



Power and Gender in Arabic Proverbs: An Ideological-Cultural Study

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Abstract

Proverbs are maxims of wisdom that describe human everyday experience in a society. Accordingly, the study aims to determine whether the representation of gender roles and power in Arabic languages manifests and disseminates with this cultural treasure trove. The strategy in this research is qualitative. Analysis of the data was conducted in line with theoretical frameworks drawn from sociolinguistics, textual and discourse analysis, and cultural studies. Findings show that there exist gendered power systems that are often patriarchal in nature. In various languages and cultures, women are portrayed as inferior to men or have some dependency on men; has one ever heard of a “weakling” in the family? They are objectified and considered objects of sexual desire or simply servants. By highlighting these practices, this study highlights the role of rhetoric in the normalization of gender inequality and calls for a reevaluation of its use in contemporary discourse. This study aims to fill the gap in culturally specific analyses of gender representation in Arabic proverbial texts and highlights the need for a discourse that promotes gender equality in Arab societies. The research shows how proverbs also extend male dominance in terms of male power, domination over women, and leadership of the household. Although some commentaries offer a more nuanced view of women's roles, the overall picture reflects a consolidated social model in which men wield strength and power, while women are largely relegated to subordinate professions. It is therefore important to understand how discourses both reflect and construct notions of gender and power in Arabic-speaking societies.

Keywords

Arabic Proverbs, Culture, Gender Roles, Power Dynamics, Patriarchy.



السلطة والنوع الاجتماعي في الأمثال العربية: دراسة أيديولوجية - ثقافية

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المستخلص

الأمثال هي أقوال مأثورة عن الحياة، شائعة الاستخدام في المجتمعات لوصف حياة الإنسان. ولذا، يُوظف البحث في تمثيل الأدوار الجندرية وعلاقات القوة في الأمثال العربية لتحديد مدى انعكاس هذه الأدوار وتداولها من خلال هذا التراث الثقافي الحكيم. تستند هذه الدراسة إلى منهج نوعي، حيث استرشد تفسير البيانات وتحليلها بأطر نظرية في علم اللغة الاجتماعي، وتحليل النصوص والخطابات، بالإضافة إلى الدراسات الثقافية. تُظهر النتائج نظامًا معقدًا من هياكل القوة الجندرية، التي غالبًا ما تُعزز الرواية الأبوية السائدة. في معظم الأمثال، وفي معظم الثقافات، تُصوّر المرأة على أنها أدنى من الرجل أو معتمدة عليه بطريقة أو بأخرى؛ متى سمعت يومًا عن مجتمع ضعيف الشخصية؟ تُعامل المرأة كسلعة، وتُعتبر موضوعًا للفرجة الجنسية، أو تُحصر في أدوار منزلية. من خلال تحديد هذه الأنماط، تُبرز الدراسة دور الأمثال في تطبيع عدم المساواة بين الجنسين، وتدعو إلى إعادة تقييم استخدامها المستمر في الخطاب المعاصر. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى سدّ الفجوة في التحليلات الثقافية الخاصة بتمثيل النوع الاجتماعي في الأدب العربي للأمثال، وتُبرز الحاجة إلى خطاب يُعزز المساواة بين الجنسين في المجتمعات العربية. يُبين البحث كيف تُرسخ الأمثال هيمنة الذكور فيما يتعلق بسلطتهم، وسيطرتهم على النساء، وكونهم رؤساء الأسر. ورغم وجود أمثال أخرى تُصوّر صورة أكثر دقة لدور المرأة، إلا أن الميل العام هو عكس نمط اجتماعي راسخ يُهيمن فيه الرجال على القوة البدنية، بينما تُصوّر النساء في الغالب في أعمال أدنى. لذا، أعتقد أن هذه الدراسة تُعدّ وسيلة جيدة لفهم كيف يُمكن للأمثال أن تعكس، وفي الوقت نفسه تُؤطر، المواقف تجاه النوع الاجتماعي والسلطة داخل المجتمعات العربية.

الكلمات المفتاحية

الأمثال العربية، الثقافة، الأدوار الجندرية، ديناميات القوة، الأبوية.



1. Introduction

Proverbs are short, well-known statements that convey a collection of truths, advice, or wisdom. They reflect cultural values and social beliefs and often also embody common prejudices and superstitions. While definitions of proverbs vary in their origins, they generally agree in summarizing universally accepted truths. The word "proverb" comes from Middle English, Old French, and Latin and means "forward" and "word." Proverbs capture the accumulated knowledge of humankind and often express a culture's social emotions, prejudices, and traditional beliefs (Rasul, 2015).

The universal interpretation of proverbs has long been debated by scholars. Mieder (2008) understands them as moral wishes or narratives that contain moral values and are conveyed through conventional language using metaphorical devices such as idioms and allusions. Oral proverbs have been passed down for centuries (Grzybek, 1994), and although they have fallen into obscurity, their cultural heritage is long.

Commentaries often touch on gender issues and other social issues. Human experience and observations of real life which reflect truths about rights, not facts are the basis of opinions. Proverbial language in distinct cultures manifests attitudes toward various social practices and behaviours. Women in particular are accused of strengthening unjust social hierarchies, perpetrating stereotypes and undermining their role of empowerment (Frank & Treichler, 1989; Roya, 2012).

Societal perceptions of gender are reflected through metaphors. In patriarchal contexts, men dominate while women are subjugated. In many African languages, for instance, young women are taught the modesty expected of their male relatives (Dominguez, 2010; Schipper, 2010). Even in Islamic societies, women are typically shown in negative fashions, despite the religion teaching about their welfare, which only bolsters the traditional patriarchal values (Hekmat, 1997). Most importantly, few studies investigate gender in Arab culture. In particular, the role and life of women (Altohami, 2023; Ghafoori & Elyas, 2023; Karakacha et al., 2021). Different dialects of Arabic describe women as submissive and subordinate while others depict them as capable and dominant in the home. This shows the complicated relationship of traditions and what society expects (Jendeya, 2023; Mohsen & Ahmed, 2023). The words and phrases of these languages tend to either reinforce or challenge stereotypes while reflecting the ever-changing contexts of gender and identity (Migdadi et al., 2023).



1.1 Problem Statement

Despite the popularity and cultural significance of Arabic proverbs, little is known about their role in shaping and expressing gender norms. As per the present research, many proverbs depict women as submissive or preoccupied with housework. On the other hand, many proverbs depict men as always authoritarian and dominant. The absence of such research makes it difficult to understand how language, culture and socialization work in the maintenance of gender. Yet, it would be useful to understand these dynamics to see how they contribute to social inequality.

1.2 Research Questions

This study aims to answer the question: What role do authority and gender play in Arabic proverbs?

1.3 Research Objectives

The main objectives of this study are:

- 1 .Analyse how Arabic proverbs describe men and women in terms of roles, characteristics, and social expectations.
- 2 .Analyse how these myths reflect and reinforce patriarchal ideals in Arab societies.
- 3 .Examine the linguistic and cultural mechanisms that reinforce or reduce gender stereotypes in myths.
- 4 .Contribute to a better understanding of the interplay of language, culture and gender in the formation of social norms and power.

2 .Purpose of the Study

In this context, this study aims to examine gender roles and power relations in Arabic folklore and examine how they reflect social and ideological ideologies. The study aims to answer the following question: What gender roles and power relations can be observed in Arabic folklore, and how do these reflect social and ideological perspectives?



3 .Methodology

This study examines the dynamics of power and gender in Arabic mythology from a cultural and ideological perspective. A qualitative research approach using document analysis and data interpretation was used. Using selected Arabic proverbs from literary texts, fables, and cultural productions, the study aims to cover Arabic proverbs comprehensively.

A thorough review of the literature was carried out to identify cultural and linguistic tools. Using this information, a compilation of myths related to the issues of gender and power were developed. The qualitative approach allowed for an extensive analysis of language, imagery and latent social values in the proverbs. A compilation of transcribed myths was established, followed by a thematic analysis to reveal similarities in discourses and symbols related to gender and power. Myths were examined for underlying hierarchies by means of a coding strategy, as were female and male characters .

The interpretation and analysis focus in this study is based on social linguistics, discourse analysis, and anthropology. The theoretical models supplied tools to investigate the impact of language on cultural and ideological norms relating to gender roles and power relations within Arab societies.

3.1 Adopted Model

This essay investigates the ideological and cultural power relations and gender representations in Arabic mythologies. It uses qualitative approach which focuses on the interpretation of qualitative analysis of text data. The qualitative data utilized include Arabic proverbs. These were chosen to give a full picture of the Arabic proverbial heritage, reported from a wide variety of sources from literature and folklore to cultural events.

3.2 Data Analysis Methodology

Numerous Methods of Data Analysis Were Adopted. This research explores the control and gender representations found in Arabic mythology within an ideological and cultural framework. The qualitative research method is employed in this, which involves the qualitative analysis of and interpretation of texts. The qualitative data used consists of Arabic proverbs. The collection as a whole was intended to cover the Arabic proverbial heritage. It was compiled from a variety of sources: literature, folklore, cultural events, etc.



The data collection involved a literature review and an examination of cultural and linguistic documents to produce a list of Arabic proverbs. The proverbs examined in this article focus on gender and power relations. Rigorous qualitative methods were used to conduct the analysis. Subsequently, a database was created after the documentation of mythologies. Moreover, we carried out a thematic analysis to detect common trends, practices and motifs related to power and gender. Depending upon this, the hypotheses on the language and imagery of the myths were formulated in light of cultural studies theory. The analysis occurred, and codes were constructed to identify the references of gender and power in the mythology. The research utilized pertinent theoretical frameworks from anthropological, discourse analytical, and sociolinguistic studies. The findings were analysed through these lenses to evaluate the cultural and ideological influences on gender and power in Arabic mythology.

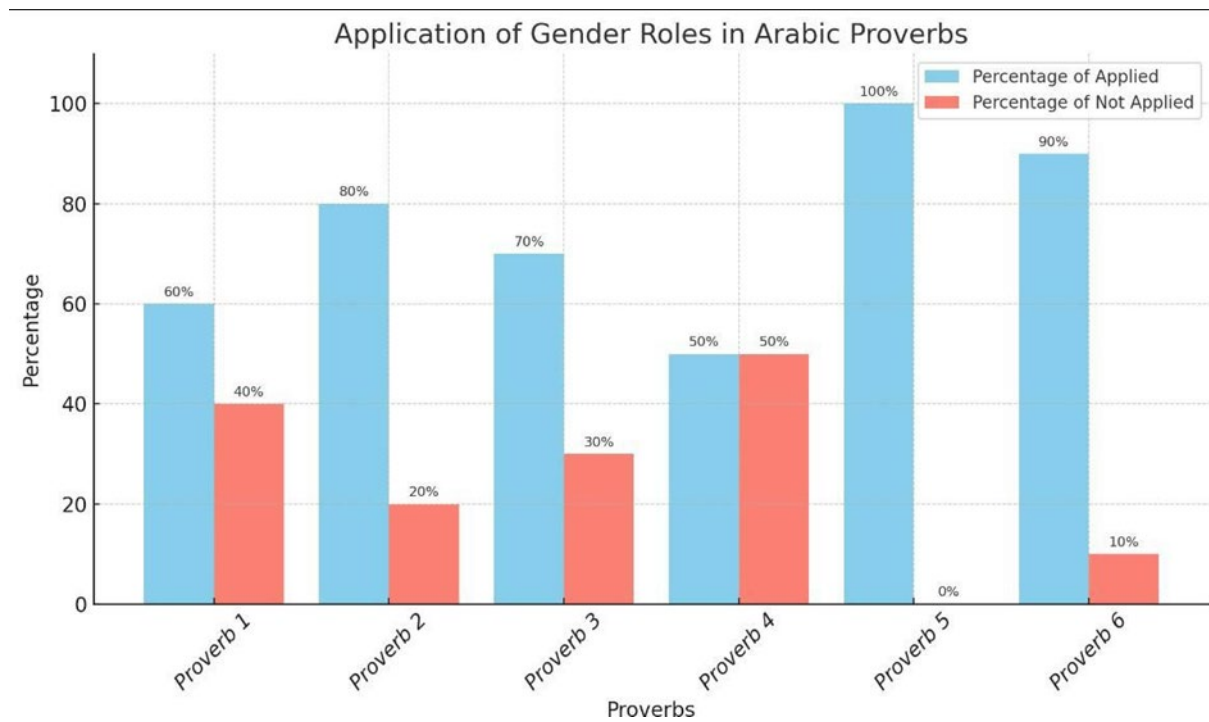
4 .Results

In the literary work, proverbs are basic since they originate from folklore. Their particular style is rich in symbols and makes use of many rhetorical devices, such as metaphor, allusion, and simile. For this reason, there is a necessity for careful analysis of proverbs about women. In this regard, the use of satire, symbolism, similes, metaphors, and allusions are important. They often display overt sexism, ironic humor, disparaging characterizations, and the perpetuation of negative prejudice and latent attitudes.

Analyzing proverbs about women highlights the profound impact of patriarchal gender roles on Arab society. Many of these proverbs are negative in nature, portraying women in a negative light and associating them with negative traits such as arrogance, infidelity, constant complaining, unreliability, and even immorality and corruption. These proverbs can be applied to wives, mothers, daughters, or other female members of the family. A similar negative image of women also exists in Arab culture; here, women are depicted as weak, lazy, wicked, parasitic, stupid, and overly concerned with their appearance. Proverbs praising female intelligence and beauty are often found in patriarchal societies, where women are seen as the spoils of war for men. Women frequently appear in proverbs through metaphors relating to objects, ornaments, food, or animals.



However, in their descriptive form, proverbs present women according to cultural models and gender norms. Therefore, some proverbs about women are the product of culture, religion, and social expectations regarding marriage. While some proverbs praise women, most emphasize their role within the family or in motherhood and are therefore stereotypical. To understand how these representations help us understand gender structures and power relations in Arab culture, it is necessary to first examine these representations and the way women are depicted in Arabic proverbs.



Here come some Arabic proverbs that are construed:

Proverb 1 :

“ Al-mara kaana qalati duqahaa ukhutahaa—if a woman shows disrespect, punish her by marrying another wife”.

This is a chauvinistic kind of proverb whereby the husband possesses much power both within the family and in society as well. The proverb attributes disrespect mostly to the wife, with no concern as to whether the husband might be at fault. Remarrying is depicted as revenge against the first wife, and this



reveals how polygamy is used to control female behavior. There is a proverb that says, “A married woman has no say and can’t do anything against the rule of her husband.” This proverb reflects the existing cultural norms in some Arab societies that men have always had more power in marriage over their wives. That is to say, it reflects that women should obey their husbands. It has been brought out in this proverb that having more than one spouse may result in more offspring. That suggests Arabs place importance on male lineage and the history of family descent.

Proverb 2:

“Asa’a aldaaba al-sareea wa akhud al-mara al-mutwiya kulaha tumtiya—keep a fast-moving animal and marry an obedient woman, as they are the enjoyment of life”.

This is a proverb that has traditional implications regarding gender roles and the way society is perceived. Animal imagery is used to illustrate women as submissive and obedient. The great reward for such obedience is obedience itself, which is touted as the most prized feature of marriage. Here, the wife is shown to be a source of fun and pleasure; perhaps her own fun and desires are sacrificed while the husband boasts about his love life. The proverb ignores the individuality and identity of the woman in areas other than these traditional roles. The proverb encourages dominating behaviors over women: whoever controls their wives lovingly earns a successful household. The proverb belittles the woman because she is only recognized for being submissive and for her ability to attract the man; other aspects of her life that define her personality are not considered. It displays the view that women are meant to be submissive to the demands of the heads of the families in the name of ensuring that the family remains peaceful and secure. It is also associated with the theme of feminine modesty, quietness, and meek obedience.

Proverb 3:

“Al-zawaji sutra—marriage is a shield”.

This is a proverb that has traditional implications regarding gender roles and the way society is perceived. Animal imagery has been used to illustrate women as obedient and submissive. The great reward for such obedience is obedience itself, which is touted as the most prized feature of marriage. Here, the wife is projected as a source of fun and pleasure; probably her own fun and desires are sacrificed



while the husband boasts about his love life. The proverb ignores all the individuality and identity of the woman in areas other than these traditional roles. The proverb encourages dominating behaviors over women: whoever controls their wives lovingly earns a successful household. The proverb degrades the woman because she is only recognized for being submissive and for her ability to attract the man; other aspects of her life that define her personality are not considered. It displays the view that women are meant to be submissive to the demands of the heads of the families in the name of ensuring that the family remains peaceful and secure. It is also associated with the theme of feminine modesty, quietness, and meek obedience.

Proverb 4:

“Mauti al-maratu tajidiidi al-urusi—the death of a wife is the renewal of the wedding”.

This is a proverb that, though simple, is strikingly likely to be from a culture where men held powerful positions. The simple premise behind this proverb is that the value of a wife is essentially outlined by the position she holds in marriage, painting a picture of her as disposable. Her death becomes a time to find a new companion, just as one would be given a chance to find a new shoe to replace an old one. The proverb downplays the pain associated with death and only surfaces the need to find a new wife, thus eroding the pain of losing one’s lifetime companion. The proverb states the desires of the husband in finding a new wife, free from questions about the dead spouse’s agency or her well-being. This proverb reinforces gender norms that privilege men’s greater authority in matters related to marital affairs, such as the practice of polygamy. Several spouses are seen as a means to ensure the survival of the family line, depicting cultural values with a focus on lineage and family inheritance. It also relates to earlier customs of arranged marriages, where a woman was considered to fulfill specific responsibilities in the home.

Proverb 5:

“Azahilaqi al-himaaru wa kaana mini shahiwatu al-himaaru—the ass slipped and fell as a result of the ass driver’s desire to see a lady”.

This saying satirically suggests that a man’s desires bring about distractions that make him forsake his duties, and it often blames such distractions on women. It also propagates the fallacy that men are unable to resist their desires. The saying,



perhaps in an effort not to hold males responsible, shifts the blame onto the woman for the incidents, a fact that conveniently ignores that it was the driver's distraction that caused the mishap.

The message in this proverb aligns with the general gender conventions in the culture that value male self-control over appetites and responsibilities, and warns against the dangers of libidinal and impulsive male behavior. It fits into the cultural theme of feminine modesty, which implies that women should not do anything that may attract the attention of men in ways they do not intend.

Proverb 6:

“Dharabatu al-intaya zai mash’ati aldinnaya—punishing a female is like rubbing butter over the body”.

This is a quite shocking proverb because it suggests that it is not worth going to such an extent to discipline women. Violence against women is trivialized to the extent that smearing someone with butter is portrayed as a harmless act, it would seem. What is conveyed through such a message is that women are not considered people who feel pain or individuals who cannot be reasoned with without undergoing punishment. There is a complete lack of empathy and understanding of a woman's predicament. The phrase supports the concept of male supremacy, that men are greater than women and can discipline women without significant consequences. The phrase aligns with the ideology of patriarchy, in which it is believed that women should be under men and that men should be the makers of laws and enforcers of discipline. The phrase can be related to historical perceptions of the power that men held over women, and thus, a direct discussion of abuse cannot be held publicly. The phrase can similarly be associated with certain practices in history where women had minimal legal protection against harm.

Proverb 7:

“Waladaka khairi wa bitaka ikhitariliha—let your son choose his bride; but choose a bridegroom for your daughter”.

This proverb underlines the one-sidedness concerning marital decisions in a patriarchal society. While boys may seem more independent, they generally receive more freedom in their choice of a partner, whereas daughters are “given away” to an already planned marriage to which their parents had agreed, having little or no say themselves in that area of life. The marriage choice of a daughter



is at times considered an assurance of inheritance and success, and at other times, not even the girl's own choice is considered among the variables. The traditional system of gender is evident in the fact that more liberty and social status are available to males rather than to females; this saying is exemplary of that very system. It suggests how much honor and status mattered when it came to daughters getting married. The saying may also be associated with arranged marriages dating from the past, where the social status and economic interests of two families were more important than the individual's choice.

Proverb 8:

“Al-rijaalu qabaayilu wal al-niswaani nifaayilu—men are with their tribes and women are with their good deeds”.

It directly suggests the foreseen gender roles and divisions within an Arabic society, where women should be recognized by distinguishing features of their actions or through good deeds. On the contrary, a man is to be associated and identified with either his tribe or within the circle of peers he shares. The proverb suggests that, in terms of power relations, the source of men's identity, authority, and status in society is their membership in tribes. The tribe is indispensable in Arab societies because it represents a collective identity and a support system and, therefore, represents authority and honor. In this regard, the proverb suggests that the source of men's relevance and power in society is their membership in a tribe. The opposite would be that the origin of a woman's power or authority is said to come from her virtues and her accomplishments as an individual. It says women's power and authority are credited to their peculiar virtues, individual accomplishments, and conduct. This could also mean that women's power, sourced from their virtues, is, in a way, a stereotype of cultural reality placed on women as custodians of moral virtues and the builders of networks of relations and peace within the domestic and social space.

Proverb 9:

“Twaibu al-hadeedah wa al-dharibu naseebu—choose a good wife from a good family and having children is a matter of luck”.

This adage summarizes the reflection on male traditional knowledge and the auspices of kin relations. Choosing a partner from a decent family and the right family indicates how much importance social status and family background hold. This is reflected in the patriarchal belief that women are the honor of their



families. The proverb expresses the theme of having a “good” wife, which means little outside of a woman’s household duties but is displayed here as being neat, submissive, and associated with other perceived ills. That it should fall to randomness to bring about a child implies at least the subtext of kismet, or, worse, an acquiescence to biological determinants beyond human intervention. It does reflect patriarchal norms by which men often get the last word about whom to marry and in matters of family history. The adage reflects civilizations that have stakes in sons and in transferring legacy to posterity. It could also be a reference to past traditions where first marriages were arranged, and both sets of parents would demand that their match have compatibility in social standing.

Proverb 10:

“Lubusu albuswatu tabuqa urusatuni—dressing a stick turns it into a bride”.

This proverb draws out the implication of the immense pressure to make good impressions, especially for women, through a harsh comparison. It suggests that a woman is valued mostly by her outward appearance and not by her being or inner qualities. An ordinary object can become marriageable simply by changing its dress. This saying follows traditional gender roles that hyper-emphasize women’s looks and desirability as marriage prospects. It exposes societal expectations of how women are supposed to be, the beauty standards they need to fulfill, and how they are expected to appear. The same has historical relevance to earlier times when arranged marriages took place on a large scale, based on looks and standing in society.

Proverb 11:

“Tabuusu al-harifu taqilau asinaanihi—he who kisses his lover tears out his teeth”.

This proverb openly and blatantly shows sexism by unfairly shifting the blame on women even though males are to blame.

Proverb 12:

“Huratu swabarati baituhaa umarati—a virtuous woman had patience with her husband and her house flourished”.

This proverb supports stereotypical gender roles and expectations for women in a patriarchal society. It underlines that one of the most important attributes of a wife is patience; thus, endurance and tolerance are a good woman’s duties in the



household. The proverb places on the wife the task of preserving the well-being of the household and identifies the importance of a woman's patience in building a prosperous family. It does not regard the contribution of the husband in creating a happy home and burdens the woman with all the responsibilities of preserving harmony. This proverb is used to justify patriarchal stereotypes that wives must deal patiently with their husbands and strictly follow them. The regarded importance of family unity in society reflects on the woman's role of being a housewife and carer. Furthermore, it fits in with the historical norm of females not being given enough freedom and their lives being meant to center around putting the husband above all else.

Proverb 13:

“Alifu ashiiqunu walaa musitahiluni—a thousand lovers rather than one husband for hire”.

This proverb originates from the customs of ancient Arabs. A widow, in order to have her marriage reinstated, had to purify herself by spending the night with someone other than her legitimate husband. The men designated for this role were often among the ugliest and poorest in the community. Hence, the widow's reason for preferring a thousand lovers over that sort of man emanates from that very background.

Proverb 14:

“Maa akitharu khatwabii wa maa agalu firaashii—how great is the number of my wooers, but how small is the quantity of my furniture”.

The blame placed on women, the demands addressed to them, and the cultural beliefs that debase them, as expressed in the analyzed proverbs, greatly contribute to silencing their voices. As the above proverbs show, blame-shifting, demands placed on women, and the use of cultural ideas that degrade women all play a huge role in silencing the voices of women. This study corroborates the findings of other studies. Various studies have recorded the same observations. Ali Saud (Saidi, 2012) discovered that Omani proverbs with feminine markers tended to present women in negative ways. (Rasul, 2015) discovered stereotypes of subordination and weakness in English and Urdu proverbs related to women. (Belfatmi, 2013) demonstrated how Moroccan proverbs perpetuate male dominance and female subordination. (Mubarok, 2017) examined Sudanese proverbs that portrayed women as submissive to husbands. The wider study of Arabic proverbs from different cultures conducted by (Jendeya, 2023) confirms



the general trend of placing women in a disadvantaged position. Due to cultural differences, (Altohami, 2023) found that American proverbs presented a more incomplete picture of spouses compared with Egyptian proverbs, which portrayed wives negatively. Similarly, Ghafoori and (Elyas, 2023) examined Hijazi Saudi Arabian proverbs, where they found positive depictions along with some highly unfavorable ones that implied failure and an inability to think [lack of intelligence]. Taken in their entirety, these findings suggest that historical gender inequity is commonly represented within and perpetuated through Arabic proverbs.





5 .Literature Review

Research on proverbs has long attracted academic interest because they reflect cultural wisdom, social norms, and human experience. They offer insights into social attitudes, particularly regarding gender roles and power relations. Previous studies have explored these themes in different cultural contexts, highlighting both universal and culture-specific patterns in the representation of men and women.

Ali Saud (Saidi, 2012) examined Omani proverbs and found that those with feminine connotations often convey derogatory meanings and portray women as inferior. Similarly, (Rasool, 2015) analyzed Urdu and English proverbs and concluded that women are frequently depicted as inadequate, inferior, or incompetent. (Belfatimi, 2013) analyzed Moroccan proverbs and found that women are often relegated to secondary or domestic roles, while men occupy leadership and decision-making positions. (Mubarak, 2017) examined Sudanese proverbs and found that women's oppression is reinforced by traditional linguistic expressions that emphasize obedience to male authority. More recent studies of Arabic proverbs reveal a subtle but persistent trend. (Jundiya, 2023) analyzed 106 proverbs from Sudanese, Palestinian, Omani, and Yemeni cultures, demonstrating that many of them portray women in a subordinate position, for example through the use of feminine pronouns, thus reinforcing these stereotypes. (Al-Tahami, 2023) compared Egyptian and American proverbs on the topic of "wife," finding that Egyptian proverbs generally portray wives negatively, while men are portrayed more subtly and sometimes neutrally. (Ghafoori and Elias, 2023) found similar patterns in their analysis of Hejaz proverbs: women are portrayed

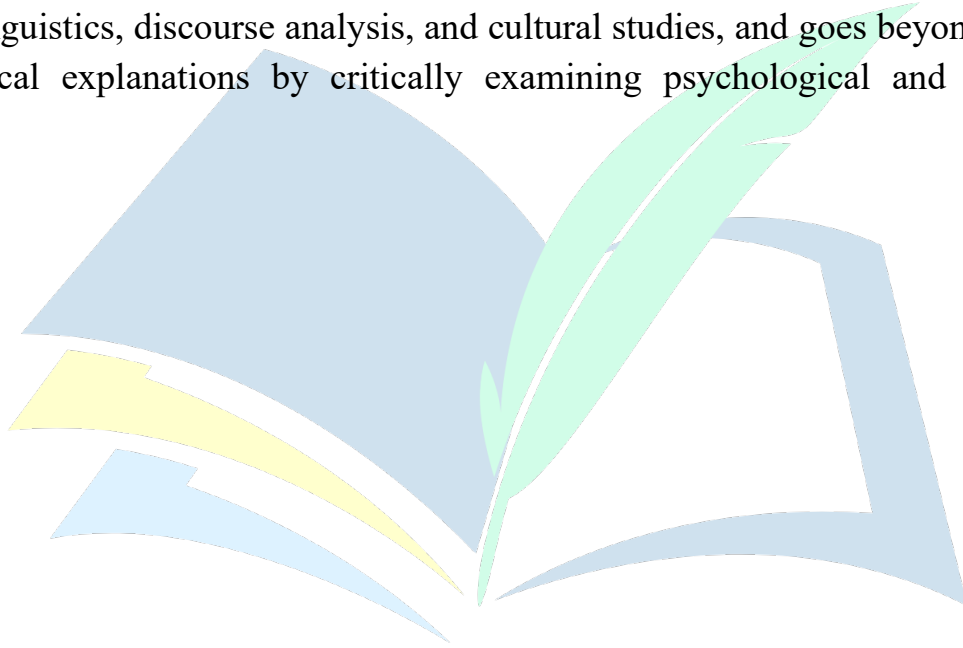
negatively in terms of intelligence, ability, and moral judgment, while their limited role within the family is emphasized. (Hikmat, 1997) highlighted the conflict between Islamic ideals favoring women's rights and the negative portrayal of women in Muslim proverbs.

A comparison of these studies with more recent research reveals some similarities: most previous studies agree that women are portrayed negatively and that male dominance is reinforced. Furthermore, they agree that linguistic and cultural



devices such as idioms, metaphors, and naming conventions play a central role in shaping gender stereotypes.

However, significant differences also emerge. Many previous studies focus on a single culture (e.g., Oman, Morocco, or Hejaz) or offer descriptive analyses of linguistic practices, neglecting a critical examination of gender ideologies and underlying power structures. This study fills this gap by applying a discourse analysis approach to a broader range of Arabic proverbs from diverse cultural and historical contexts. This approach not only documents positive and negative representations of women, but also explores how these proverbs reinforce, challenge, or subvert patriarchal gender norms. The unique contribution of this research lies in its integrated approach to method and theory. This work combines sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, and cultural studies, and goes beyond purely theoretical explanations by critically examining psychological and auditory aspects.





6 .Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigates the power relationship through gendered Arabic proverbs. It aims to determine how these roles and power relations may further the desired image of society by integrating the social with the ideological. The research shows that Arabic proverbs often portray women as tools serving male interests without having their own existence or leadership qualities or contributions acknowledged and which subordinates them by routinely silencing their voices in a dynamic of domination. The issue of objectification in Arabic proverbs is examined, as it relates to the feminist reading of the depiction of women in patriarchal societies. As philosopher (Martha Nussbaum, 1995) explains in her oft-cited essay on objectification, to objectify is to treat someone as a tool in the service of your own purposes. This is apparent in proverbs, where women are compared to useful objects, like hand-bags, which are “made of themselves”, or to a sexual object at the disposal of men. This idea was further elaborated by other feminists such as Simone de Beauvoir whose book “The

Second Sex” is a great example (Beauvoir, 1949). Beauvoir argues that women are always defined in relation to and by men, the "Other." This power dynamic is reinforced by stereotypes that stigmatize women by reducing them to objectified bodies, denying them any identity or capacity for expression, and degrading them to mere objects controlled by men. This type of objectification is linked to the concept of dehumanization, that is, the definition of an individual or group as inhuman and inferior to humanity. This dehumanization has proven to be an effective means of justifying discrimination and violence, as researchers such as (Smith, 2011) have demonstrated in her book "Less Than Human: Why We Degrade, Enslave, and Destroy Others." When proverbs objectify or dehumanize women, they exacerbate this dehumanization, reinforce their marginalization, and suppress their voices, interests, and aspirations. These sayings are not merely “innocent” national sayings in honor of women and/or feminists (for once instrumentalized, no woman is truly a feminist). Rather, they serve to remind women that they are incapable of creating their own independence/defending their own autonomy. This is based on a patriarchal thought that is intended to keep women dependent on men. According to (Kandiyoti, 1988), this is explained as “patriarchal bargaining”. In its content, the chapter “Among the Maasai” illustrates a commonly apparent double standard regarding male and female



sexuality. In patriarchal societies, women may negotiate power and security within the system by accepting or even reproducing some of the constraints that the system imposes upon them. Nevertheless, through this bargaining process, we lose our independence and the right to self-determination. All the proverbs that highlight the necessity of women being guided and controlled by men only serve to undermine this agreement while advising them not to aspire for success on their own or emulate men. According to (Butler, 1990), in “The Problem of Gender,” denying autonomy can also be enacted in hegemonic masculinity and social construction. Social constructivism deals with how culture and social life construct an individual's reality and, consequently, how expectations regarding gender and roles are communicated. This includes the communication of gender not only through language but also through proverbs. Proverbs that devalue women are indeed very effective in shaping the image of women. They reinforce and solidify roles that are considered accessible only through the privilege of being a woman.

Arabic proverbs further enhance the silencing of women by depicting them as indolent. (Bourdieu's, 1991) theory of symbolic violence is relevant here since prisons enforce dominance over the out- group whilst creating a representation of the cultural superiority over the minority. In proverbs, the attribution of a non-working status to women constitutes a form of symbolic violence. It reproduces stereotypical ideas which devalue women's contributions to social life and limits

their full participation in public life. The representation of women in proverbs as silent and unidimensional helps remove them from the power structure. Such projections successfully marginalise women by silencing them. When we treat women like parts and not a whole it has consequences and it silences them. Numerous patriarchal societies utilize this technique to diminish womanhood into mere sexuality and reproduction. In her 1990 article “Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory” Young addresses this problem of women's bodies being represented under the male gaze as fragmented and objectified. It distracts from women's capabilities to think and feel, undermines their worth, and silences their voice.

Young explains that women's bodies are often objectified and fragmented in representation. The role of violence in proverbs used to deter women from rebellious opposition is a clear indication of how patriarchal ideologies aim to



restrict women's authority and freedom of expression. This is linked to a broader concept of social control, namely the use of institutions and other tools to shape behavior and ultimately maintain control within society. Particularly in patriarchal societies, this social control is often applied to ensure women conform to gender expectations. Proverbs that punish women who dare to overstep boundaries are tools of social control that prevent women from becoming too independent and suppress any dissenting opinions.

Thus, all these means erode women's self-esteem and self-confidence. It relates to Freire's 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' (1970), where the author states that the oppressed receive images of themselves which are negative due to the dominant class's impotence to bolster their self-esteem and sense of autonomy. Women see themselves as incapable or inferior and feel insecure as a result of the limiting narratives (e.g., proverbs) and stereotypes that are inscribed in their minds. This feeling of insecurity encourages silence and stops women from revolutionary liberation from the shackles of male dominance. The study does not treat proverbs as mere language phenomena. These demands are so numerous that they require intervention from social, linguistic, educational, psychological, and even legal perspectives. This necessitates a comprehensive re-examination of language and culture to realize the promise of gender equality in all areas and at all levels of human life.

This study is based on specific criteria; therefore, a larger sample size could have increased the generalizability of the findings. A more comprehensive study including a wide variety of proverbs from different regions and periods could contribute to a broader understanding of the challenges and complexities of gender equality.



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