the above idioms that young women still believe that one should always have someone to marry and that marriage is an irreversible contract as it used to be the case in traditional African societies.



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- Belief in Christianity also seems to be another common phenomenon amongst the youth.
- There are many new churches that have come into existence especially the Pentecostal ones and this also seems to have influence the narratives and proverbs that are shared by the youth.
- The following are some of the proverbs that were given by the youth which is evidence of their belief in Christianity:
 - Always believe in God for we can do nothing on our own.



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- Life is too short to live on regrets so live life to the fullest.
- God is great you can never underrate him.
- You should not bother yourself about tomorrow for God will provide.
- These idioms make one aware that the youth are aware of the existence of the almighty God. Their lives are guided by their belief in Christianity.
- The following excerpts from a narrative that was shared by the youth on facebook also show that the youth are God fearing people:



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Death is certain but the bible speaks about untimely death! Make a personal reflection about this...very interesting, read until the end... It is written in the bible (Galatians 6:7) “Be not deceived God is not mocked: for whatever a man sow, that he shall reap.” Here are some men and women who mocked God.

John Lennon (singer), some years before, during his interview with an American magazine, he said:

Christianity will end, it will end, it will disappear. I do not have to argue about that. I am certain. Jesus was ok, but his subjects were too simple, today we are more famous than him (1966).

Lennon after saying that the Beatles were more famous than Jesus Christ, was shot six times.



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- Tancredo Neves (President of Brazil), during the presidential campaign, he said if he got 500 000 votes from his party, not even god would remove him from presidency. Sure he got the votes, but he got sick a day before being made president, then he died.
- Cazuza (bi-sexual Brazilian composer, singer and poet), during a show in Canecion (Rio de Janeiro), while smoking his cigarette, he puffed out some smoke into the air and said “God that’s for you.” He died at the age of 32 of lung cancer in a horrible manner



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- The man who built the Titanic, after the construction of a Titanic, a reporter asked how safe the Titanic would be. With an ironic tone he said “Not even God can sink it.” The result I think you all know what happened to the Titanic.
- Marilyn Manroe (actress). She was visited by Billy Graham during a presentation preacher had to say, she said “I don’t need your Jesus.” A week later she was found dead in her apartment.
- Our very own Bhundu Boys sang a song mocking God calling him a drunkard and saying all sorts of things. Where are they now!!!



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- From the excerpts above it is clear that the youth fear God and are made to fear him even more.
- However whilst they are made to believe that God is ever loving they begin to wonder why God would then kill anyone who mocks or jokes about him and at the end of the day they are made to believe that God is loving but untouchable.
- Through proverbs and narratives shared on Facebook the youth are also conscientised that life is full of challenges and they encourage and prepare one another through these forms of folk art.
- The following were given by the participants:



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- *Life is too short to live on regrets.*
- *Follow excellence success will chase you.*
- *Life is the most difficult exam, many people fail because they try to copy others not realizing that everyone has a different question paper.*
- *You will never square a circle.*
- *A hard beginning means a good end.*
- *Problems and crises are part and parcel of our lives.*
- *Patience pays but delays.*



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- From the above it clear that the youth are aware of what is possible and impossible, what should worry them and what should not.
- One of the participants said:

There is hope for a better life which is being conveyed in folktales, idioms and proverbs. They also encourage people to struggle for a better life.
- Although the youth face some challenges in their lives it can be seen from these art forms that some hope is nurtured into them about their future.



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- Whilst the youth share these narratives and proverbs of facebook, they also showed that some of these convey some immoral messages:
 - *Idla lapho ebotshelwe khona* [It (an animal) eats where it is tied]
- This proverb justifies the action of stealing from where one is employed or has some form of attachment.
- Sentiments from the participants showed that they are aware that some of the proverbs that they share encourage immorality e.g:
 - *You are not a man until you have sex with a girlfriend.*

IMPLICATIONS OF CHANGE IN CONTENT

- The contents of traditional proverbs change whilst those proverbs still retain the same form and at times function ,e.g:
 - *Iairtime iwela abangela macellphone.*
 - *Indwangu idobhe icellphone isiwhatsapha lamalandline.*
 - *Indlela ibuzwa emasowe.*
 - *Chabenda chabenda mbambayira ayina panel beating.*
- These changes in content show that the youth are comfortable with talking about concepts that they are familiar with, that these forms of art cannot be kept in a frozen form and it also demonstrate creativity.

IMPLICATIONS OF CHANGE IN MODE OF TRANSMISSION

- After a proverb, idiom or narration is posted others can also post comments and thereby creating a platform for debate. In that way that question and answer session which was created after the narration of a folktale is still in existence.
- There was no platform for commenting on proverbs and idioms but today it is there.
- Those who are not subscribers of facebook are not part and parcel of the discourse.
- The language that is used is normally shorthand and this affects them in their academic work.
- New social identities are also created through facebook.



CONCLUSIONS

- These forms of art that are shared via facebook have even increased in function as compared to those traditional ones that were orally transmitted.