

A Conceptual Metaphorical Analysis of Swahili Proverbs with Reference to Chicken Metaphor

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Abstract

This is a metaphorical analysis of domestic animals in selected Swahili proverbs with a focus on chicken metaphor based on their source domains. The paper examines the socio-cultural and economic background that shapes the Swahili proverbs and their underlining meanings inherent in them. The paper reveals that the Swahili proverbs are used metaphorically as a repository of traditional wisdom of the Swahili people and a vehicle to articulate their worldview.

Keywords

Swahili, Proverbs, Chicken Metaphor, Conceptual Metaphor Theory

1.1 Introduction

Proverbs are a universal phenomenon (Omoniyi, 1987:1) and this universality makes it difficult to define what a proverb is. However, a close reading of paremiology (the study of proverbs) reveals that there are many definitions of a proverb as there is numerous proverbs in any community. For instance, Abraham (1968:119) views a proverb as “short, readymade sententious statements of common truth constituted from life experience and used in rhetorical or conversational situations of formal or informal events.” An expert in oral literature in Africa, Finnegan (1970:393) describes a proverb as “a saying in more or less fixed form marked by shortness, sense and salt and distinguished by popular truth tersely expressed in it”. Coyle (1991) describes a proverb as “... a short and pithy sentence forming a popular saying, and expressing some result of experience life in a keen, and lively fashion”. It is evident from these definitions that a proverb, as a genre of oral literature, has distinctive features. These include shortness, conciseness and wittiness as a phrase or a sentence; vehicle of expressing known universal truths about life in a particular community; carrier of societal frustrations, aspirations, experiences and hopes and it is deeply rooted and embedded in peoples historical, cultural and environmental heritage.

Several studies have defined the concept of proverb rather metaphorically. For instance, proverbs have been defined as “the products of the masses rather than of the classes” (Whiting, 1932), “the voice of the people” (Ikenga-Metuh, 1983), and as “guidelines for successful action and living” (Nwala, 1985). These terms ‘products’, ‘voice’ and ‘guidelines’ are metaphors used to portray the role of proverbs in the society.

African communities, the Swahili community included, emphasize the importance of proverbs as versatile vehicles of communication. Indeed, proverbs have been used to define a proverb in some communities. For example, among the Yoruba of Nigeria, ‘proverbs are the horses of speech’ and the Amharic of Ethiopia categorically state that, ‘a speech without a proverb is food without salt’. Among the Ashanti people of Ghana, they underscore the vitality of proverbs in the community

through the proverb, ‘without proverbs, the language would be but a skeleton without flesh, a body without a soul’. Likewise, the Igbo of Nigeria say ‘proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten’. From these descriptions, a proverb is a metaphor but this does not mean that a metaphor is always a proverb.

Eco (1985:251) defines metaphor as the “substitution of one element of language for another but by virtue of resemblance between their referents.” In metaphor, ONE thing stands for ANOTHER by comparison to evoke vivid and memorable messages. Metaphor is conceptual (Lakoff, 1997) as the reader or hearer associates ONE concept with ANOTHER. In essence therefore, a metaphor subjects ONE thing to the features of ANOTHER in a comparable manner.

The Swahili people, who are the focus of this paper, are a Bantu speaking group found in coastal region of Kenya. According to Whiteley (1969) the term ‘Swahili’ refers to the coastal people and their language. The term ‘Swahili’ was first used in the 14th century by an Arab historian, Ibn Batuta (Hurreiz, 1985:35). The word ‘Swahili’ is derived from a Arabic word ‘Sawahel’ with the root ‘Sahel’ meaning ‘coast’ and the prefix Ki- denoting the language (Mbaabu, 1996:28). Swahili are the people who occupy East African coastal strip from Mogadishu in the North to Comoros Islands in the South. Swahili people occupy the coastal strip and the coastal islands of Lamu, Siyu, Mombasa, Pemba, Comoros and Zanzibar. The Swahili people use Kiswahili as their language of communication but with different dialects like Kiamu, Kisiu, Kiunguja, Kimvita, Kipemba, Kivumba, Kimtangata among others which are mutually intelligible. The Swahili culture is found in dress, food, religion, language and oral literature. One of the most versatile forms of oral literature used to express Swahili culture is proverbs.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Various studies have been done on animal metaphors in copious languages and cultures of the world (Kleparski 2002, Olateju 2005, Rodriguez 2009, Estaji & Nakhavali 2011, Rashid et al 2012). However, to-date there is no study, known to the researcher, which has critically examined animal metaphors in Swahili proverbs. This study, therefore, aims at examining chicken metaphors, being part of animal metaphors, in selected Swahili proverbs using conceptual metaphor theory, to represent human beings in the society. The behavior of chicken as depicted in Swahili proverbs analyzed in this paper revolves around the way they eat, sleep, walk, run, care and their relationships.

1.3 Review of Related Literature

Schipper (1992) argues that African proverbs can be divided into two categories; clear, direct statement and proverbs in metaphorical form. This paper analyses animal metaphorical proverbs among the Swahili people of Kenya with specific reference to chicken metaphor. According to Lakoff (1989) proverbs are metaphoric in nature. This means one thing is understood in terms of the other. In this study, chicken metaphors in Swahili proverbs are analyzed metaphorically to understand the underlying societal meaning since animals are used symbolically to represent human beings.

Research has revealed that animal names have been used metaphorically to refer to people (Olateju, 2005). Domestic animals like dogs, goats and chicken have been used to refer to human characteristics and behavior because they have been close to humankind since time immemorial.

Olateju's study revealed that animal metaphors are interpreted based on culture and context of their usage. The sources of the animal metaphors are in the naming culture, Yoruba poetry and animal habits and behavior.

Moreno (2002:42) is of the view that 'proverbs are mentally economical since from one particular situation presented in them we can understand many other.' This economy of proverbs is best captured through use of metaphors. Among the most prominent metaphors exhibited in Swahili proverbs are the ones related to animals. This paper critically analyses chicken metaphor in selected Swahili proverbs to unravel human relationships in the community.

Rodriguez (2009) study on animal metaphors for women in English and Spanish revealed that animal metaphors in the two languages reinforced the stereotypes associated with the female gender. The study was a comparative study of English and Spanish figurative use of animal names as they relate to women.

Estaji & Nakhavali (2011) study revealed that Persian proverbs with chicken expressions show semantic derogation and imbalance against the female gender. One of the proverbs states the intelligence of 40 women is equal to a single black hen! This chicken proverb portrays women as stupid and dull. The metaphor of HEN represents STUPIDITY. Imran (2011) analyzed cognitive semantics of Malay proverbs related to the dog. The study revealed that there are various meanings of animal metaphors related to dog.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

This paper is guided by the principles within the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (henceforth CMT). Although CMT was developed and initially majorly used by scholars in cognitive linguistics, today it is used by researchers in other disciplines in humanities and social sciences.

Lakoff & Johnson (1980), the leading proponents of CMT, affirm that metaphors are essential to the structuring of human thought and language. Through use of language, metaphor is one of the figures of speech that directly connects and compares two unrelated things. CMT as a theoretical construct has received major modifications and developments since the seminal work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) *Metaphors We Live By*. Among other scholars who have contributed considerably to the development of CMT are Gibbs (1994) and Kövecses (2000, 2002, 2005).

Conceptual Metaphor Theory, according to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), postulates that concepts are systematically governed in terms of other concepts. Hence, metaphors are tools that connect two conceptual domains; the source domain (SD) and target domain (TD). This means in each metaphor, there are two mental representations. Conceptual metaphors map one conceptual domain source into another target domain as Lakoff and Johnson (1980:5) posits, "the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another". In verbal communication, this is what Chilton (1988) calls 'metaphormorphism' which means seeing one thing in terms of another (Obododimma, 1998:90).

Another proponent of metaphor analysis Holman (1985) came up with the concepts of "tenor" and "vehicle" in the understanding of metaphor. According to Holman (1985), the **tenor** is the idea being expressed or the subject of the comparison; while the **vehicle** is the image by which this idea is conveyed or the subject is communicated" (Holman, 1985). For example, in the proverb *Dua la*

kuku halimpati mwewe (The curse of the chicken does not bother the falcon), the vehicle is *kuku* (chicken) and *mwewe* (falcon) while the tenor is weak and powerful in the society respectively.

Chicken metaphors analysed in Swahili proverbs are used as a mirror to see the human traits and relationships in the Swahili community. Metaphors have the potential to hide message but at the same time emphasize the target domain. This is made possible through use of metaphor in a sentential proverb. Although one of the functions of proverbs is to hide the known to the untargeted audience, the message is communicated to the target audience. The message is hidden to the untargeted through metaphor but is reinforced to the targeted audience.

Metaphors use language in a figurative manner to speak about various aspects of human beings in their environment. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980:146) asserts, “since much of our social reality is understood in metaphorical terms, and since our conception of the physical world is partly metaphorical, metaphor plays a very significant role in determining what is real for us”. Indeed, metaphors are mapped from specific natural and human environments. Stressing the importance of metaphor in language and thought as far as human communication is concerned, Derrida (1978:8) notes that “there is nothing that does not open with metaphor and end by metaphor”. Metaphor controls human life through Swahili proverbs.

Based on CMT, this paper moves under the premise that Swahili proverbs represent HUMAN BEINGS as CHICKEN. Here, CHICKEN is taken as source domains for the target domain HUMAN BEINGS. In this paper, therefore, chicken are used as metaphors in Swahili proverbs as well as their traits as a representation of behavior exhibited by human beings in Swahili community.

1.5 Research Methodology

Data for this paper was collected from published Swahili proverbs reference sources namely *Kamusi ya Methali* by K.W. Wamitila (2001). A corpus of over 200 Swahili proverbs that have animal metaphors was used for this study. After I collected the Swahili proverbs with animals metaphors, I categorized them into two; domestic and wild animals. From the corpus of domestic animal metaphors, the researcher purposively sampled Swahili proverbs that have chicken metaphors. In this study, 27 Swahili proverbs that have chicken metaphors were analysed within the tenets of Conceptual Metaphor Theory.

Chicken is one of the many birds reared as domestic animals among the Swahili people for eggs, meat, beauty and prestige. It is highly valued due to its delicacy (meat, eggs) and crowing (the cock) for telling time. Because of its central role in economic and cultural life of the Swahili people, there are many proverbs with chicken metaphor exhibiting different meaning depending on the contextual applicability of specific proverb.

Since the study involves two languages; Swahili and English, translation was inevitable. The researcher is cognizance of the warning given by Schipper (1992:17) that, “... a number of the most captivating features of proverbs are barely translatable...” like “... assonance, alliteration, rhyme, rhythm and word play...”. This paper therefore adopted Normal Sentential Translation (NST) from source language (Swahili) to target language (English). This method of translation is advisable because the focus of the paper is the meaning of chicken metaphor embedded in each specific Swahili proverb.

1.6 Data Analysis and Interpretation

In this study, qualitative techniques basically textual analysis, are employed to show the chicken metaphors as used in Swahili proverbs. The interpretations presented in this paper are based on Swahili people's worldview and the contextual use, meaning and understanding of specific Swahili proverb. Further the metaphorical interpretations of the Swahili proverbs are within the socio-cultural and economic environment of the Swahili people.

Proverbs of any given community are closely related to their history, culture and environment. An understanding of triangulation of history, culture and environment is crucial to interpretation of Swahili proverbs. A number of Swahili proverbs are as a result of historical facts and happenings among the Swahili people. Some Swahili proverbs refer to historical characters that made a significant contribution to the existence and being of the Swahili community. Swahili proverbs refer to known and imaginary people in history. Some of the characters mentioned in the proverbs are a product of literary creativeness but they are also used metaphorically to represent human race. In the Swahili proverbs analyzed in this study, one sees reality and creativity of the Swahili people.

The study of chicken metaphor can be discussed and viewed within the African family setup of which Swahili people is an example. In this study, unless expressly indicated, a cock or roaster is a metaphor for male gender, a hen representing female gender and a chick figuratively represents a child.

Data analysis and interpretation of chicken metaphor in selected Swahili proverbs is as follows:

1. Kuku wa mwewe haachi kiwewe.

A hen who has encountered a kite lives in fear.

In the context of this Swahili proverb, a hen is a metaphor that represents a person who has faced a life threatening problem. He is always ready to face the challenge. Hence although one is worried and in fear, he/she is not a coward. A terrified person can be prepared for any danger or challenge in life.

Animal metaphors are used to express figuratively the parent-child relations. In some Swahili proverbs, this relationship includes protection, discipline and caring. This is aptly captured in Swahili proverbs like:

2. Kuku havunji yaile.

A hen does not break her own eggs.

The hen represents a caring mother in African communities, Swahili included. Mothers are supposed to take care of their children. A mother cannot be harmful to her children as she instills education and discipline. Mothers are cautious in the nurturing and disciplining of their children. It is not easy for a person to harm his/her people or friends. This proverb emphasizes on the aspects of caring and friendship as important virtues that a person should have.

In relation to parenting and disciplining of children, Swahili proverbs are rich in chicken metaphors. For example:

3. Teke la kuku halimumizi mwanawe.

A hen's kick does not hurt her chick.

A hen is metaphor representing a mother while chick is a source domain for the target domain child. Mother, as parent is portrayed as a strict disciplinarian and caring. If one disciplines the child, the child is not hurt but the child grows as a responsible and meticulous citizen. A parent who is a disciplinarian guides, corrects and teaches a child the expected values in the community. As Fasiku (2006:51) observes, 'proverbs are products of peculiar and particular experiences of people'. Swahili proverbs are viewed as truisms which are as a result of historical experiences, daily happenings and the environment. The Swahili woman is a strict disciplinarian who imparts discipline to her children at a tender age.

The hen is portrayed as caring, protective, defender and loving to the chicks. In Swahili community, the mother takes care of the children and offers discipline if need be.

4. Kuku jike hawiki penye jogoo.

A hen does not crow where there is a cock.

Hen, metaphorically, represents female gender and cock signifies male gender. This can be represented as follows:

Proverb	Source Domain	Conceptual Structure	Target Domain
Kuku jike hawiki penye jogoo.	Kuku jike Jogoo	weak, powerless, quite strong, powerful, authority	woman man

This is one of the proverbs that subjugate the status of women and adores masculinity in the society. However, it can be used to analyze gender roles in the society. A hen represents weakness while cock represents powerful. This proverb reveals unequal power and gender relations that are evident in many African communities, Swahili people included.

5. Yai haliatamii kuku.

The egg does not hatch a chicken.

The hen is a source domain representing target domain, mother. The hen is a portrayal of life-giver, knowledgeable and experienced person, while the egg represents young one, novice and defendant. The egg in essence depends on the chicken, therefore children depends on their parents for basic needs like clothing, food and shelter. If left alone without parental guidance, children may go astray.

6. Ukimpiga kuku wamtafuta mwenye kuku.

If you beat a chicken you are after the owner.

Chicken is a metaphor that represents property or people. One should respect other people's property or children. Mistreating someone's children or workers or misusing a person property is a way of inviting the wrath of the owner.

7. Ukimficha jogoo pakachani kuna wakati atawika.

If you hide a **cock** in the basket, one time he will crow.

Cock may represent a person who is evil pretending that the person is good, yet one day the person may reveal his/her true character. This calls for openness and transparency in the society.

8. Mgeni ni kuku mweupe.

A visitor is a white fowl.

White fowl is a metaphor that represents noticeability or visible. The behavior of a visitor easily distinguishes him/her from the rest. This proverb warns a person, in faraway place from home, not to misbehave because he/she can be easily conspicuous.

9. Kuku mgeni hakosi kamba mguuni.

A new fowl always has a string around the leg.

A visitor is easily identifiable or known, through physical features, walking or through his/her actions.

10. Jogoo hulua uta wangu u kulee!

The cock crows my bow is there!

The cock represents a person who has failed and looks for simple reasons for his failure. In essence the cock's failure to tame the kite, arguing that his bow and arrows are far away. The cock here is a person who is a failure in execution or execution of his duties blaming lack of appropriate tools. This further implies or shows act of cowardice and failure to plan leading to disasters where the chicks are taken away by the kite. This proverb further cautions people of blame-game for their failures in life.

11. Kichwa cha kuku hakistahili kilemba

The chicken's head does not require a turban.

Chicken's head represents a person who is given a bigger responsibility than his/her ability. It is always good to assign responsibilities to people according to their capabilities, experiences and qualifications. This proverb reveals that performance goes hand in hand with person's knowledge, skills and qualifications.

12. Jogoo la shamba haliwiki mjini.

The village cock does not crow in town

The village cock represents a person who is in a new environment. Change of environment leads to change of one's behavior. For instance, a very courageous person in one place may be a coward in a new environment.

13. Jogoo hatagi mayai.

A cock does not lay eggs.

A cock is a source domain for target domain, man. There are gender roles assigned to man in Swahili society. Biology plays a vital role in sex orientation but gender is assigned by the society expectations. The vital act of giving birth to young ones is reserved to women. Although a man does not give birth, he plays an important role in the reproduction process. Man and women have been assigned specific societal roles to play which are complimentary. This proverb compares well with *Jogoo hawezi kulea mwana* (A cock does not rear a chick).

Proverbs have a specific cultural orientation, significance and interpretation based on socio-cultural environment that makes the proverb. Swahili proverbs are products of socio-cultural and political experience of Swahili people over many years. The proverbs express human behavior through use of chicken metaphors to reveal human beings failures, strengths, weaknesses, hopes,

fears and aspirations. The chicken metaphors, 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.

14. Jogoo wawili hawawezi kusaidiana kukamata kidudu.

Two cocks cannot catch a small insect.

Two cocks represent leaders with competing interests. At another level this portrays lack of cooperation among leaders. Competition and lack of cooperation in solving societal problems leads to retardation in terms of development. This shows that supremacy wars, among leaders, have a negative effect on development projects which can assist the people.

15. Jogoo halali na kichwa chake shingoni.

A cock does not sleep with head buried in the neck.

Cock is a metaphor for a man, who is viewed as the protector and defender of the community in case of any invasion by the enemy. Man is portrayed as always prepared; awake all the time to defend the community. Leaders should be like the cock; ready to defend their people against any negative impact. The proverb exhorts preparedness in the Swahili community.

Swahili proverbs make abundant use of animal metaphors to convey specific message to the audience. Any interpretation of Swahili proverbs should take into account the historical and cultural context of the Swahili people. The animal metaphors are majorly drawn from the socio-cultural environment of the Swahili people. People use proverbs to increase the socio-cultural impact of the message they want to pass. Metaphorical Swahili proverbs have a more psychological effect in the transmission of cultural wisdom of the Swahili people to the audience than those without animal metaphors.

16. Kuku wa mkata hatagi, akitagaa haangui, akiangua hutwaliwa na mwewe.

The hen of a poor person does not lay eggs, if she lays eggs she does not hatch them, if she hatches the chicks are taken by the falcon.

The hen represents a feeble or a weak person who has no say in the community. The plans of a weak person may not succeed due to inequality and unfairness in human society. Social stratifications lead to inequality and marginalization. The powerful always control political and economic power in the society. Whatever a weak person does, he/she is at the mercy of those who wield power.

17. Kuku wa kidimu manyonyake si kasoro.

A hen with naturally ruffled feathers is not a defect.

Ruffled feathered hen represents REALITY. Every person has his/her own unique characteristics. Reality is represented in the world in various forms.

18. Kasuku hukariri asiyojua maana yake.

A parrot recites words he doesn't know their meanings.

A parrot in this case represents an IMITATOR; this is a person who mimics other people's actions and behavior in the society. It also portrays a person who utters words before taking a second thought about their repercussions. Parrot is a metaphor for careless, not thoughtful or an imitator.

19. Jembe la kuku mguu.

A chicken's jembe is its leg.

Chicken's hoe (jembe) metaphorically represents resources. One should use the available resources to perform specific tasks. In life, resources are scarce and should be used appropriately for one to achieve his/her objectives. One should use the resources at his/her disposal instead of being idle waiting for superior resources. This proverb lays a lot of emphasis on innovativeness of an individual.

20. Dua la kuku halimpati mwewe.

The curse of the chicken does not bother the falcon.

The chicken represents weak and powerless while the falcon represents powerful people in society. This proverb indicates that the powerful people in the society do not mind the welfare of the weak and less fortunate members. The powerful use the weak people mercilessly for their own gain not minding the weak, poor and helpless. In most cases, although the weak speak about their worries, agitate for equality, the powerful are less concerned. This Swahili proverb reveals unequal power relations in the society based on Marxist ideals and principles.

21. Jogoo halei mwana.

A cock does not rear a child.

The hen is supposed to nurse, and take care of the chick. The cock is portrayed as not caring. The role of rearing children in many African societies is left to the mother. These roles include cooking for children, bathing them, and washing their clothes.

Proverbs remains the effective tool for transmission of values, thoughts, culture and philosophy of life of people who are the owners of the proverbs concerned. Animal metaphors in Swahili proverbs perform aesthetic, entertainment, communicative and educative roles. In performing these functions, the animal metaphors express thoughts in a subtle way.

22. Kuku mwenye watoto halengwi jiwe.

A stone is not aimed at a hen with chicks.

A woman is respected in the society because of her reproductive and rearing role of children. She needs protection and respect not harm since she carries future generation. Women's reproductive and caring roles of young ones are crucial in the Swahili community. Any mistreatment of mother affects the nurturing and well beings of children.

23. Mwana wa kuku hafunzwi kuchakura.

A chick is not taught to peck.

There are some traits that a child acquires in the environment, through discovery, without being taught by anybody in the society. This shows that children are inquisitive and observant of their surroundings. They sometimes learn through imitation.

Nandwa & Bukenya (1983:100-101) observes that 'a proverb is a terse statement containing folk wisdom. A proverb is terse in the sense that it uses the fewest words possible in context'. Fergusson (1983) indicates that proverb's form is usually terse, figurative, and rich in metaphor and most often poetic. Most Swahili proverbs are succinct and metaphorically in nature. Understanding and interpretation of animal metaphors in Swahili proverbs depends on speakers and receivers ability to

decode the attributes or actions associated with the animal and transfer meaning attached to them to depict human beings. The Swahili people use proverbial chicken metaphors in their communication to generalize animal characteristics to human behavior. Chicken traits are used in proverbial metaphors to portray human characters, attitudes and even aspirations.

24. Kuku mgeni zawadi ya kunguru.

A new chicken is a gift to crow.

New chicken in this proverb represents a visitor, an apprentice, or an inexperienced person while the crow is a metaphor for challenges or danger. A visitor, a novice or an inexperienced person faces challenges as he/she tries to settle. In some instance, one may be discriminated, exploited or disadvantaged since he may not know where to start.

25. Kuku hawekwi shahidi wala hajui sheria.

A chicken does not know law nor can he be a witness.

Chicken, in this proverb, represents unknowledgeable person, who cannot be consulted on an issue. Consultations require people who are well-informed in specific areas

26. Kuku akiatamia hana matembezi.

A hatching hen does not promenade.

A hen is a metaphor for focused and caring mother. Further analysis of this proverb reveals that a hatching hen represents a young mother who has given birth compared to one that strolls which means young lady with a lot of vigor to do youthful things. Life changes as one grows.

27. Kuku akiacha wana ana mayai tumboni.

If a hen leaves her chicks she has eggs in the womb.

A hen represents a mother who has taken care of a child and is expecting another pregnancy. At another level, this proverb means a person who leaves one thing for another probably better. For instance, moving from one job to another with better paying and working conditions.

Discussing the role of proverbs in the African communities, Akporbaro & Emovon (1994:169) states that a proverb 'constitutes a powerful device for the shaping of moral consciousness, opinions and beliefs'. Proverbs are expected to espouse or extol morals in the community and also condemn or ridicule deviant behavior in the community. The Swahili proverbs analyzed in this study applaud expected virtues in the community like honesty, creativity, hardworking and truthfulness. Other proverbs condemn anti-social behavior in the community like dishonesty and craftiness.

1.7 Conclusion

Chicken plays an important role in construction of Swahili proverbs. From the metaphorical analysis of Swahili proverbs in reference to the chicken, it can be deduced that proverbs as a repository of community's socio-cultural values, can be used as vehicle to unravel the culture, morals, philosophy, education and religion of a people in aesthetic manner through contextual setting.

This study reveals that the chicken is mapped onto human beings to depict human behavior in Swahili community. It is evident that chicken metaphor is used in a positive manner to depict

human characteristics in Swahili community. The data reveals that chicken is associated with positive connotations in Swahili community like caring, protective, motherly, gentle, and peaceful. However, some negative characteristics of chicken can be identified in Swahili proverbs analyzed like cowardice, foolish, deceitful, laziness, stupidity, worthless, ignorant, easily manipulated, dull and promiscuous.

Proverbs as social discourse reflect the worldview of a people. They are used to unearth the beliefs that are held dear by the community. Chicken metaphors in Swahili proverbs are embedded in Swahili culture and environment. The metaphors are used in Swahili proverbs to convey societal meanings that portray human behavior.

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