Abstract
Considering the role of proverbs in the society, it is important to understand the hidden meanings that they convey. Nevertheless, so far, little attention has been paid on how women are discursively represented in the traditional societies of the Bukusu and Gusii and how such a construction can help in understanding the role of women in the society despite the observed social changes. This paper examines the main attributions that are attached to women in Bukusu and Gusii proverbs. Specifically, the paper reports on how women are represented in proverbs in these cultures; which aspects of their lives are highlighted and how such representations define the social fabric of the society. Data of the study comprised thirty-three (33) Bukusu and Gusii Proverbs related to the portrayal of women encapsulated in proverbs, ethnography was used to select the proverbs, the data analysis focused on the examination of the respective proverbs as a semiotic system of signification grounded within an African social-cultural approach to discourse analysis. The findings revealed that women are expected to promote morality, good conduct, fidelity, respect, productivity, nurturance and beauty which are pillars on which the family as a social unit is anchored as opposed to misconduct, and arguments/gossiping which are vices that may easily break the social fabric of a society. The paper thus concludes that women should embrace the indigenous values in word and deed for sustainable social growth.

Key Words: Indigenous knowledge systems, Proverbs, Bukusu, Gusii, Women

Introduction
Proverbs were and still are important in traditional societies because they are relevant in a number of ways. Unfortunately, despite proverbs pivotal role in helping societies identify and dignify cultures, their potential value for modern thought and life is still to be recognized. In Africa, proverbs are a vanishing heritage associated mostly with the rural world. They seem never to have found a home in the modern world, especially in the imported system of education because schools do not bring out the importance of proverbs in the lessons taught. Africa has proven to be a rich source of proverbs and sayings, encapsulating in a few words profound principles that bespeak wisdom. Proverbs are a storehouse of cultural beliefs which guide the young and the old, the ruler and the ruled to make appropriate choices in different situations (Jenjekwa, 2016). In line with this, Mapara (2009) asserts that as a pillar of Indigenous Knowledge Systems, proverbs are educative and their value lies in the fact that they are used by the elders to teach the experiences of the past that they should emulate or avoid.

Several societies have underscored the role of proverbs in sustaining the culture of the community. As such the Akan of Ghana have a proverb which says: se wo werefi wokurombene abentia a woyera wo advabo ase (Lit. that anyone who forgets the tune of his or her chief’s trumpet/horn gets lost at a durbar). This proverb underscores the fact that any group of people that loses its culture (indigenous system) does so at its own peril. Further, the UN has observed that the basic component of any country’s knowledge system is its indigenous knowledge (Jenjekwa, 2016). Consequently, Africa’s developing problems can be attributed to the neglect of African indigenous systems for the wholesale adoption of Western epistemologies to African developmental agendas (Mawere, 2010). In addition, before the
encounter with Western civilization, people lived sustainable lives thus there is a need to integrate the two cultures- indigenous and the Western – to tackle social problems. This is to say that indigenous knowledge can be used to solve Africa’s social problems. Further, several scholars have examined the position of women in traditional cultural practices (Hussein, 2004; Wang, 2012; Lee, 2015, Diabah & Amfo, 2015; Hagos, 2015; Ardakani, Aliakbari & Hajjari, 2015). Many of these studies have taken the feminist approach, but only a few have examined the utilization of proverbs in the expression of positive images of women. Further, little attention has been paid to the role of proverbs in creating, sustaining or promoting social growth in Bukusu and Gusii societies.

**Literature Review**

Indigenous knowledge on its part refers to what indigenous people know and do, and what they have known and done for generations (Melchias, 2001). Mapara (2009:140) defines indigenous knowledge systems as “a body of knowledge, or bodies of knowledge of the indigenous people of particular geographical areas that they have survived on for a very long time” which are linked to the communities which originate them. These indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) are “the sum facts that are known or learned from experience or acquired through observation and study and handed down from generation to generation” (Mwaura in Chirimuuta et al, 2012:2).

These knowledge systems cover all spheres of life of the people concerned. Thus, indigenous knowledge systems are “African ways of knowing” which define the African’s worldview and ways of knowing (Ngara, 2007:7). For this study, IKS refers to traditional wisdom. Unfortunately, these systems are fast eroding due to colonialism, commercialization, globalisation and modernisation, lack of efficient codification, breakdown of the traditional family structure and function (the institution that helps in the socialisation of tacit knowledge among other reasons. Despite this, Viriri and Mungwini (2010) observe that in Africa, proverbs were looked down upon by shutting them out of school curriculum and promotion of foreign ones, although most proverbs promoted moral uprightness, respect for authority and elders, cooperation, forgiveness and self-restraint. This study sought to understand the role of proverbs as a form of indigenous knowledge systems within the discourse on the representation of women and social sustainability in Bukusu and Gusii societies in Kenya.

Women constitute the majority (51%) of the population in Kenya according to the Statistics Kenya October 2001 Census and 80 % of who live in rural areas (FIDA, 2006). Women’s responsibilities include being mothers, wives and home administrators. They are also responsible for the education of their children, which resonates with Malcolm X’s pithy saying: ‘If you educate a woman, you educate a nation, if you educate a man, you educate an individual’. The crucial role that women play in their families is summed up in the words: ‘Behind every successful man there is a woman’. Kolawole (1997:63) cites a similar proverb in Zimbabwe: ‘Musha mukadzi’, which loosely translated means “Behind the successful family there is a woman”.

In order to understand what has or has not changed, it is crucial to accurately determine the challenges and opportunities in the lives of the Kenyan woman today. In this study, data exploring social change in women comes from two distinct sources; proverbs, which served as a source of information about “the traditional Kenyan woman” and the contemporary information obtained from the results of the 2014 Kenya Demographic Health Survey. The 2014 Kenya Demographic Health Survey (KDHS) reveal that the state of the Kenyan family in general, and the experience of being female in particular have undergone significant changes. For instance, there is a decline in parental involvement in spousal
selection and an increase in marital instability, resulting in an increase in women-headed households. There are also changes in the number of childbirths, decision to own property or get employment. Kenya has also witnessed the fastest decline in total fertility rates from 4.9 births per woman in 2003 to 3.9 births per woman in 2014, a one-child decline in the past 10 years. Such social changes have resulted in increased domestic violence due to the dissonance between the roles of women and men in the society. However, domestic violence is still on the increase (KDHS, 2014). Based on the results of this survey, this study posits that IKS comprised in proverbs could be adopted and adapted to mitigate the negative effects of Western civilisation and restore the values and expectations of an African family.

In most studies on women representation, women are usually given negative images. Conversely, in his study of the portrayal of women in respect to Tigrigna proverbs and proverbial expressions, Hagos (2015) argues that there also exists folk tales that praise females. This indicates that there are some attempts to illustrate women positively. The problem, however, is that women are portrayed positively in very few cases. And the positive images of women revolve only around conceiving, rearing children, taking care of spouses who play major roles in social activities, and the like. The following Tigrigna proverbs depict wisdom of women. *Blhat kem sebeyti girma kem leyti* (Wisdom is to a woman as “girma” is to a night). *Sebeyti zbeleto aykewnin sebeyti zbelotoke aykern* (What a woman says never listened but happened). These proverbs indicated that women can serve as an advisor to their husbands. There are also common beliefs that even kings and famous warriors get advice from their wives whenever they face critical problems (Hagos, 2015). Similarly, Proverb number 25 and 26 strengthen the extraordinary importance of Women to their husbands.

According to Hagos (2015), “Blhat” (wisdom) is to a woman as “girma” is to a night. “Blhat” refers to the wisest idea forwarded to solve a certain problem. Therefore, the proverb alludes that the advice and recommendations gained from women are always noble and desirable. The proverb which says “What a woman says never listened but happened also shows the insightful and wisest nature of women. The proverb shows that despite its importance and nobleness, what women say is never listened to. This proverb further illustrated the society's prejudice against women's thought and practices (Hagos, 2015).

A study by Ardakani, Aliakbari and Hajjari (2015) on the portrayal of women in Persian proverbs established that there are proverbs which exalt the position of women in the society and calls upon men to respect them. For instance, there is a proverb that says: “never beat a woman even with a flower stick” (Ardakani, Aliakbari & Hajjari, 2015). Regarding loyalty to one’s wife, there is proverb which says: “To kiss one’s own wife is to bark up the wrong tree” (Ardakani, Aliakbari & Hajjari, 2015). In the above examples about beating or respecting a woman, the first proverb has a moral lesson whereas the second indicates the human desire for power.

According to Davis (2001.36) “marriage and raising a family is the goal for which girls are prepared almost since birth”. Differently put, for Davis the girl is often perceived as a responsible person from her early childhood. The way she is brought up qualifies her to maintain the role of her mother. She has to be restricted to the domestic sphere, to be a good wife and avoid some flaws. This is illustrated in the Moroccan proverb: *El-mRa hiya afel elbi:t* (A woman is the key of her house). With reference to the indigenous knowledge systems, a woman is totally entrusted with the wellbeing of her family. Without her, the
family may not hold. Such a proverb underscores the crucial role women play in bringing up and sustaining a family. This is the same import this study sought to demonstrate from the perspective of the Bukusu and Gusii proverbs.

Hussein (2004) investigated the representation of women in Oromo folk-proverbs and folk-religion and analysed the position of women in the traditional Oromo cultural practices. It is observed that despite all the barriers of patriarchal power, Oromo women had an influential position in the past although this has now declined following the decline in the people’s indigenous cultural practices. Oromo proverbs about womanhood were categorized into cultural stereotypes. Although the majority of the sample proverbs were basically disparaging, the semantics were shown to depend to a large extent on the complex whole of their context of use.

The African cosmology provided for ways of how people were supposed to behave in the society. This cosmology is portrayed in the proverbs which abound in Bukusu and Gusii societies. Throwing away our IKS, we seem to have broken down the social fabric of the society and sadly caught up in a vicious cycle of family feuds, domestic violence, divorce, prostitution among other social evils. These problems were minimal in traditional African society because the informal education system inculcated the right values to an individual from childhood to adulthood. The argument in this paper is that the Bukusu and Gusii proverbs have vast potential in possibly preventing such social evils and also in maintaining good social relations in the society. This is in agreement with Mawere (2010) who argues that IKS hold the key for Africa’s future by nurturing a morally correct and virtuous society. Moreso, Gwavaranda (2011) observes that some proverbs are used to prevent and mitigate the effects of HIV/AIDS through promoting morally responsible citizens. Based on these views, this paper argues that the Bukusu and Gusii IKS encapsulated in proverbs can be harnessed to inculcate positive moral and family values in women towards enhancing social growth.

**Theoretical Framework**

This research is guided by the social-cultural approach to discourse analysis. This theory is relevant to this study because it relates to the aspects of how language, culture and indigenous knowledge systems interrelate in conceptualizing reality. The social-cultural analysis approach of discourse analysis regards discourse as interactional activities and emphasizes the social function of language (Brown & Yule, 1983). According to Brown and Yule (1983), discourse refers to language in use, as a process which is socially situated. The social-cultural approach to discourse analysis not only analyses the word and sentence expression form and meaning but also analyzes all kinds of social-cultural factors related to discourse. This method insists that the speaker as an individual and one entity of a society not only want to transmit information or expresses thoughts but also attempts to engage in certain social activities in different social situations and social institutions. Most discourse analysis concentrates on form, meaning, interaction and cognition, while social-cultural analysis emphasizes the function of context besides what is mentioned above. Since that language interaction involves all sorts of social-cultural contexts, we cannot fix the meaning of language element in terms of its place in the whole sentence. We should also take the context, in which the discourse is produced, into consideration. On the different levels of the
discourse, we can see that the social features of the participants play an important role in the context, such as gender, classes, ethnics, age, social status and so on.

The relationship between discourse and context is a dialectical one. Discourse is not only in and under the effect of context, but also influences, establishes or transforms context. Social-cultural analysis regards discourse as interactional activities and emphasizes the social function of language. This method cannot only analyze word and sentence expression form and meaning, but also analyzes all kinds of social-cultural factors related to discourse. The speaker, as an individual and one entity of a society, not only wants to transmit information or express thoughts but also attempts to engage in certain social activities in different social situations and social institutions.

Language and culture are intertwined and are not separable (Abdollahi-Guilani, 2012; Okon & Ansa, 2012). Proverbs from the folk are ‘the mirror of a culture’ (Ennaji, 2008, p. 168), as they can reflect the customs, traditions, values, opinions and beliefs of a particular society (Lee, 2015). They emanate from people’s experiences, mentality and ways of thinking at a certain point in time. The rich linguistic data found in proverbs enables us to study the cultural beliefs and social values of a society, including its attitudes towards the two genders; men and women. The present study focuses on the women’s “image” created by highlighting positive aspects or strengths of women as seen in proverbs. By comparing proverbs of the two cultures, the study brings to light similarities in the representation of women as pillars and catalysts of social growth as depicted in Bukusu and Gusii proverbs.

The cultural concepts and norms of the language are imparted to children during their learning of a language. Some proverbs have been passed on from generation to generation for hundreds or perhaps thousands of years. Language is used to produce and reproduce cultural experiences. As a social and cultural phenomenon, it is used to communicate about every aspect of cultural experience in a society. This means that language expresses, embodies and symbolizes cultural reality. Nothing defines the position of women as clearly as its language. This language, in turn, encapsulates a society’s thoughts, beliefs and values. Proverbs are part of people’s popular culture which includes language. It is thus important to know how these proverbs function and how they are structured to both convey and maintain certain cultural values. Proverbs, in their concise forms, provide us with rich linguistic data to examine the cultural beliefs and social values of a society. In general, a proverb becomes popular if the social experience depicted in the saying corresponds with social expectations (Lee, 2015).

Through proverbs, this study looks into the socio-cultural perspective of the Bukusu and Gusii societies. The research questions in this study are: what is the nature of proverbs as indigenous knowledge systems, what is the relationship between proverbs and social sustainability and how are the proverbs perceived in the discourse on the representation of women?

**Methodology**

The proverbs in this paper were collected from fieldwork among the native Bukusu in the northern and central parts of Bungoma County and the AbaGusii in Kisii and Nyamira Counties. The Bukusu are one of the seventeen sub-nations, or more, that comprise the Baluyia cluster of the Bantu groups of the East African region (Wasike, 2013). The other Baluyia sub-tribes are Baragoli, Batiriki, Bakabaras, Batachoni, Banyore, Bakhayo,
Bamarachi, Banyala, Basamia, Babesukha, Babedakho, Bakisa, Barechea, Batsotso, Bawanga, and Bamarama. Bukusu inhabit parts of Bungoma District in Western Kenya and parts of Trans-Nzoia District of Rift Valley Province. The Abagusii are a Bantu-speaking people numbering close to 1.9 million and they are the sixth most populous community in Kenya. They are settled in the fertile highlands of Kisii, Guucha and Nyamira Districts of Nyanza Province. Nilotic-speaking peoples i.e. Luo, Kipsigis and Maasai surround them.

The research made use of informal interviews of randomly chosen five (5) respondents between ages 50-75 years as sources of data. The respondents were both male and female. An audio-recording of the interviews was done and a total of one hundred and fifty (150) proverbs were collected. However, according to the themes of the study, only thirty-three (33) proverbs were purposively sampled for analysis. Published literature on indigenous knowledge systems was also analysed as a valuable source of secondary data on indigenous knowledge systems. This study adopted a qualitative research design. Proverbs were categorized according to their content. The meaning of each proverb was discussed with reference to the social and cultural factors that influenced its production, adopting the subject matter method of classification to describe the representation of women in Bukusu and Gusii cultures. In the analysis of the data, some of the proverbs that look alike are discussed together. A point that was taken into consideration is that meaning is multi-faceted and proverbs may assume different interpretations based on the context in use. Based on this, the researchers analysed both direct proverbs that talk about women and the indirect reference embedded in the proverbs which do not explicitly refer to women. The focus of the analysis was the discursive meaning underlying the proverbs. Moreover, the proverbs were replayed to the respondents to corroborate the meaning.

We classified our data according to various themes that we found relevant to shed light on the social status of women in Bukusu and Gusii societies. We started from the home, the theme that defines women according to the domestic sphere. Choosing women and the domestic sphere as the first theme stresses the idea that the family is the core of the larger society. The sub-themes in the domestic sphere included aspects of marriage, the conduct of women, childbearing, nurturance and respect. The other following themes are classified according to the themes of women and beauty, fidelity, and productivity in the society.

Findings and Discussion
The findings of this study are presented and discussed along thematic lines of Bukusu and Gusii proverbs. As IKS, proverbs are analysed as vehicles of nurturing social values in the society and the use of proverbs to sustain societal growth. It is observed that indigenous knowledge systems do not condone bad behaviour and "bad families".

Introduction to the Domestic Sphere
Almost every aspect of women’s lives is depicted in Bukusu and Gusii proverbial lore. There are proverbs representing the traditional cultural expectations of women concerning their behaviours and familial roles. It seems that women were traditionally subject to society’s close scrutiny and were expected to behave according to the norms and social values presented in proverbs. This is illustrated in the sections that follow.
Women's Conduct

The following proverbs underscore the behaviour of women and girls in the Bukusu and Gusii societies.

1. *Embwa ebukulanga khuchochomala khwa mawe*. Bukusu Proverb
   (A puppy/dog squats like its mother) –Bukusu
2. *Nyang’era ndotungi ko n’emori yaye ndotungi* ( The way a mother is so shall be the daughter) Gusii
3. *Omokungu nyagetiara, moe boremo bwa mbororwa, akorema obwata omotwe* ( a woman with bad manners , give her a bad portion of land that will trouble her)- Gusii
4. *Omukungu omobe nsagasaga ekobuga buna maemba a nkongo*. (An ill-behaved woman is as noisy as a weevil-infested millet being rubbed together) –Gusii

The use of the words, “mother” and “daughter” reveal that the daughter is the reflection of the mother. Therefore, what the mother says or does is eventually mirrored in the daughter. Traditionally, women were expected to guide and bring up their daughters to be responsible women in the society. Bad behaviour was never tolerated in the society. A socially deviant mother is likened to the image of a dog. As such dogs are perceived to be inherently promiscuous. In a similar way, the image of weevils negatively portrays women bad-mannered women as a nuisance in the society. Such women are looked down upon in the society. The import of such proverbs was to caution mothers to take good care of their children. Specifically, it was the prerogative of the mother to ensure that her children, both girls and boys are raised properly. Unfortunately, this seems not to be the case in the contemporary society where women have relegated their roles to housekeepers because of formal employment. As a result, the society is experiencing moral decadence among the youth.

Women and Nurturance

5. *Ninde busie mayi alafuka endie*. (I shall wait till morning for mother to cook food for me to eat) –Bukusu. *(ninde* is a Bukusu word that takes the form of a lexical noun to mean “wait for me” or lexical verb to mean “I will/shall wait”. This study adopts the later translation.
6. *Ere namage tiyana kunora, n’ena magena ekonora* (The one with young ones never fattens up; it is the one laying eggs that fattens)-Gusii
7. *Nyoni e’na mage teri konora, n’ena magena ekonora* (A bird with ‘children’ never grows fat)-Gusii
8. *Baba n’omuya okomanya ka nomire* (mother is good for she knows when am hungry) -Gusii
9. *Baba n’omuya ondereire kwaa, na magega a boronge, na ngobo chi’marera* (mother is good she has taken care of me) - Gusii

The linguistic use of words such as "mother", "food", "cooking", "hunger", "care" socially reflect the activities of mothers in the family. These social activities represent the cultural view of women as caretakers of families. Women were traditionally expected to nurture their offspring. Mothers were also caring and loving. A woman who was unable to carry out this role could not earn any respect in the society. As such cases of malnourished children were
unheard of unlike what is happening in the present day. As shown in the above proverbs, the
key phrase to describe a good homemaker or caretaker is "cooking, fatten, taking care". For
instance, in examples 4 and 9, it is noted that only a good mother takes care of her children.
These proverbs, therefore, highlight certain ideals of femininity – nurturance. Within the
Bukusu and Gusii socio-cultural context, these attributes are what makes a woman a good
homemaker or caretaker.

Women and Generosity
10. *Sio omwimani osilia nali mwibo* (You can take advantage of a mean woman and eat her
portion when she is nursing a baby) –Bukusu
11. *Nisio okisa omusecha wowo olisilia ne chimbeba* (Whatever you hide away from your
husband you will share with rats) - Bukusu
12. *Ekiomogoko, no mwana ogatoere* (If you need to eat from a selfish woman, wait until she
gives birth) –Gusii

Selfishness is expressed in the words *omwimani* and *omogoko* from the LuBukusu and
EkeGusii languages respectively. Consequently, a woman nursing a baby is helpless and
requires assistance from other family members. If a woman is selfish, all that is hers will be
used by the family members since she won’t be in control at all. Rats (*chimbeba in Lubukusu*)
are destructive rodents which slowly and secretly eat away what is hidden. Socially, honesty
and generosity and sharing are virtues that were valued in the society. A woman who is
selfish is socially and culturally despised in the society. This was partly attributed to the fact
that since the men were the breadwinners, wives were expected to share all that the husband
had earned. Selfishness was a vice that could attract penalties, such as being sent away by the
husband. These proverbs thus represent women as socially tasked with the virtue of
generosity. These proverbs thus cautioned men against being lazy and at the same time
encouraged women to be generous. Due to these, there were no cases of vagabond children
because a mother could share her food with children not necessarily hers.

Women and Fidelity
13. *Kumwikale kwa bene, kumwikule kukwoo.* (The door that is closed is not yours but the
one which is open) -Bukusu
14. *Ekhafu yabene okhama nololelela musilibwa.* (You milk someone’s cow while watching
the gate) –Bukusu
15. *Enjofu eyebwayiayia siekhusia musanga* (an elephant which engages in risk behaviours
will not grow tusks). –Bukusu
16. *Abakungu abaya nyakomogania mbari getaa ki’amarura amasangi nguragura.* (Good
women do not speak foul words, neither are they found in adultery).-Gusii

Proverb 13 is usually used to admonish newly circumcised men before they come out of
seclusion. The social import of the proverb is that a Bukusu man should behave as one. However, the linguistic expression of a closed door (*kumwikale in Lubukusu*) has a deeper
meaning of something that is free or available for use by anybody. Consequently, the vice
versa is true in the use of an open door (*kumwikale in Lubukusu*). A similar meaning is
reflected in the use of the expression *enjofu eyebwayiayia* in proverb 15 in Lubukusu and *amasangi* in Gusii which whose linguistic import translates into a woman who wanders about aimlessly and engages in risky behaviours never brings up a family). Further, the import of availability in proverb 13 has to do with sexual undertones. Traditionally, women were expected to observe fidelity. They were to preserve their honour and the honour of the family. Specifically, with reference to proverb 12 and 13, married women were not expected to commit adultery.

Traditionally, proverb 14 presents general advice to men to take care of the cows which do not belong to them as the owner would come for them any time. However, the linguistic and discursive import of the proverb is "the owner of the cattle" who in this case is the wife/girls. A Bukusu wife usually claims to have a wife when he has paid full dowry in form of cows. Based on this, contextually, therefore, men are warned against engaging in illicit sex with a woman who is not his wife. This is because girls are the ones who bring cows to their father. As such men are warned against indulging sexually with married women who don’t belong to them. If such a thing happened, the man would pay a very heavy prize which was in most cases very punitive.

The implication thus in proverb 14 is that women, especially, the married should observe fidelity. Generally, women were also expected to observe verbal hygiene as illustrated in proverb 16. Since the women were entrusted with the upbringing of the children, such values ensured that children do not copy undesirable behaviours from their mothers. This is in contrast with what happens in the society today where many women engage adultery and even use disrespectful words in public space. As a consequence, the moral fabric of the society is wanting.

The Importance of Women as Life Givers
The following proverbs, 17-22, underscore the importance of women as givers of life in the Bukusu and Gusii societies.

17. *Wandala yesi aliesilongo* (Be proud of what is yours even if it is the only one) Bukusu
18. *Sisa siambanga owasaala* (Those who have given birth are the only ones who have sympathy) Bukusu
19. *Endubi yomuleme ekhila owafwa* (The basket of a lame person is better than a person who is dead)-Bukusu
20. *Otawati omwabo, obwata moraa mumwo, oyobwate oyomwabo obatwa koboko, ocha kaa* (He who does not have a sibling, if injured will use a walking stick, but he who has a sibling, will be supported back home)-Gusii
21. *Basacha bagira bakungu ng’a nda chiagira bana.* (Men reject women like wombs of barren women)- Gusii
22. *Koibora nkuya, gwakora mokungu monyaka ting’ana* (Giving birth is good; it earns a disregarded woman respect)-Gusii

Proverb 17 traditionally means that even if you have one cattle, you take it to the salt-lick. Given the import of the word cattle in Bukusu society, contextually, the proverb is used to remind people, especially women that having one child is better than nothing at all. Women
are thus encouraged to be proud of the children they have, even if it is the only child (wandala in Lubukusu). This aspect is corroborated with the attitude in 19 which warns women against looking down on their children who are physically challenged (umeleme in Lubukusu). This is because such children are valued (as expressed in the use of a basket: endubi in Lubukusu which represents provision) because they are better than the one who is dead. The discursive import of the proverb lies in the imagery being used: basket. Consequently, such a proverb is used in situations when a woman is barren to show that you better have a child even if it is lame than none at all. This is also indicated in proverb 21 (a woman who has never given birth is always rejected by men). In a similar way, in proverb 18, sympathy (sisa in Lubukusu) is the only virtue found in women because of motherly instincts. A woman who has never given birth does not know how it feels like to give birth. The linguistic import is the focus on "birth"; which appears synonymous with a woman. Proverb 21 and 22 underscore the value of children in the society and as such women are praised for giving life. This is illustrated in the use of words such as (omwabo, oyomwabo, koibura in Gusii). The general representation of women as expressed in these proverbs is that of life givers.

Women and Beauty

Women are generally judged by their appearance. Beauty in the cultures of Bukusu and Gusii is measured not by appearance but by productivity.

23. Ekhabi ekhila Lukondo (Luck is better than beauty) –Bukusu
24. Notaba kieni, obe negesio, ogosiaboria ogotema (Luck is better than beauty) –Gusii
25. Bulayi bwobukhana bukosia ekhafu (A girl’s beauty may steal a cow) - Bukusu
26. Omiseke omuya omonyene eng’ombe namoroche (A good girl is eyed by the owner of cattle) - Gusii
27. Tosemeria moka-momura otaramorora (Do not expect much from a daughter-in-law whom you have not seen and interacted with) –Gusii
28. Totogia moiseke kieni, motogie mwana (do not praise a girl’s beauty praise her for bearing children)
29. Okhalola mawe nasilimukhana aloma ali rarawe katibia chikhafu (A person who never saw the mother at the height of her beauty may say the father wasted his dowry)-Bukusu

The proverbs 23-29 show that beauty is one of the positive qualities that abound in Bukusu and Gusii proverbs. In these two cultures, though beauty (lukondo and ekieni in Lubukusu and Gusii respectively) is a virtue, it is not the only measure of a good wife, character and good wishes (ekhabi and egesio in Lubukusu and Gusii respectively) also matters. As such women and girls are expected to maintain and reflect both beauty and good manners. Such good women will always find favour in the society as they will gain respect socially and culturally, they will attract prizes; cattle; ekhafu (Lubukusu/eng’ombe (Gusii). In proverb 29, men are cautioned against disrespecting their wives because of the declining beauty which is as a result of childbearing. Men are expected to appreciate their wives despite reduced beauty. The mother-in-law's love or affection, particularly towards her daughter-in-law was put in check by the norms of the society. Using proverb 27, mothers-in-law are also warned against encouraging their sons to only search for physically beautiful women who lack character. This paper argues that in contemporary society, women value beauty more than
character. In part, this could be a contributing factor to the changed women's lifestyle which portrays and exalts beauty at the expense of good morals. For instance, women shy away from giving birth because it is believed that it would affect their body shape. This is partly why the 2014 KDHS indicates low birth rates in women. The survey also attributed the lack of children to domestic violence in families. Based on this, this paper contends that if women could nurture both beauty and character, social evils such as wife battering could reduce.

Women and Marriage
30. *Nisio umukhasi afuna sosilia mumulembe tawe*. (What a woman has earned, you will not eat it in peace) –Bukusu
31. *Omwibo satila muningilo tawe* (A woman who has just given birth should not touch the cooking pot) –Bukusu
32. *Omukungu somiasomia, ngaya akomanya bwarugeirwe* (A woman who wanders about will not know where food is prepared) –Gusii
33. *Takona kondamera omosacha, bakungu, nere riito (esiro) rire (ere) nyomba*. (Do not despise my husband; he is the pillar in our house) –Gusii

The semantic import proverb 30 is to caution men not to rely on what the woman produces. This is because the man was the head of the family and was therefore expected to provide for it in all ways. This was the mantle of a man. However, in situations when a man overlooked this duty, his position was then relegated to that of a beggar and his position as the head of the family would definitely disappear. In light of the 2014 KDHS, it was revealed that because of formal employment, female-headed homesteads have increased and as a result, men have lost their traditional position of heading families.

A similar meaning is expressed in the Gusii proverb 33 which underscores the importance of men as breadwinners of the family and thus should be respected. In proverb 32, women are expected to nurture their families by ensuring that they manage what their husbands have brought home. In Proverb 31, a woman who has just given birth is considered to be ritually impure. Therefore she cannot cook for the husband until she is cleansed. The socio-cultural import is on cooking and doing it after giving birth conceptualizes women to be unclean. Hence the sanctioning of polygamy in order to have other household chores including taking care of the husband and children are taken care of. In proverbs 30-33, women are represented as home managers and without such provisions, no family can stand the test of time. On the other hand, men are presented as providers (*riito*) of the families and without such provisions, the family will collapse.

Conclusion
This comparative study brings to light the similarities seen in the representation of proverbs from the two cultures. This study has revealed that Bukusu and Gusii proverbs promote values such as morality, good conduct, fidelity, respect, productivity, nurturance and beauty in the society. These are the very values on which the family as an institution is grounded. More so, the proverbs also indicated that vices such as family misconduct, and arguments/gossiping misbehaviour were not condoned in the society. It is possible to come to the conclusion that despite the cultural differences and the geographical distance, proverbs in these two languages create an overwhelmingly positive impression about values in women with regard to the social growth of the society. The study, therefore, recommends that all people embrace the indigenous values in word and deed for sustainable social growth.
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