A SOCIO-SEMANTIC ETYMOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF SELECTED NICKNAMES WITHIN THE ZAMBIAN SENGA SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ONOMASTICS COSMOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the social-semantic meaning of selected Zambian Senga nicknames within the Senga social and cultural milieu. It unveiled the social-semantic significance of selected Senga nicknames in relation to their social and cultural setting. It also established the etymology of the names as well as the social cultural significance of meanings expressed in the nicknames. This study adopted a qualitative approach. A purposive sampling technique was employed through which fourteen persons, who were considered sufficiently knowledgeable in the Senga language, provided an accurate explanation of the data. The participants were drawn from Chama District of the Eastern Province of Zambia. Data was collected through an interview guide, which was administered to the selected research participants. Data was analysed using Social Semiotic Theory. In line with social semiotics, nicknames express both connotative and denotative meanings. In addition, Senga nicknames have social and cultural significance in that they warn witches, discourage selfishness, provide wisdom, encourage, demonstrate endurance, reprimand, teach self-reliance, show ownership, discourage laziness, expose promiscuous behaviour, hard work and traditional beliefs. Lastly, it is recommended that other aspects of Senga anthroponyms may be researched on. These might include personal names, their etymology and semantic value.

Keywords: *Zambian, Senga, Nicknames, Cosmology, Etymology, Social, Cultural, Social-Semantic, Onomastics*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

According to Lungu, Hirst, Simwinga and Kapau (2022:1) the expression 'Socio-semantic analysis' entails examining linguistic aspects of a given phenomenon taking into account the relationship between social and semantic factors. The study being reported in this paper constitutes the socio-semantic analysis of selected Zambian Senga nicknames within the linguistic branch of Onamastics. Senga is one of the Bantu languages spoken by people in Chama district of the Eastern Province of Zambia. According to Raper (1987) and Cobuild (1987), Onomastics is the science or study of the origin and forms of proper names. Kabaso (2016:12) defines onomastics as "a scientific study of names, naming and naming systems; the field of study where the naming systems in a language and meanings of names are studied." It is the study of proper names in all their aspects from different typologies among others being personal names (anthroponyms), names of places (toponyms) and names of gods (theonyms).

Onomastics also involves, among others, a study of the connotations of names (for instance, how, or whether, personal names relate to personality or are subject to changes in fashion), how different names may apply to the same entity (even in the same culture, for example in nicknaming) how ordinary words and phrases may become proper names, and vice versa, and/or how they may be used metaphorically or become associated with entities which are not the original thing named (Matukuto, 2020).

1.1 Naming Practices of the Senga People

Names are badges of identity and individuality and come about as a result of a family naming its own members at birth or at a ceremony that is usually ritualistic as when a person assumes a new name and responsibility as head of a clan. Naming can also result from the community that may give a person an additional name as a result of that person's behaviour or that of his/her parents or clan. Parents and families give names to their offspring informed by their experiences and expectations. There are other instances where the community or a member of the community gives a name to a particular individual, in order to describe that particular person. When that descriptive name sticks, it becomes an identity tag for the named person.

Naming among the Senga is a very important activity. This is usually done when a child is born. In his research on the Lamba naming process, Chishiba (2017) states that the naming of a child among the Lamba people takes place as soon as the child is born and after the navel has been cut and the new born baby has been washed in warm water by a midwife (Chishiba, 2017). This is somewhat similar to the Senga people, who give names to a child before or when it is just born. Sometimes they give a name to a child days after it is born if they are uncertain of what name to give it. They do not have a specific period of naming a child nor do they wait for the umbilical cord to drop as is the case in other tribes as cited by Kabaso (2016) in Ng'umbo society or by Hang'ombe (2015) in Tonga society. The Senga give a name to a child as long as the one naming the child already has one.

In Senga society, the one who gives the name to a child is the father or any person from the father's side. This can only apply to a first born child. But for the second child, a woman is permitted to name the child or any other person can name if allowed by the couple.

Among the Senga people, names are sometimes inherited from deceased relations. This is done when the relatives want the name to live on or be replaced. Sometimes, names are given due to certain circumstances or experiences of the parents at the time of the child's birth. For example, due to predicaments like death or repeated deaths, a child might be given the name *Chafwakale* (which means it is already dead) or when the family is happy, the child will be named *Temwani* (which means be happy). If the child cries when a name is given, then the family has to appease the spirit so that the name is accepted by the child or the child will be renamed. This means the child has rejected that name or the spirit was not ready to reincarnate in that particular baby.

1.2 Nicknames among the Senga people

Nearly all the linguistic groupings in Zambia have nicknames. Kabaso (2016), observes that a nickname, is an informal often humorous name for a person that is connected with their real name, their personality or appearance or with something they have done. It is assumed that these nicknames depict peculiar meanings. For Neethling (2005:2) a nickname "is a linguistic sign: phonologically, morphologically, syntactically or semantically." Among the personal names or proper names is the sub-category called nicknames, an additional name a person acquires in the course of life. Barnes and Pfukwa (2008:78) state that, "the nickname is a sub category within the personal name category". They further define a nickname as an, "additional name' from middle English ekename; from old English *eaca* 'addition' and old English *name* 'name', it is free of any derogatory meaning." The nickname is another name. This observation is supported by McDowell (1981) and Reany (1967) who argue that a nickname is an elastic term used for a name, or description that is added to a proper name. Nicknames are widely used in Africa, they encompass compound names, praise and proverbial names to demean or praise somebody. Nicknaming is, most of the times, a subversive act and the nickname is a byname that the one who is nicknamed bears, without his knowledge, as it is being used by various utterers. The attitude of the nicknamed, when he is aware of his nickname, is, most often, related to distancing or refusal or denial, and only seldom to accepting (Felecan, 2009).

Neethling (2000), opines that the act of naming is human. It has been the practice among various people for thousands of years. "Practically all individuals may name an entity". The act of naming in various societies is sociologically, psychologically, politically, economically and culturally bound. Usually the name reflects the namer's mental state, emotions, norms and the culture of the people where the act of naming takes place. Almost all African names have lexical meanings clearly understood by the name giver and the name bearer. As the name conveys certain meanings or messages by the name giver, to either the name-bearer or the society where naming takes place, some name-bearers might like their names while others might despise them. Traditionally, in African societies, name givers were assigned this responsibility because they were respected people in the community. Name giving was regarded as a great responsibility because by naming a child, the namer was not just giving a name or label to the child but was also moulding the character of the name bearer.

Batoma (2009), explains that the meaning of African names is a cluster of three layers of meaning: the lexical meaning, the onomastic meaning which is based on each tradition of naming practices and the socio-pragmatic meaning, which is based on the cultural knowledge of the onomastic code of conduct, the interpersonal relationships of the partners of the onomastic communication and the situations that generate that communication.

In other instances, nicknames are given to people depending on one's behaviour or experiences of a person in a community or society. They show various stages of one's life in society. They maybe given due to the character of someone, how one has been developing, appearance of someone or one's achievements which qualifies a person to be nicknamed. Despite these interesting features, there has been no systematic scholarly study so far on a socio-semantic analysis of nicknames in Senga.

The practice of nicknames also applies to the Senga people of Chama, who have nicknames as part of their naming practices. Among the Senga people, nicknames are names given as additional to first or family names. They are given by people who know each other personally. These nicknames are very important because they present semantic values in society. Nicknames among the Senga emerge from borrowing and semantic association. This means that some people may be given nicknames associated with the behaviour of animals, insects, valued or valueless objects, appearance and unusual behaviour portrayed by human beings. Nicknames according to the Senga may be given by community members/people in the community to an individual or one can give him/herself (self-imposed) depending on the situations. Those nicknames that are given to people by community members are used secretly or without the owner being aware of the name though some might know it later. These names are sometimes used when one is gossiping or talking about a person and does not want people to know the person being talked about or when one does not want to mention the name of a particular person in the presence of people. Hang'ombe (2015) describes a nickname as a familiarly, humorously, or ridiculously used name given to people instead of using the real or complete name of that particular person.

2.0 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Most of the linguistic groupings in Zambia have nicknames including the Senga people of Chama District in Eastern Province. These nicknames are very important because they present semantic and cultural values in society. Amongst the Senga people, nicknames also play a significant role to build, teach, encourage, discourage, rebuke, advise, criticise, remind and inform. At times, they are given for prestige according to what one has achieved in society, and the position they hold. Further, they are given due to some people's predicaments and failures or experiences in society. Additionally, nicknames in the Senga society express denotative and connotative meaning.

In line with onomastics studies in Zambia, Mutunda (2011) conducted a study of names focused on the Luvale and Lunda while Penda (2013) targeted the Bemba, Chewa, Kaonde, Lozi, Lunda, Luvale and Tonga (the seven main Zambian official languages). Although Mutunda (2011) and Penda (2013) presented the meanings of Zambian personal names, they did not analyse the social semantic aspects of nicknames. As noted above, it is apparent that no systematic and formal logical

study has been conducted on socio-semantic analysis of selected Senga nicknames. In this regard, this study bridged the information gap on the origin, meaning and socio-cultural significance of selected Senga nicknames. There is inadequate information regarding the social-semantic and etymological aspects of nicknames within the Zambian Senga social and cultural setting.

3.0 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study attempted to answer the following questions:
1   What nicknames exist in Zambian Senga?
     What is the etymology of the identified nicknames?
2   What is the denotative meaning of each nickname?
     What is the connotation meaning of each nickname?
3.   What is the social and cultural significance of meanings expressed in the Zambian Senga nicknames?

4.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review highlights studies that have been done in Zambia and outside Zambia with respect to Onomastics. Onamastics studies have been done by a lot of researchers both in Zambia and elsewhere. Though these studies have been done, there is scanty information on literature particularly on nicknames done in Zambia.

Musonda (2019), carried out a study on 'A Socio-Semantic Analysis of Selected Tumbuka Anthroponyms'. The researcher attempted to investigate the meaning and socio-cultural implications of selected Tumbuka anthroponyms. The study sought to identify and analyse the meanings of the selected Tumbuka personal names, establish the kind of naming system that the Tumbuka of Lundazi District have, and to find out the socio-cultural implications of the names and naming patterns and or strategies that are used among the people in the study area. The researcher revealed that-among the Tumbuka people, the name is bestowed on a child after the detachment of its umbilical cord. Traditionally, the grandfather and great grandfather of the new-born child are the sole name-givers. However, there are circumstances under which another person might be requested to name a child. The bestowal of first names arises from different factors including events or circumstances surrounding a child's birth such as: a child's place, period, order and manner of birth, death, fertility, religion, marital dispute and physical appearance of the newborn among others. In addition, names are sometimes given to children to honour dead relations. The researcher concluded by stating that personal names in Tumbuka-prone speech communities go beyond being mere personal labels, to expressions and stories that mark the various social and psychological milestones and circumstances surrounding the birth of the child to be named. This in turn makes personal names an integral meaningful part of the Tumbuka cultural heritage. The present study is similar to Musonda's study because both based on the meaning of anthroponyms.

Related to Musonda's (2019) work is Musonda (2019b) who established the meanings of Tumbuka death daring personal names, within the Tumbuka social and cultural setting. The study identified and analysed the meanings of selected names and the socio-cultural implications of the names and naming patterns and/ or strategies that are used among the people in the study area. The present study is similar because it sought to identify and analyse the meaning and find out the socio-cultural implication of the names. The qualitative approach was used in form of semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, observation and interaction with the study population as well as introspection to collect primary data. On a large scale, purposive sampling was the employed technique, and was supplemented by simple random sampling. Secondary data was obtained from existing Tumbuka literature including school and village registers.

Findings showed that, among the Tumbuka people, the first name is bestowed on a child after detachment of its umbilical cord, with the father and grandfather of the child being the sole name-givers. First name bestowal arose from different factors, but the study focused only on those names that were influenced by death, with particular reference to those that were used to taunt death. Using the Unified Theory of Names, generated data was analysed. In relation to the findings, it was deduced that personal names in Tumbuka-prone speech communities go beyond being mere personal tags, to expressions and stories that mark the several social and psychological indicators and situations surrounding the birth of a child to be named. This in turn, makes personal names a fundamental meaningful part of the Tumbuka cultural heritage which should be explored by scholars.

Hang'ombe (2015), conducted a study on the Morphology and Semantics of Tonga Anthroponyms: The Case of Given Names and Nicknames. He used the Unified Theory of Names, which states that names have denotative and connotative meanings. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, which were administered to a purposively selected sample. The data was later grouped according to semantic categories. He further analysed Tonga given names and nicknames morphologically by dividing them into deverbals, denominals, deadjectivals and denominals plus deverbals, in addition to the common morphological structure of common nouns and proper nouns. Semantically, the study presented the meaning of names based on themes which included order of birth, character, clan, appreciation, request, travel, work, fertility, social conflict, health, gestation period, social caution, occupation, hope, love, death and religion. The results showed that a vast majority of Tonga given names and nicknames are devised from the already existing stock of Tonga vocabulary. Some Tonga anthroponyms have positive meaning while others have negative meaning. Most of the given names are unisex, while most nicknames are masculine because most of the speech acts are directed towards men. He concluded by stating that Tonga names and nicknames are meaningful and used to minimise conflict, teach, advise, inform, and to show endearment.

Related to Hang'ombe's work is Kabaso (2016) who conducted a study on the 'Morphological and Semantic Analysis of Selected Nicknames in Ng'umbo' in Samfya and Mufulira districts of Zambia. His study established that the meaning expressed in the selected nicknames in Ng'umbo have social and cultural significance. They conveyed messages to the society about the namer, nicknamed and the society that has created it. The nicknames just like personal names are documents where one can read the history of the individuals in time and space. They are marked by subjectivity, affectivity and critical sense, sense of humour or ridicule. Some conceal and create new identities. It was also observed from the data analysis that while there is a teasing and aesthetic dimension, there is also a pedagogical dimension to the meanings of these nicknames to the general society. Through the meaning of these nicknames, people are taught about the culture and values of the Ng'umbo people.

Another study that looked at personal names in Zambia is that of Chishiba (2017) titled "The Naming Process among the Lamba People of Zambia: A Socio-Cultural Study." Using the qualitative approach, Chishiba set out to find out whether Lamba names carry any meaning and how these given names are arrived at. In his findings, it was revealed that naming of a child among the Lamba people, of the Copperbelt Province in Zambia, takes place as soon as the child is born and after the navel has been cut and the new born baby washed in warm water by a midwife. An elderly person from the family is chosen to name the newly born. The name given to the new born baby is usually taken from one of the deceased relatives and it is commonly referred to as the spirit name, implying that the spirit of the dead relative has been reincarnated. It should, however, be noted that a name given to the child at birth may be changed at a later stage in life. It may be changed during early adolescence or adulthood. However, the changing of names is more common among boys and not girls. The study concluded that nicknames are meaningful, but polysemous, have semantic values, governed by socio-cultural factors and convey messages.

Mutunda (2011), conducted a study on Personal Names in Lunda Cultural Milieu. His study determined what is relevant to Lunda speaking people with regard to the meaning of names, their naming practices and factors governing the choice of names. In his study, he found out that Lunda personal names are not mere arbitrary labels, but they bear meaning and are based on socio-cultural factors. Names in Lundu are given after a child's kinsmen, for instance, a grandfather and that makes relations strong. There are also those named after events which govern a child's fate, express gratitude and names connected with manner of birth. Some names are insinuating and are proverbial and couched in forms of innuendos to depict a situation that occurred during pregnancy or childbirth, names acquired later in life, for instance, a woman becomes Nyakalumba, "the mother of lightening" avoiding personal names mostly used by friends.

He concludes that Lunda personal names are the foundation of one's identity. Their meanings and circumstances in which they are chosen suggest that they are not mere linguistic phenomenon or arbitrary labels without any meaning whatsoever. To the contrary, they convey the social and cultural existence of the Lunda people. Names are rarely given to children randomly, but rather are carefully chosen by parents and relatives so as to reflect and reveal the social circumstances in which a baby is born. Therefore, socio-cultural factors play a major role in the selection and bestowal of personal names.

Matukuto (2020), conducted a study to establish the morphological structure, social semiotic aspects and etymology of the Bemba Christian theonyms. The study established that Bemba Christian theonyms are meaningful, because they try to express adoration and praise of the mighty and great powers of God who is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. It was established that due to God's social interest in the life of mankind, he has been given different names. Some names, which were previously used before the coming of Christianity to praise their natural environment, phenomena, some extra ordinary chiefs and people, have been adopted and transposed as praise names for God. Some Bemba Christian theonyms have been borrowed from other languages and others from the Bible. The researcher concluded by stating that etymologically, Bemba Christian theonyms are derived from verbs and nouns motivated by social semiotic factors (social interest and religious beliefs) based on humankind, natural environment and phenomena. While the studies reviewed so far focused on names and nicknames, there is no study that has dealt with Zambian Senga nicknames. In this regard, there is inadequate information regarding the social-semantic and etymological aspects of nicknames within the Zambian Senga social and cultural setting.

5.0 METHODOLOGY

5.1 Research Participants

A group of thirty-five participants was purposively selected, with varying ages ranging from thirty to eighty from the study area to be key informants, and help with verification of data thus far gathered. Among them were the headmen from the villages selected and three men and women from their respective villages.

This was based on the assumption that, mainly, older generations have the required body of knowledge and are vessels of the necessary cultural related issues. They understand and can articulate better most of the things related to culture. In addition to these people were other twenty-five participants, five chosen from each village through snowballing. This helped with the speedy collection of data. It also enabled people that had vast knowledge on the subject of names but were not from the older generation and/ or among those selected to also take part in the study.

5.2 Data Generation

The study was conducted using the qualitative approach and had employed a descriptive research design. Different techniques were used for data collection. These included the interview guide and focus group discussions, whose output was recorded using a digital recorder as well as a note book where some notes were written down. Since most of the respondents were unable to read and write, the researcher guided them by reading out and translating questions on the interview guide from English to Senga language.

5.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis began during the interviews by recording what was considered relevant to the objectives and the research questions. In addition, data was firstly analysed according to the generally accepted strategy of qualitative data analysis. Such a strategy consisted of preparing and organising the data for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of doing and condensing the codes, and finally presenting the data by discussion. Thereafter, data was coded literally and deep structure meaning was carefully analysed and translated by the researcher because she was familiar with the language in use. On the other hand, an eclectic theoretical framework was engaged in the analysis of data where Social Semiotic Theory, Phenomenology and Unified Theory were engaged to analyse how Senga nicknames in the Senga society are designed and interpreted, how they are shaped by social interests and beliefs, and how they are or have been adapted as the society changes or has changed.

6.0   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

6.1 Results

The findings in this study were categorised thematically. Thematic classification was done according to the similarity and main ideas that were central to a particular group of nicknames. Further, the study established that Senga nicknames, like any other African names, have semantic values, which manifest in form of denotative and connotative meanings. It is worth noting that connotative meaning is not always obvious while on the contrary, denotative meaning is transparent.

1. Chilyambuto

Chilyambuto is a Senga word derived from the lexeme 'kulya' to eat while 'mbuto' means seed which is a symbolic presentation of children. Therefore, Chilyambuto is a nickname given to a witch who likes killing babies with a view to wiping out the other genealogies. Such type of killing is mainly out of jealous on one's family that may be wealthy and prosperous.

2. Chivwimbo

Chivwimbo is directly translated as 'a nest for birds or rats'. Nests are said to be homes and dwelling places of birds and rats. They are used for protection from predators and bad weather. They also offer comfort and warmth. It is a nickname given to someone who takes care of other people by giving them a place to spend a night or shelter in. It is also given to someone who keeps a lot of people or has a lot of dependents.

3. Khululumwazi

Khululumwazi is a Senga word linguistically translated as an 'open hole'. This nickname is offensive in nature because it expresses a euphemism for a woman's private parts. It is a self-given nickname for a man who likes to share sexual intercourse with several women. Further, the nickname can be given to a girl or a woman who accepts and performs sexual activities with different men or boys.

4. Sekanitole

Sekanitole is a word semantically translated as 'if you laugh with me, I will propose to you'. The nickname is given to a man who always proposes love to any woman that laughs or smiles at him. Further, this is a warning nickname to women who smile to men any how to be careful before falling victim to men portraying such behaviour.

5. Chidyake

Chidyake is literally translated as 'step on it'. This nickname expresses a behavioural aspect of a sexual act. It is given to a lady who drinks and sleeps around with different men. Chidyake is a word which has a sense of reference to destruction. It expresses anger or teases because such a lady has the tendency of destroying people's marriages and spreading sexually transmitted diseases. It is always a feminine nickname.

6. Zuzupu

Zuzupu is an onomatopoeic word translated as "stripping off meat from a born'. There is sexual sarcasm portrayed in this nickname. Zuzupu in this context is a word which shows sexual act. It is a self-given nickname to a man who likes sleeping around with a lot of women.

7. Chibindawamoba

Chibindawamoba is a Senga nickname that can be linguistically translated as 'poacher of alcohol'. The nickname is bestowed on a drunkard who wakes up early in the morning and moves around in different villages looking for beer. He behaves like a talking drum announcing where good beer is brewed.

8. Phuliphuli

Phuliphuli is a Senga word semantically translated as 'waking up early in the morning.' This nickname is not directly related to consumption of alcohol but to the brewer or seller. It is given to someone who sells alcohol only on cash basis. If it happens that a person gets on credit, then the money has to be paid early in the morning or it will be followed before someone even wakes up from sleep. As a result, some furious drunkards nickname such brewers or sellers as phuliphuli so that people avoid getting bear on credits from them.

9. Chelu

Chelu is a nickname translated as "careful or swift". This is a given nickname for a drunkard who drinks a lot, but with care. No fights, no quarrels, no insults and not susceptible to being poisoned.

10. Kanthukanyeka

Kanthukanyeka is a Senga word that can be linguistically translated as "a thing has burnt". It is given to a man who quarrels and fights when drunk. He loses his mind when drunk and causes fights with different people. He shouts *Kanthukanyeka* to his rival to let them know that he has come to fight.

11. Kavuluvulu

Kavuluvulu is a Senga word which is literally translated as "whirlwind." A whirlwind usually destroys and drives valuables. This nickname is given to someone who moves from one place to another causing confusion. It is also given to people who like stealing from others.

12. Kapalanya

Kapalanya is a destructive nickname that can be linguistically translated as "one who scatters". This nickname is given to a person who tells lies and causes confusion in society. The socially unpalatable behaviour brings conflict and division in families.

13. Chibwaila

Chibwaila is translated as "a bundle or luggage of household items". The nickname was given to a man that had no permanent home. He always moved with his luggage and settled in different places only for a while. However, it can also be given to a married woman who packs her items and flees her matrimonial home after a small dispute with her husband.

14. Ukata

Ukata is a Senga word which is literally translated as "laziness". It is a nickname given to a very lazy person who wants every single thing to be done for him or her. The only thing the person can do is to sit, sleep, eat and complain when things go wrong.

15. Palavyacha

Palavyacha is a harvest word which is semantically made up of 'pala' meaning *when* and 'vyacha' meaning *ready to harvest*. It is derived from a praise expression '*palavyacha mutengo wa minga akavisanga akalyanga nyifwa ilije mazuba*'. This is translated as 'when the harvest is ready, it is a price of thorns, one who finds food eats because death has no days'. This nickname is given to a person who gives a lot of excuses to avoid participating in cultivation time. But when crops are ready, he is the first person to eat.

6.2 Discussion

The above findings revealed that personal names in Zambian Senga are categorised according to different patterns. The study is similar to Mandende (2009), and Neethling (2007) who found that the patterns that personal names in most African societies follow are divided into; reflecting traditional beliefs, cultural practices, religious practices and derogation (demean). This is also in agreement with Mphela (2010) in South Africa who found that names given to children are given taking into account issues such as status, marital wealth, health, biological and social relationships, nature and environment. This is also true in Zambian Senga culture and traditions. Culturally, Zambian Senga nicknames are not just tags that are out there in the community to help distinguish one person from another. They are fundamental clues to help people look into issues pertaining to where they are coming from, dig into their history and acknowledge the fact that they are coming from some place characterised by certain realities, which manifest through both the denotative and connotative meanings that are conveyed through names.

The results are in agreement with Chola, Simwinga and Ngalande (2022:116) on Tumbuka names where it was established that names "have both denotative and connotative meanings" and advised that "for one to fully comprehend and appreciate the meaning of these names, one has to take into consideration the meaning at both levels". However, it should be noted that while denotative meanings are generally obvious, it is not always the case with connotative meanings. With regard to the cultural aspect, the results are in tandem with Chola and Simwinga (2021:1*)* who observe that "sociocultural motivation plays a critical role in the choice of personal names among the Tumbuka people". As observed in this study, Zambian Senga nicknames can never be fully explained outside their cultural context within the Senga cultural setting. This is imperative because "meanings of names are as a result of complex social negotiations, learned and interpreted through socialisation" (Leslie and Skipper 1990:273).

7.0 CONCLUSION

From what has been presented, it can be concluded that Zambian Senga nicknames are etymologically traced from the behaviour of individuals and circumstances faced by the Zambian Senga people. The findings showed that these nicknames are referent in nature. They have some semantic value in form of denotative (surface meaning) and connotative (deeper meaning). Traditionally, Zambian Senga nicknames are directly linked to human nature and perform a very crucial role in reflecting the culture of the people in Chama District. Socially, they convey messages that perform various functions or acts in the society. Certain Zambian Senga nicknames constitute taboo and are not often bestowed on persons because they may bring shame and pour scorn on the owner. They are not only a significant cultural identity but also reflect the customs, cultural norms, myths and beliefs of the society. Zambian Senga nicknames are a social capsule of cooperation and unity in the society. They also regulate the conduct and morals of people in Zambian Senga society. However, some nicknames may socially express negative feelings and bad memories. Zambian Senga nicknames can express endurance, hard work, self-reliance or independence. They also provide wisdom and help in conflict resolutions. Zambian Senga nicknames also preserve and honour the customs, beliefs, norms and values of the Zambian Senga people.

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