



Strategies for Building a Modern African Identity Through the Traditional Philosophy of Swahili Proverbs

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Abstract

This study examines the construction of modern identity with reference to the foundations of traditional philosophy in Swahili literature. The study's aim is to understand how modern identity is formed by combining personal understanding, social cohesion and cultural values embedded in Swahili proverbs and sayings. The research used library-based methods, including reading literary texts, novels, oral traditions, historical documents and scholarly sources related to upbringing and social solidarity. African philosophical theory was applied in the analysis to understand the role of social solidarity, respect for elders and human-community relations as a basis for forming stable identity. The findings show that modern identity benefits from integrating traditional values and solidarity with the challenges of modern life. When individuals combine personal awareness with traditional solidarity, they construct a modern identity that includes wisdom, social cohesion and respect for cultural heritage. Swahili proverbs and sayings provide ethical guidance that helps sustain social cohesion and individual stability in modern contexts. The article recommends that Swahili literary education and youth socialization adopt strategies that integrate traditional values with contemporary needs. This approach will help young people form wise identities, strengthen social cohesion and maintain stable identities that contribute to social and technological development without losing cultural roots.

Keywords: Strategies, Building, Modern Identity, Traditional Philosophy, Proverbs, African Philosophy Theory

1.0 Introduction

This study investigates the construction of modern identity with reference to the foundations of traditional philosophy in Swahili literature. Modern identity is a concept that relates to an individual's personal, social and political identity in a contemporary world of rapid social, political and technological change. Modern identity is a flow of understanding, feelings and experiences that build who a person is, how they see their place in society and how they relate to others (Adamo, 2015). In this context, a person needs self-knowledge, an understanding

of their personal and communal history and constructive relationships with others. Modern identity relates to autonomy in decision-making, self-expression and intellectual creativity, while the person locates themselves within modern perspectives without losing their origins. The formation of this identity involves a combination of early upbringing, education, technological skills and social values that enable a person to identify firmly (Resane, 2023). Thus, modern identity is the outcome of an ongoing process of self-construction, self-expression and relating to society and the surrounding environment.

Traditional identity is a collection of values, customs, practices, language, beliefs and history that give an individual or community a sense of self and belonging to a particular group. In the African context, traditional identity is built on African philosophical principles that emphasize solidarity, kinship and personhood (Oruka, 2000). This philosophy is often expressed through the concept of Ubuntu, associated with thinkers who stated, "I am because we are." This phrase indicates that a person's identity cannot be separated from their community. Among Swahili communities, traditional identity is expressed through proverbs, sayings and social practices such as initiation rites, marriage rites and communal ceremonies. A proverb like '*Mtoto umleavyo ndivyo akuavyo*' (As you raise the child is how they will grow) shows that upbringing is the foundation for developing socially acceptable values. Thus, family and lineage are important pillars for transmitting that identity across generations. The Swahili language itself is a primary vehicle for carrying and preserving traditional identity. It contains a repository of knowledge, wisdom and social perspectives on life. Through language, societies transmit their histories and sustain cohesion. Overall, traditional identity evolves gradually as societies encounter modern challenges (Nweke, 2018). Nevertheless, its core remains the preservation of personhood, respect, solidarity and social responsibility.

The fusion of modern and traditional identities is a process of reconciling traditional values, customs and practices with changes brought by globalization, modern education and technology. In African societies, traditional identity is grounded in solidarity, personhood and social responsibility that emphasize a balance between modern individualism and African communitarianism (Haonga, 2025). From this standpoint, a person can be modern without abandoning cultural roots. Modern identity emphasizes individual rights, gender equality, broad education and the use of technology. However, when these elements are combined with traditional values such as respect for elders, family solidarity and adherence to customs, they produce a society with strong roots and a broad outlook. For example, a young person could use social media to grow a business or pursue education while continuing to value Swahili proverbs as moral guides. The Swahili language remains an important bridge between tradition and

modernity (Omoniyi, 2010). Through language, old knowledge can be presented in new formats such as written and digital literature. Thus, the fusion of modern and traditional identity is a selective process that chooses and develops what is useful for the present and future generations.

Modern and traditional identities in Swahili literature emerge strongly in novels, plays and poetry, where writers depict tensions and reconciliations between traditional values and modern changes. Literature serves as a mirror of society; it reflects how characters struggle to preserve customs, beliefs and traditions while facing Western education, urbanization, politics and globalization (Idang, 2015). In novels such as Shaaban Robert's *Kusadikika*, debates about leadership, morals and new ideas illustrate the interaction of tradition and modernity. Traditional identity appears through the use of proverbs, idioms and oral narratives that emphasize personhood, respect and solidarity. Modern identity is visible in characters who fight for individual rights, equality and social change. Authors use familial or social conflicts to raise the question of whether society should cling to its roots or adapt to the times. The Swahili language itself carries both old and new features. Indigenous words and traditional proverbs meet modern terminology, showing that identity is not fixed but a continuous, adaptive process. Thus, Swahili literature is a platform for negotiating tradition and modernity.

Strategies for building modern identity require developing knowledge and self-understanding. Individuals must know who they are, their needs and their place in society, while fostering solidarity and cooperation with others. Modern identity requires education, technological skills and the ability to face the challenges of the contemporary world. Self-awareness helps people identify wisely, respect history and traditional values and collaborate with others for the common good (Isife, 2022). Strategies for forming this identity include recognizing traditional history and heritage, respecting social solidarity, developing personal understanding and linking modern opportunities with traditional foundations. When a person combines individual freedom with traditional solidarity, they build an identity that is coherent and resilient in the face of modern challenges while preserving history, culture and social values (Joon, 1992). Modern identity, merged with traditional foundations, becomes a basis for social cohesion and personal stability capable of withstanding the demands of the modern world. This article therefore addresses the construction of modern identity by referring to traditional philosophical foundations in Swahili proverbs.

2.0 Research Methods

This study concerns strengthening modern identity on the foundations of African traditional philosophy with reference to Swahili proverbs. To achieve this aim, the research used library-based methods as the main data collection approach.

Information was collected from books, academic journals, theses and articles on African philosophy and Swahili literature. Philosophical writings were analyzed to obtain a theoretical basis for concepts of personhood, solidarity and values in African societies. Collections of Swahili proverbs were reviewed to identify those with content relevant to identity and social development. A content analysis method was applied to examine selected proverbs purposively according to their relevance to the topic. The proverbs were listed and organized by theme and interpreted under the guidance of African philosophical theory. Through this theoretical framework, the study reconciled traditional ideas in the proverbs with the needs of modern society to show how traditional philosophical foundations can contribute to building and strengthening modern identity.

3.0 Theoretical Framework

The theory of African philosophy arises from an intellectual perspective aimed at understanding life, society and values considering African cultures. Its foundation is the belief that the person is part of the community and individual development depends on the welfare of the whole community. This concept is known as *Ubuntu*, meaning 'I am because we are together' (Mbiti, 1969). The theory emerged in the mid-20th century through the work of philosophers such as Kwame Gyekye and John Mbiti, who published in the 1960s–1970s, especially in East and West Africa. African philosophy emphasizes values, history, customs and a person's relationship with their environment and it resists foreign viewpoints that may misrepresent or diminish cultural value (Wiredu, 1980; Gyekye, 1996). Its basis is a cultural and social recognition that seeks to promote equitable life and respect for every member of society.

In literary studies, African philosophical theory is used to understand the themes, perspectives and values represented in proverbs, stories and African poetry. For example, proverbs like '*Mbele ya jua hakuna siri*' (In front of the sun there is no secret) illustrate how social knowledge and moral values relate to everyday life. Philosophers, researchers and literary analysts use this theory to study and analyze the relationship between individuals and society, the person–nature relationship and how people collaborate in resource stewardship or social justice (Nasolo, 2010). Using African philosophy, analysts can provide interpretations that emphasize indigenous perspectives rather than simply following foreign frameworks, ensuring that literary analysis yields meanings that resonate with the communities that read and produce these works.

African Philosophical theory has been an important tool in studying proverbs related to building a modern identity derived from traditional thought. Swahili proverbs often carry community values, social norms and moral teachings that connect people to their culture. Using African philosophy, analysts examine these

proverbs in terms of Ubuntu principles, social cooperation, respect for elders and the person's relationship with their community (Asante, 2007). For example, proverbs such as '*Mbele ya jua hakuna siri*' demonstrate the importance of transparency and shared social knowledge, which is foundational for ethnic and social identity. From this viewpoint, proverbs are not simply relics of the past but tools that can guide modern societies in forming identities that respect origins and traditional values.

In social and literary research, African philosophical theory helps explain how proverbs can form the foundations of modern identity. Proverbs provide ethical and social guidance that can be applied in daily life to strengthen social cohesion and promote values of cooperation and responsibility (Sifuna, 2004). Researchers use this theory to connect traditional proverbs with modern challenges such as social change, technology and globalization. In doing so, proverbs become both a historical heritage and a pedagogical tool for moral education, community development and the formation of modern identity grounded in cultural roots. This demonstrates that African philosophy can reconcile traditional heritage with contemporary demands in a sustainable manner. In this article, African philosophical theory is employed to explore strategies for strengthening modern identity on traditional philosophical foundations through Swahili proverbs.

4.0 Strategies for Building a Modern Identity Rooted in Traditional Philosophy in Swahili Proverbs

Strategies for constructing a modern identity rooted in traditional philosophy include integrating traditional philosophical education into modern curricula; using technology and social media to disseminate elders' wisdom; involving elders and cultural organizations in workshops and competitions; creating ceremonies and activities that combine tradition and modern styles; and conducting cultural research and analysis to preserve proverbs, stories and dances while strengthening cooperation between communities and government. These strategies encourage new generations to understand, value and participate in cultural heritage to create a modern identity that includes wisdom, values and perspectives suitable for the digital and global age. The following subsections present concrete strategies for strengthening the construction of modern identity based on traditional philosophy through Swahili proverbs.

4.1 Integrating Traditional Philosophical Education into Modern Curricula

Education is fundamental to building a modern identity consistent with traditional philosophy. Teaching youth about the wisdom, values, proverbs, stories and customs of their societies in schools and universities enables them to appreciate their cultural heritage. Modern curricula can integrate traditional philosophy with technology, digital skills and global perspectives. For example,

literature courses might include digital methods to record and distribute elders' proverbs. This approach allows youth to maintain their roots while adopting modern outlooks. Developing traditional philosophical education helps recognize indigenous values, build respect for community and increase social cohesion while adapting to the needs of the modern world (Othman, 2022). It is important because it preserves and transmits culture, values and community foundations, helping new generations understand ancestral wisdom and their history, thereby strengthening identity and cohesion. It also provides moral guidance for facing modern life challenges from an African viewpoint.

Respect, discipline and identity are foundational in modern education that includes traditional philosophy because they teach students to value teachers, elders and community leaders. Respect helps maintain cohesion and cooperation in classrooms and communities; discipline strengthens good conduct and academic achievement; identity helps youth understand their history, customs and social values (Sifuna, 2004). A Swahili proverb, '*Asiyesikia la mkuu huvunjika na kifua*' ("He who ignores the elder breaks his chest), teaches respect, wisdom and humility qualities that promote traditional philosophy. This proverb can be used to teach students the importance of listening to elders and community leaders whose knowledge forms the basis of culture and values. This proverb advances traditional philosophical education by teaching new generations how to recognize the value of communal heritage and appreciate ancestral teachings when confronting modern challenges. It also encourages cohesion, respect and discipline within schools and the broader community. By incorporating this proverb into modern curricula, students receive moral and practical guidance, learning traditional virtues while gaining the capacity to cooperate, value elders' knowledge and sustain cultural identity across generations.

Humility, solidarity and values are key components of social identity consistent with traditional philosophy because they teach younger generations to value others, cooperate respectfully and make wise decisions (Larson, 1972). Humility helps people recognize limits and respect authority; solidarity strengthens familial and community bonds and cooperation; values provide a foundation for responsibility and respect. The Swahili proverb '*Akili ni mali*' (Wisdom is wealth) teaches the importance of using reason, knowledge and sound judgment in daily life, promoting traditional philosophy. This proverb can be included as material to teach students how to use their intellect to solve problems, make plans and collaborate wisely. The proverb contributes to traditional philosophical education by showing that knowledge and wisdom are more valuable than material wealth and that protecting and cultivating them helps maintain cohesion, good morals and social identity. Proverbs thus help connect modern perspectives and traditional philosophy in schools, giving students opportunities for critical

thinking, application of traditional values and respect for elders and teachers (Mudimbe, 1988). Therefore, proverbs are essential instruments for promoting traditional philosophical education in modern curricula, encouraging humility, wisdom and social solidarity.

Another Swahili proverb, '*Mzima kashikwa na neno*' (Even an adult can be guided by a word), teaches respect, responsibility and obedience to the guidance of teachers, elders and community leaders—qualities that support traditional philosophy. In modern curricula, this proverb can be incorporated to teach students the importance of listening, acknowledging elders' wisdom and integrating traditional teachings into daily decision-making. It contributes to traditional philosophical education by demonstrating that communal knowledge and values are foundational to social identity and family and community cohesion (Said, 1978). The proverb encourages new generations to accept respect, discipline and solidarity and to collaborate to preserve the community's culture. In modern curricula, it can be used in literature, history, or moral education courses to help students understand traditional philosophy, appreciate teachers and elders and develop virtues that strengthen social cohesion and stable identity.

4.2 Using Technology and Social Media for Preservation and Dissemination

Technology is an important tool for linking modern identity and traditional philosophy. Social media, video and digital platforms can be used to record, distribute and teach proverbs, stories, dances and traditional ceremonies (Akaka & Wandera Simwa, 2024). For example, videos of traditional ceremonies can be accessed by youth worldwide quickly. This approach broadens the reach of cultural education while preserving indigenous values. Technology also enables the formation of online communities that share and participate in traditional culture, creating a modern identity that retains community roots and allows literary and technological creativity. The role of technology in preserving indigenous values in literature is significant in the digital age (Kraska-Szlenk, 2023). Through social media, websites and online book distribution platforms, oral literature—such as stories, proverbs and traditional songs can be recorded, archived and disseminated more quickly and easily. Technology also offers opportunities for researchers and writers to publish their work to wider audiences. Thus, traditional knowledge and social values are transmitted to new generations in modern and sustainable ways.

Technology and social networks help preserve cultural heritage and traditional philosophy within modern identity. The Swahili proverb '*Mti hauendi mbali ukikosa mizizi imara*' (A tree cannot go far without strong roots) vividly expresses the importance of firm foundations in preserving culture, values and social

identity. This proverb teaches that a society, like a tree, cannot thrive for long without core values, customs, ancestral wisdom and history. A tree's solid roots correspond to cultural heritage preserved through stories, proverbs, poetry and elder teachings. When a society preserves and transmits these values, new generations have a strong foundation to continue culture and social cohesion. The proverb also stresses the importance of family, school and community solidarity in transmitting indigenous knowledge and social cooperation. In this way, social networks enable youth to access and share both cultural and modern aspects of identity.

Technology preserves community wisdom, knowledge and culture through digital tools, including social networks. Technology is a key instrument for linking modern identity and traditional philosophy (Resane, 2023). The Swahili proverb '*Nyumba ya hekima haikosi wageni*' (The house of wisdom never lacks guests) teaches that wisdom, knowledge and cultural heritage should be shared and expanded. This proverb underscores the need to teach new generations and involve students, community members and guests so that traditional philosophy is not lost. Culturally, the proverb encourages cultural organizations, schools, families and community leaders to collaborate in preserving and transmitting elders' wisdom. Guests of knowledge who participate help disseminate values, culture and traditional philosophy to wider audiences, thereby maintaining social cohesion and respect for teachers and elders. The proverb also teaches humility, solidarity and collaboration, ensuring cultural heritage continues to strengthen social identity across generations.

The combination of analysis and collaboration through technology and networks helps reinforce values and solidarity in practical ways. Social-data analysis identifies challenges, moral patterns and behavioral trends in society, enabling leaders and communities to plan strategies to promote cohesion and values. Social network collaboration supports rapid distribution of information, knowledge and education, facilitating communication among schools, cultural organizations, the government and communities. This increases cooperation, strengthens social cohesion and fosters respect, responsibility and collective action. Technology and networks provide opportunities for youth and elders to collaborate, contribute to community development and ensure core values are preserved as social identity is built for new generations (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Thus, data analysis and networks are essential tools for sustaining social cohesion and stable values.

4.3 Promoting Cultural Organizations and Elders' Councils

Involving elders in the management and promotion of culture is an important strategy. Elders' councils and cultural organizations provide opportunities to

teach the younger generation, share wisdom and give moral guidance. This strengthens social cohesion and ensures the modern identity incorporates traditional values. When youth collaborate with elders in cultural projects and community ceremonies, they gain deeper understanding of traditional philosophy and how it can be integrated with modern perspectives (Castells, 1997). These organizations can organize workshops, seminars and educational competitions to strengthen the identity of a new generation. Cultural organizations and elders' councils have a crucial role in bridging traditional and modern philosophies. They facilitate research, dialogue and training that align ancestral wisdom with contemporary needs. Through workshops, conferences and cultural celebrations, these bodies help communities recognize the importance of traditional values in modern development. They also strengthen communal identity by aligning customs, technology and social change with respect for African heritage.

Cultural organizations and elders' councils contribute to preserving and developing cultural heritage. The Swahili proverb '*Tunda la msitu haliwi peke yake*' (A forest fruit does not ripen alone) teaches the importance of solidarity, cooperation and social support in daily life. The proverb shows that an individual cannot achieve everything alone; communal contributions are necessary for significant outcomes in society. In the social and cultural context, it encourages family, neighbor, community and leadership solidarity, demonstrating that everyone's wellbeing depends on collective effort. Proverbs help cultivate values of mutual assistance, cooperation and appreciation of small contributions. For younger generations, the proverb teaches the importance of collaborative efforts in preserving cultural heritage, participating in development activities and maintaining social cohesion that values cooperation and respect. Generally, the proverb forms a moral and cultural foundation that binds society through strong solidarity.

Cooperation between organizations and councils fosters moral education and traditional philosophy. The Swahili proverb '*Penye mshikamano pana utajiri*' (Where there is unity there is wealth) teaches that solidarity and cooperation among people contribute to collective success and wellbeing. The proverb does not mean only financial wealth but also respect, social cohesion, good morals and cultural heritage. In society, unity strengthens family, school, cultural organizations and communities, because when everyone contributes their strengths, knowledge and resources, the outcomes are better and sustainable. The proverb teaches new generations to cooperate, value others' contributions and recognize that an individual's success results from collective solidarity. Proverbs, thus help preserve values of respect, solidarity, responsibility and social cohesion, ensuring cultural heritage continues to foster community development and strengthen new generations' identity (Gyekye, 1969).

Promoting cultural organizations and elders' councils strengthens social cohesion and the identity of younger generations. The Swahili proverb '*Shida ni mwalimu, ushirikiano ni suluhisho*' (Problems are teachers; cooperation is the solution) teaches that challenges are part of life, but they can be effectively addressed when people work together in solidarity. The proverb shows that every problem teaches a life lesson wisdom, patience, social tolerance and the need for careful planning. Cooperation is the key to solving such challenges because when people collaborate, contributing knowledge, resources and effort, problems are reduced and solutions are found more quickly and effectively (Masolo, 2010). Culturally, the proverb confirms the importance of social solidarity involving family, schools, cultural organizations and the wider community. It teaches new generations values of respect, solidarity, responsibility and cooperation, ensuring culture is preserved and social cohesion is strengthened for future generations.

4.4 Designing Ceremonies and Activities That Blend Tradition and Modernity

Social ceremonies and activities can be adapted to incorporate modern styles without losing their traditional character. For example, weddings, harvest festivals and traditional dance competitions can be combined with modern music, video, or digital technology. This approach encourages youth participation, cultural recognition and inclusion of tradition in everyday life. Events blending tradition and modernity provide opportunities to preserve values and wisdom while enabling creative expression for new generations (Asante, 2007). Integrating tradition and modernity in literature and arts makes literature living and contextually relevant. Writers use proverbs, stories and customs together with contemporary writing techniques to present messages that fit today's environment. This mixture strengthens communal identity, preserves cultural heritage and makes literature appealing to the current generation without losing its foundational elements. Thus, this is a direct way to construct a modern identity aligned with traditional philosophy.

The Swahili proverb '*Mbele ya jua hakuna siri*' (In front of the sun there is no secret) teaches transparency, responsibility and shared participation in social ceremonies or activities. The proverb suggests that when participants are open about responsibilities, contributions and objectives, tasks are clear and procedures succeed. In the context of blending tradition and modernity, the proverb helps involve communities, cultural organizations, schools and elders so that events are conducted in solidarity and continue to transmit traditional values. It also encourages the use of modern technology, such as social media and information systems, to ensure events meet modern needs while preserving cultural heritage. Hence, the proverb provides a basis for designing ceremonies

and activities that connect tradition with modernity, contributing to cohesion, transparency, respect and social values for new generations.

The proverb '*Penye mikono mingi kazi hukamilika haraka*' (Where many hands work, the task is completed quickly) teaches the importance of solidarity and cooperation in organizing ceremonies or social activities. The proverb demonstrates that when many participants contribute strength, knowledge and resources, complex tasks of planning, preparing and executing events are completed efficiently. In the context of combining tradition and modernity, the proverb helps mobilize cultural organizations, schools, communities and modern technologies so events are conducted collaboratively while preserving values, customs and cultural heritage. It also teaches new generations the importance of solidarity, selfless cooperation and appreciation of each participant's contribution. Therefore, the proverb is foundational for designing integrated ceremonies and activities that promote cohesion, social responsibility and cultural identity for future generations.

The proverb '*Nyuki wanaposhirikiana, asali hukazwa*' (When bees collaborate, honey is produced in abundance) teaches that solidarity, cooperation and joint effort produce great achievements. Applied to activities blending tradition and modernity, the proverb shows that whenever participants collaborate, contributing resources, knowledge and effort, activities finish faster and with better outcomes. It highlights the importance of social solidarity where families, communities, cultural organizations and schools cooperate in planning and organizing events that involve traditional customs while incorporating modern technologies. Through cooperation, social values such as solidarity, respect, humility and responsibility are reinforced. The proverb teaches new generations the value of cooperative action, sustaining traditional culture and using modern methods for community benefit (Idang, 1981). Thus, it underlies the creation of events and activities that blend tradition and modernity while maintaining social heritage and cohesion for future generations.

4.5 Implementing Cultural Analysis and Research Projects

Cultural research is essential to identify elements of traditional philosophy that can be integrated into modern life. Implementing research projects that build cultural pride helps communities recognize and appreciate their heritage (Wiredu, 1980). By collecting narratives, songs, customs and histories, indigenous knowledge is preserved and developed. These projects strengthen communal identity, stimulate patriotism and provide a basis for development grounded in cultural principles and African moral values. Analysis projects, historical studies and research into traditional literature and arts help record proverbs, stories, dances and ceremonies before they disappear. Research also

provides methods for improving modern identity using technology. Young people can be involved in online research projects and digital competitions for songs, proverbs and stories. These efforts help build cultural pride, increase youth awareness and form a modern identity that includes traditional wisdom.

Cultural analysis and research projects help preserve and understand community heritage. The Swahili proverb '*Usione vyao, usikie vyao, bali jaribu mwenyewe*' (Do not just see or hear about things; try them yourself) points to the importance of direct investigation and personal verification. In cultural analysis and research projects, this proverb is implemented through a sequence of steps. First, the researcher collects data from cultural sources such as proverbs, dances, songs, or community practices. Then, instead of relying only on others' opinions, the researcher conducts direct fieldwork, such as participating in ceremonies, interviewing community members, or writing first-hand accounts. The final step is careful analysis of findings to ensure interpretations are accurate and meet research aims. The proverb thus encourages cultural understanding and judgment through personal experience and direct evidence rather than mere second-hand reports.

Cultural research contributes to the development of traditional values and philosophy in communities (King'ei, 1992). The proverb '*Mti hauanguki kwa msitu mmoja*' (A tree does not fall because of one factor alone) means outcomes depend on multiple sources and contexts. In cultural research projects, this proverb is applied by considering a broad system of sources and context. The researcher collects information from different sources, such as proverbs, stories, songs, ceremonies and customs and analyzes historical, social and cultural contexts surrounding those sources. When results are assembled from diverse sources, they create a comprehensive picture of the culture and social behavior. The proverb indicates that robust evidence requires a broad perspective; no single source can fully explain community life and customs. Thus, cultural research yields meaningful and reliable results through combining sources and careful contextual analysis.

Implementing cultural research projects strengthens social cohesion and community identity (Masenya, 2018). The proverb '*Maji hufuata mkondo*' (Water follows its course) means that events proceed according to their natural order. In cultural research projects, this proverb is applied by observing organized procedures and research steps. The researcher sets clear objectives and methods for investigating cultural sources such as proverbs, songs, stories, or social ceremonies. They then collect data in a systematic sequence using fieldwork, interviews and document analysis. The final step is structured analysis to produce a comprehensive view of culture and social behavior. The proverb

suggests that cultural analysis succeeds better when followed step by step rather than in disorganized ways. Thus, research results become reliable, in-depth and reflective of social and cultural contexts.

The Swahili proverb '*Mguu mmoja haupigi chenga*' (One leg does not perform a leap) means collaboration is essential for accomplishing anything. In cultural research, this proverb is implemented by involving multiple stakeholders and diverse sources. A researcher cannot obtain accurate results alone; they must collaborate with community members, consultants, social scientists and cultural specialists to collect information from proverbs, stories, songs, ceremonies and customs. This collaboration ensures the findings meet the social and cultural realities. Through interviews, community organizations and advisory methods, studies obtain comprehensive and detailed information. The proverb teaches that collective effort and collaboration yield better outcomes in cultural research and highlights the importance of a shared approach to fully understand society.

4.6 Arts and Creativity as Means of Identity Construction

The arts are a powerful way to connect traditional philosophy with modern life. Artists can use music, film, dance, painting, or poetry to display a community's values, proverbs and wisdom. For example, contemporary songs that incorporate proverbs, riddles and traditional stories help young people recognize themselves and connect. Art also enables appealing digital creativity for the current generation (Nyamnjuh, 2021). In this way, a modern identity is constructed without removing indigenous values and youth have platforms to express cultural pride while identifying within the modern world. Modern identity can be built without abandoning indigenous values by combining social development, technology, education and traditional cultural foundations (Bamba, 2025). Societies can embrace modern change while preserving customs and values that foster solidarity and respect. This approach helps new generations understand their history, value cultural heritage and make moral and wise decisions in modern life without losing their roots.

Arts and creativity help preserve and transmit cultural heritage and social identity. The Swahili proverb '*Mchoro wa leo ni shule ya kesho*' (Today's artwork is tomorrow's school) indicates that every artistic or creative work today forms the basis for tomorrow. In the identity-building context, the proverb shows how art and creativity help people form personal or communal identities. Every painting, dance, or creative work reflects attitudes, histories and cultures. By incorporating creativity into daily life, a person builds a unique identity that reflects their ideas, values and perspectives. Art is also a tool for storytelling, teaching and knowledge transmission, aiding the strengthening of individual and collective identity. The proverb teaches that every talent today contributes to

constructing tomorrow's identity and that creativity and art are pillars for demonstrating personhood, history and cultural origins.

Art provides avenues for self-expression and strengthening social cohesion aligned with traditional values. The Swahili proverb '*Nyota hazizuii giza kuwa juu*' (Stars do not stop the darkness from rising above) means difficult conditions cannot prevent the growth and light of creativity. In the context of art and creativity as identity-building tools, the proverb implies everyone can develop an identity through thought and creativity despite environmental or social obstacles. Art painting, music, or performance enables expression of personhood, history and individual perspectives that can flourish even amid challenges. It encourages creative success and intellectual boldness; darkness of challenges cannot extinguish talent and innovation (Hountondji, 1983). Thus, art and creativity are not only means of expression but ways to form unique identities, convey values and share personal or communal stories despite obstacles.

Creativity and art contribute to building modern identity while preserving cultural foundations. The proverb '*Pembe mbili hazina nguvu kama pema moja*' (Two horns are not as strong as one tusk) underlines the importance of unity and collaboration. In the arts context, this proverb indicates that creative works are stronger when they incorporate diverse perspectives and talents. Art does not build identity alone; it grows and is strengthened by collaborative, creative conversations and the blending of styles. For example, a community art project can represent a shared cultural identity, history and values. The proverb teaches that collaborative creativity produces more powerful identity imagery that reflects both individual and community influences. Therefore, art and creativity are platforms for building meaningful and resilient identities.

The proverb '*Chura mchanga hafundishi mbwa mkubwa*' (A young frog does not instruct a big dog) implies that every talent and age have its path of learning and growth. In the context of art and creativity as tools for identity-building, the proverb shows that individuals undergo stages of practice, experimentation and personal creative development before forming a unique identity. Artistic works begin with practice, trials and learning from teachers and predecessors. Through this process, individuals develop distinctive perspectives, styles and creative voices. The proverb also implies that artistic identity does not form instantly but results from training, effort and personal experience. Thus, art and creativity are ways for self-discovery, expression of personhood and the formation of a unique identity as the artist gains experience.

4.7 Promoting Collaboration among Community, Schools and Government

Social collaboration is fundamental to maintaining a modern identity rooted in traditional philosophy. Government, schools, non-governmental organizations and families must collaborate to design policies, workshops, cultural events and competitions. This cooperation provides opportunities for youth to participate in cultural events, learn from elders and understand the value of traditional wisdom. Collaboration helps create stable environments for sustaining a modern identity that combines innovation, technology and social values (Dei, 2013). Promoting collaboration among community, schools and government is vital for strengthening modern identity while respecting traditional streams. Schools provide education that blends modern knowledge and traditional philosophy; communities supply cultural heritage and values; the government ensures policies and programs support cultural dissemination and preservation. Such collaboration builds a generation that values its history, honors traditional values and applies this knowledge in modern development.

Collaboration among community, schools and government promotes values and identity for new generations. The Swahili proverb *'Mchoro mmoja haukamiliki bila rangi nyingine'* (One painting is incomplete without other colors) shows that better outcomes come through cooperation and the sharing of different perspectives. The proverb encourages solidarity by urging people to collaborate, share ideas, talents and resources to achieve common goals. Everyone has a unique contribution—like different colors in a painting; when combined, results become complete, appealing and more valuable. The proverb also teaches that each person matters and one participant alone cannot accomplish the whole task. In social activities, joint creativity, or development projects, the proverb encourages inclusive collaboration, appreciation of everyone's contributions and building a cohesive society. Thus, the proverb is fundamental to building social cohesion and achieving shared objectives.

Collaboration enables educational projects that blend traditional philosophy with modern education (Wiredu, 1969). The Swahili proverb *'Kila kipande cha mche huzaa kivuli kizuri'* (Every piece of a tree produces a good shade) implies that every contribution, even small, has value and contributes to a positive outcome. In society, the proverb promotes collaboration by teaching that when everyone contributes with effort and sincerity, joint results improve. Each participant is like a piece of the tree; without any, the shade is incomplete. The proverb urges inclusion, respect for each person's contribution and collaborative effort without discrimination. In community projects or development activities, the proverb shows that cooperation increases productivity, fosters solidarity and builds a united community. Therefore, this proverb supports promoting cohesion, strengthening social ties and achieving shared goals through collaboration.

Such collaboration enhances social cohesion and confirms the importance of cultural identity in modern development. The Swahili proverb '*Pembe tatu hushikilia tunda moja*' (Three horns hold one fruit) suggests that multi-party cooperation yields better and stable results. In society, the proverb teaches that every participant has an important role in achieving common goals. As three horns hold one fruit, when people cooperate bringing strength, knowledge and resources society benefits from productive outcomes. The proverb also encourages group collaboration, listening to each other and valuing everyone's contribution. In community or development projects, the proverb teaches that success cannot be achieved by one person alone but through collaborative work. Hence, the proverb is foundational for strengthening social cohesion, achieving collective goals and building a productive, united society.

5.0 Conclusion

Efforts to strengthen modern identity on the foundations of traditional philosophy show that personal and communal identity is built through values, solidarity and social wisdom. Traditional philosophy teaches that a person cannot be isolated from their community and modern identity should combine traditional knowledge with social change, education and technology. It is important to promote collaboration, mutual respect and appreciation of everyone's contributions, as these help form a cohesive and productive society. Modern identity should also consider values, courage and creativity so that individuals can withstand the challenges of contemporary life while maintaining firm cultural roots and traditional philosophy. The recommendation is that education systems, community projects and youth training incorporate the promotion of values, solidarity and social wisdom so that communities and youth can form a strong, productive modern identity aligned with their historical and cultural context.

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