ORAL CULTURES AND SEXISM: 
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN AND 
PUNJABI FOLKLORE 

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Abstract

The present study embarked with a supposition that there are similarities (traditional, under-developed, agri-based) between the Punjabi and African cultures, so the gender ideology might have similar patterns, which can be verified through the analysis of oral genres of the respective cultures. From Africa, Nigerian (Yoruba) proverbs are selected to be studied in comparison with Punjabi proverbs, while taking insights from Feminist CDA (Lazar 2005). The study has examined how Punjabi and Yoruba proverbs mirror, produce and conserve gendered ideology and patriarchy. Punjabi proverbs are selected through purposive sampling from ‘Our Proverbs’ (Shahbaz 2005) and Yoruba examples (with English translations and interpretations) are elicited from a dictionary of Yoruba proverbs (Owomoyela 2005), as well as articles written about gender by native Yoruba researchers. The investigation has uncovered through thematic content analysis that the portrayal of women in both communities is primarily biased, face-threatening and nullifying. Both languages have presented womenfolk mainly as unreliable, insensible,
loquacious, insincere, ungrateful, opportunist, materialistic and trouble-making. Men have been depicted for the most part as aggressive, rational, prevailing, and anxious to take risks. This analysis infers that in asymmetrically organised Punjabi and African (Yoruba) communities, proverbs are deliberately sustaining inequality.

Keywords

Proverbs, gender, Punjabi, Africa, sexism, folk wisdom

Introduction

Folk-wisdom is considered the most noteworthy type of wisdom in traditional societies; the worth of maxims increases manifold in such conventional setups. Proverbs, as indicators of wisdom, are never absent from the daily speech of Punjabi and African people (Finnegan 1970). Though great insightful work has been done on Punjabi language and literature, no subsequent previous studies could be found about proverbial possibilities of identity formation. Researchers have ignored the fact that proverbs as cultural capsules of folk wisdom are used by patriarchal societies to sustain a hegemonic and authoritarian social order which appoints men as producers and caretakers of social information; the shrewdness of their partners (females) is merely considered incapability.

Academically, an investigator from the respective culture is in a better position to analyse and interpret the metaphorical and cultural connotations of similes and metaphors used in proverbial lore. In this case, the researchers are native Punjabi speakers and are able to offer an insider's perspective to bring out a valid and authentic analysis. The African data is taken from studies done by native African gender researchers.

As far as the significance of the investigation is concerned, it is straightforwardly connected with awareness-raising about the utilization of language, especially proverbs, as a tool to construct, maintain and perpetuate gender bias against females in the respective societies. These proverbs otherwise appear innocuous to the common people and are just considered representative of folk wisdom. Being of an interdisciplinary nature, this research should interest academics, students, researchers, curriculum planners, and policymakers in the fields of gender studies, linguistics, sociology, anthropology, politics, and culture studies. This research should also interest members of civil society as it deals with social change in terms of reducing gender gaps by being more sensitive to language use.

Linguists, social antiquarian, anthropologists, philologists, and folklorists have for quite a while endeavoured to stamp and map out the history, origin, and nature of
oral cultures and sexism

proverbs. numerous investigations have been led to investigate the dispersal of adages and to analyse variations of axioms across languages and culture (shah, nadil, sultan and kaker 2018; khan, mustafa, and ali 2017; sanauddin 2015; rasul 2015). however, in relation to punjabi and african proverbs, no significant work could be found in terms of comparison. in the settings of man-controlled societies, the present examination is an endeavour to investigate gender and power connections as projected through punjabi and yoruba maxims, to discuss the biased language utilised for women, and to analyse how this portrayal is more than a semantic phenomenon and has socio-social repercussions.

• how has gender-biased ideology been portrayed through punjabi and yoruba proverbs?
• how are similar or distinctive thought patterns regarding gender and patriarchy prevalent in punjabi and african (yoruba) societies reflected through their proverbs?

literature review

punjabi and yoruba societies

conventionally, punjabi identity or character is chiefly geographical, cultural and linguistic. its identity is free from religion, race, creed or colour. so punjabi refers to those for whom the punjabi language(s) is the primary, first, mother or perceptible language and those who belong to the punjabi region and associate with its inhabitants (thandi 1999). as punjabi society does not consist of a certain creed or tribe, assimilation, and integration, among different tribes of the punjabi community, are essentially present. more or less all punjabis have a similar cultural and traditional background (singh 2012).

yoruba society

the yoruba people inhabit predominantly the south-western region of nigeria, involving for all intents and purposes, the majority of the territory earlier known as the western region. they are likewise found in certain parts of kwara, kogi and edo states. the language is yoruba which has numerous dialects – ekiti, oyo, ondo, ijesa, and, ijebu among others. the yoruba are the most urbanised and conceivably the most industrialised ethnic identity in sub-saharan africa; around 20 percent of nigerians are yoruba. yoruba people are said to be highly cultured and religious (babatunde and zeitlin 1995).

gender as performance

butler (1990) proposes the notion of gender as an enactment or performance. inspired by foucault’s (1995) stance, she claims that gender uniqueness is not an intrinsic trait or a
problem of bodily processes but an outcome of unending successions of gender enactments (91). She speaks of gender as “an act of ‘doing’ which can be ‘achieved through the reiteration of the norms” (Butler 2000, 245). She has recognized gendering at two levels: conscious gender performance, which makes gender a physical enactment, and unconscious engendering. Both conscious and unconscious gendering are directly linked with the use of language as an efficient tool to help a society construct its desired gender models. The enactment of gender models does not just exemplify the reiteration and internalization of enforced gender uniqueness and standards by socialized groups, but it is also a mindful enactment of the un/repelling subjects. In the present research, one of the most effective dimensions of language is chosen to reveal how gender and patriarchy are being socialized through these cultural capsules (proverbs).

Research on Proverbs and Gender

Different researchers have analysed and studied proverbs from diverse languages and found gender bias and stereotypical representation of gender in them. Most of the existing investigation is carried out mainly in African and Asian setting. For example, Mieder (1993) and Schipper (2010) have individually analysed proverbs from around the globe in the modern age. Moroccan adages have been studied by Fati-Rabat (2013) with a gender perspective; American folklore has been considered by Brunvand (1986), while the capacity of Mexican folk discourse has been analysed by Dominguez (2010).

Focusing on indigenous research, a collection of Pashto maxims has been segregated into negative, positive and neutral categories by Sanauddin (2015). He has strongly contended that Pashto proverbs glorify men and create damaged identities for, women beginning with the birth of a male or a female baby. Girls are taken as a liability while sons are celebrated as the heirs of the family name. He has reasoned that Pashto maxims endorse antagonistic vibes towards females and convey an increasingly constructive portrayal of males over females.

Breaking down the language utilized in Pakhtu adages, Khan, Sultana & Naz (2015) have also investigated the critical job of language in the production of gendered personality in a Pakhtun community. With reference to Pakhtu axioms, men are displayed less in a face-compromising tone and more in a face-saving manner. Contrary mention of a man is also found but only when mentioned with reference to a female family member, most often his wife.

Urdu maxims have been broken down by Siddiqui (2013), who has recommended that in oral cultures, ideas, belief systems, and convictions get their authenticity from verbal literature. Many recurrent themes and stereotypes about women identified in
Punjabi proverbs have also been recognized in Urdu proverbs: foolishness, inferiority, and subjugation. Urdu proverbs have also been analysed in comparison with their English counterparts by Rasul (2016); she delineated that femininity is associated with being adversely excellent, delicate, unfit, unintelligent and loquacious. Additionally, females are represented as corrupted and indecent objects of satisfaction who are also inconvenient, dishonest, and hard-headed. Though an insightful study, comprising of comparative analysis, Rasul has not provided any translations of Urdu proverbs limits understanding for an international readership.

Nadil, Sultan & Kaker (2018) have studied Balochi proverbs and brought to light the bias and prejudice present in these folklore items with reference to Pakistani society. The analysis is more subjective than objective as no verification is sought from native speakers, and the authors have relied on personal interpretations. Khan, Mustafa, and Ali (2017) have conducted a comprehensive analysis of Punjabi folklore and authenticated the findings of research done earlier in the same domain.

Schipper (2010) has stated that proverbs mirror social convictions with respect to gender; proverbs of a specific language or a specific culture can reveal how men and women are perceived in that culture. Mpungose (2010) has employed textual analysis of Zulu proverbs promoting patriarchy from the perspective of an ‘insider’ as opposed to the perspective of an ‘outsider’. The analysis is based on the supposition that Zulu proverbs signify a gender bias that may encourage women to submit to men's authority. A radical feminist viewpoint is used to present the case that such proverbs endorse gender inequality. Marriage is considered a rite of passage for women and her sphere of operation is within the Zulu traditional household.

Thwala (2016) studied gender-based proverbs in the Siswati language while Asiyanbola (2007), Akinbibi (2010), Balogun (2010) Familusi (2012), Olojede (2012), Ademowo and Balogun (2014) have analysed African and Yoruba proverbs and highlighted gender-biased ideologies inherent in these nuggets of wisdom. Kamwendo & Kaya (2016) have contended that the precepts from different African ethnic gatherings illustrate that proverbs are utilised to explain the profoundly entrenched man-centric frameworks of African social and cultural association. The studies have concluded, just like the present study, that these proverbs about females are very oppressive, offensive and humiliating for them.

The present research intends to comparatively analyse Punjabi and African (Yoruba) proverbs to find gender representation and stereotypes as created, reinforced and perpetuated in these cultural capsules. The aim of this research is to bridge the gap in earlier research from a comparative gender-based feminist critical perspective.
Theoretical Framework

The theoretical perspective of the present study is taken from Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA). The focus of FCDA (Lazar 2005) is on how the ideology of gender and power-based ideological relations are (re)produced and negotiated in representations of gender, and in men and women’s societal and individual identities in talk and texts (11). Ideological structures based on gender divides human beings into men and women, in relation to dominance and subservience, respectively. According to West, Lazar, & Kramarae (1997), gender is accomplished through active, iterative and ongoing discursive practices in different language practices. ‘Gender Relationality’ (a central principle of FCDA) entails and explores the identities of "women" and "men" with reference to each other.

Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature. A dictionary of Punjabi proverbs (Shahbaz 2005) was used to find an extensive collection of proverbs depicting gender. Proverbs are selected in different steps. First, among 12,000 proverbs 588 proverbs were selected in which gender is represented in some way. Second, four Punjabi NORMs (Non-moving, Old, Rural, Male) are requested to identify familiar proverbs so that only those proverbs were analyzed which fulfill the condition of ‘vitality’. Third, literal and paraphrase translation and descriptive analysis of the selected proverbs was conducted with the help of two native Punjabi translation experts. Fourth, content analysis is used to develop categories and thematic units from the selected proverbs. African data was elicited from studies published about gender and proverbs in Yoruba, including a dictionary of Yoruba proverbs (Owomoyela 2005), as well as articles written about gender by native Yoruba researchers including Ogunwale (1998), Asianbola (2007), Akinbiyi (2010), Familusi (2012), Olojede (2012), Ademowo and Balogun (2014). In the end, comparative analysis and interpretation are done to find out the different stereotypes and attitudes that Punjabi and African (Yoruba) societies hold towards men and women on the basis of their gender.

Data Analysis and Discussion

In this section, the selected and categorised proverbs are explained by giving literal translation (paraphrase), brief description and explanation. Research participants checked and confirmed the authenticity and accuracy of these interpretations and elicited explanations of the chosen maxims. Just representative adages are described and deciphered in the below mentioned headings to give an idea of the dominant gendered ideology in both the cultures:
Punjabi Proverbs
Women as Trouble Makers

**Zan, zar tay zameen, tinen fasad di jarr** (Shahbaz 2005, 232)
(Woman, wealth and land: All are apples of discord.)
Here, a female is termed as the cause of all the mischief. Women are often blamed as the “culprits” who deteriorate the joint family structure. The woman has been bracketed with inanimate objects like land and money.

**Garrulous**

*Aa gwandny larrive* (Shahbaz 2005, 27)
(Dear female neighbour, let’s fight.)
This popular proverb also refers to the quarrelsome and confrontational nature of women. They cannot sit idle. Instead of sitting idle, they would invite other women to quarrel.

**Unintelligent**

*Aurat di mat gutt pichy* (Shahbaz 2005, 269)
(A woman’s wisdom is behind her braid.)
This proverb is built on the reductive classification and relegates woman to the other side of the spectrum as a senseless and dim creature. It lends the credence that women are unable to self-regulate and need the intervention of men.

**Unmanageable**

*Baba Fareed ranan daadiyan, mard gareeb* (Shahbaz 2005, 73)
(O Baba Fareed, wives are strong and husbands are meek).
In this proverb, a complaint is lodged against wives to a saint insisting that women are assertive and men are meek. This proverb is used when a woman has a position of power in her married life, though this is not a generally found situation. It is considered a disgrace for the wife to keep tight control over her husband or to be disobedient.

**Selfish**

*Run tohey jeib, maan tohey peit* (Shahbaz 2005, 225)
(A wife checks the pocket and a mother checks the belly.)
Mothers and wives are compared in this proverb: wives are portrayed as selfish and money-oriented beings by accusing them of always being interested only in wealth, while mothers are always worried and concerned about feeding their sons.
Cunning/Guileful

*Zanani da rona ty majheen da mootarna ik braber ay* (Shahbaz 2005, 232)
(The crying of a woman is similar to the urination of a buffalo.)

This proverb presents a highly degrading analogy between crying of a woman and urination of a buffalo as both do so intermittently. Serbian proverbs similarly talk about the tears of women in proverbs: “A trader lies to you with a smile; a woman lies while shedding tears,” and “A woman relies on her tears, a crook on his lies” (Hussein 2009, 213).

Misfit for Leadership

*Jis ghar dhee pradhan, Oo chuggha weeran)* (Shahbaz 2005, 165)
(A house where a daughter rules, is bound to be desolate.)

Daughters, being females, are not worthy to be decision-makers in family matters. A house where they lead is bound to be destroyed.

Dehumanisation

*Ourat taan mard day choolay di joon ay* (Shahbaz 2005, 279)
(A female is only a mite (parasitic creepy crawly) of her man’s clothes.)

In this saying, a woman is contrasted with a mite in her husband’s clothing. She is delineated as a useless parasitic insect which continues tormenting and gnawing yet has no practical significance in a man’s life. The Chinese have also bracketed and equated the two in this saying: “Women and lice cannot stand good days” (Zhang 2002, 13).

*A wife, like shoes, deserves similar handling; carry on with them, if they fit well, otherwise throw them away*

A very demeaning analogy has been drawn in this proverb. A wife is considered as worthless as a shoe. She should be kept only if she behaves well; otherwise, she may be easily discarded like a pinching shoe and exchanged for a new one. So wives have to be flexible, adjustable and mouldable to be owned and kept by their men.

Men as Challenge Seekers

*Mardan ty ghoryan, kumm pein awally* (Shahbaz 2005, 339)
(Difficult times and challenges are for men and horses.)
The proverb implies that men are made to accept and take risks. They are forceful and confrontational. Hence, it is suggestive that for men, life is a trudge, a mission with loads of tests and trials.

*Kamau khasam kis nhi chahya?* (Shahbaz 2005, 290)
(Who does not want a well-earning husband?)

The primary responsibility of a man is to support his family financially. So if a man earns handsomely, he would be a perfect match, sought by every woman.

Motherhood

*Importance of sons*

*Putran diyan maawan dy waddy waddy jeeray* (Shahbaz 2005, 251)
(Mothers having sons have brave hearts.)

Sons are considered to be the strength of their mothers. The more sons a woman has, the more powerful and respectable she becomes. Therefore, sons are considered to be a source of confidence and encouragement for the mothers.

*Mothers as the trainers of their children*

*Gandiyan maawan dy namaz nhi hunday* (Shahbaz 2005, 304)
(Sons of bad mothers do not turn out to be pious.)

*Burey nu na mariye, bury dee maan nu mariye* (Shahbaz 2005, 82)
(Do not kill an evildoer; kill his mother)

It is said that a mother is responsible for the character building of her children, so if her children are bad, she should be held responsible because she has not fulfilled her duty well and has spoiled her children. She should be stopped from giving birth to more wicked children.

*Positive Aspects of Motherhood*

*Mawan thandiyan chawan* (Shahbaz 2005, 304)
(Mothers are cool shade.)

*Maan razi tay Rubb razi* (Shahbaz 2005, 341)
(The will of God is in the will of mothers.)

These proverbs show some positive beliefs about mothers. Mother is the only female relation who is presented in a positive light. Mothers are equated with cool, shady trees and their happiness is ascribed as the happiness of God.
Data Analysis of Yoruba Proverbs

Loquacious

*Obinrin ko ni gògóngò*  
(Women have no Adam’s apple [i.e. they cannot keep secrets.]) (Olojede, 2012, 8)

“*Obinrin L’eke, obinrin l’odale*”  
(“The woman is a gossip; the woman is a traitor.”) (Ibid, 8)

“A benu mimu bi obe”  
(“Her lips are as sharp as knives.”) (Ibid, 9)

These Nigerian beliefs imply that women don’t have verbal control. Therefore, they should not be trusted or depended on, as doing so will result in double-crossing and foul play as they have free tongues.

Unreliable

*Obinrin lodale, obinrin leke, Emo finu han obinrin*  
(“Women are disloyal and deceitful; do not expose your inner thought to a woman.”). (Familusi 2012, 306)

*Eniyan ti ko gbon ni i bobiriin mule Ijo obinrin bo mawo lo baje*  
(Only a stupid man takes an oath with a woman; the day a woman knows the secrets of a cult, that cult is destroyed.) (Familusi 2012, 307)

*E ma je ka finu han f’obinrin; ibi ti oju re o to, enu re debe.*  
(We should desist from revealing our secrets to a woman; her mouth will speak more than her eyes can see). (Familusi 2012, 308)

Women are not capable of holding secrets as they lack verbal restraint, so men are explicitly advised not to reveal any important information to their women. A similar Punjabi proverb advises men ‘janani nu bhaid na dey’ (Shahbaz 2005 73) (Don’t disclose your confidential information to a woman.)

Don’t Consult Wives

*Esin obinrin soro gùn, o le gbéni subù*  
(It is not good for a man to climb on his wife’s horse because he can fall to his death.). (Balogun 2010, 7)

The horse analogy in this adage is utilised to speak to the impulses of one’s better half. The saying is a warning that men who yield to the impulses of their wives' become a cause of their own ruin. The above proverb is, in any case, gender-biased against women since it has abandoned the steady and capable notion that women are fit to provide for their spouses,
partners, companions, and relatives (regardless of whether male or female). Punjabi proverbs also reiterate this concept in ‘runn day mureed da dalcha khrab, (A husband who follows his wife has to face embarrassment) and ‘jehra runn day akhay lagay oh khrab theenda ay’ (A man who follows the advice of his wife has to suffer a lot).

Black-mailers

*N ó ọp, n ó ọp’,lobinrin fi ndèrù ba ọkap
(I’ll divorce you, I’ll divorce you’ is the weapon with which a woman threatens her husband) (Olojede 2012, 8)

The proverb represents women as persons who use the word ‘divorce’ as a weapon to emotionally blackmail and control their husbands.

Cunning

* Awo burúká lobinrin lè ọṣe, obinrin lálè mèfà, mègègèfà ò mọra wọn
(Women are capable of only vicious secrecy: a woman has six lovers, (and) the six do not know about each other) (Olojede 2012, 8)

Women have been perpetuated to be so cunning and morally promiscuous that they won’t let a lover know about others despite their co-existence.

Promiscuous

* Gbogbo obinrin lo n gbese; eyi ti o ba se tire laseju laraye n pe lasewo
(All women are sexually voracious, but the one that does so in excess is is called a prostitute. (Olojede 2012,8)

Sexual dissatisfaction and insatiability on the part of women is a recurrent theme in Yoruba proverbs. Consequently, these proverbs are used to warn women against any such practices and men to remain alert about their ‘territory’ whenever they have to handle women.

Moral Misconduct

* Bọkùnrin t’atprin, bòbinrin t’a’atprin, qònkan ni láti lómi kẹhin ṣe ju ara wọn làp
(If a man urinates as he walks and a woman urinates as she walks, one of them will be wetter behind the legs than the other.) (Olojede, 2012, 9)
This proverb indicates that a bad name would be attached to the name of a female, but after a similarly immoral act committed by a male his name would not be tarnished. Similar discrimination is levied against females in a Punjabi proverb ‘putter howay nadaan tay beh samjhaiye, dhee howay nadaan, nadi nurrhaiye’ (Shahbaz 107) (If a son commits a mistake, it’s better to advice and counsel him calmly, but if a daughter does the same, throw her (to die) into the river). Two opposite reactions are advised for the same type of mistakes by children based on their gender.

Wife as Trouble

_Aini obirin ko se e dake lasan_

Having no wife calls for positive action. (Aluko, Onabanjo and Alliyu 2011, 63)

This proverb associates the absence of a wife in a man’s life with prospects for much positive and constructive action.

Punitive Measures

_Pashan ta fi na yale, oun be laja fun’yawo_

(“The whip that was used to beat the first wife is kept for the second wife.”) (Balogun 2010, 5)

This proverb simultaneously mentions the use of physical punishment to control wives and the right of polygamy for the husband. Though control is given to men in Punjabi proverbs also, no mention of physical abuse as a measure could be found; rather, good control it is advised: ‘baal tay zaal rubru changay’ (Shahbaz 2006,134). (Keep your wife and kids in front of your eyes.)

Insincere/Ungrateful

_bia si fi gbogbo odede jin oko agbere tabi iyawo onisekuse, kope o ma se sina_

(Give a promiscuous wife all you have in a beautiful house that does not preclude her from selling herself inexpensively to a paramour (Balogun 2010, 6).

The proverb delineates the nature of a woman to be ungrateful and insincere, no matter how much comfort her husband creates for her. The Punjabi counterpart expresses such ungratefulness through the matter of a spoon: ‘kha pee k do da moonh kund wul’h’ (85) (After eating, the cooking spoon will face the wall).

Hard-hearted/Murderous

_Obinrin bimo fun ni ko pe ko mo pani, obinrin ko bimo funni ko pe koma pani_
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(“Whether a woman has a child or not for her husband does not prevent her from killing him.”) (Balogun 2010, 9)

**Okunrin ti ko ku, obinrin re ni ko ti i paa**

(If a man is not yet dead, it is because his woman is yet to kill him.) (Balogun 2010, 9)

This proverb reinforces the traits of selfishness and insincerity of wives. It is utilised as a notice to men that they ought not to have false security from the fact that their spouses have borne youngsters for them; the tie may not be as solid as the husbands may think it to be. Insincerity in females’ nature is given vent in a Punjabi proverb too but with lesser intensity, “akhir nu sassi apnay bhrawn dee” (In the end, Sassi will favour her brothers (over her lover))

**Opportunist**

*itakun l’obinrin yoo maa fa kaa ni*

(Women are climber plants that overrun any available space.) (Balogun 2010, 6)

The expression in this proverb is figurative. It compares the nature of a woman to that of a plant which keeps its roots in one place and its branches in another. The proverb pictures women as people of unpredictable character, with a natural propensity to be involved in multiple affairs at the same time (Daramola 2007, 127).

**Marriage and Age**

*Bi obinrin b’ape nile, aje londa*

(If a woman stays too long in the house, she becomes a witch.) (Balogun 2010, 7)

This proverb is a reflection of the Yoruba conception of long spinsterhood. Marriage should be held at an early stage of a woman’s life; otherwise she may start losing respect as indicated by the metaphor of becoming a witch. Contrastively, Punjabi culture emphasizes ‘kariye kanwari bhawen budhi howay’ (Marry a virgin, no matter how old she is).

**Jealous**

*Orisa je npe meji obinrin ko de ‘nu*

(Women detest rivals.) (Balogun 2010, 6)

The jealousy of females is reinforced in Punjabi proverbs like ‘runn nu nenn larrey, wiss kinu charhay?’ (Who will get the poison when a wife bites her co-wife?)

**Problematic Beauty**

*Eni ti ofe arewa fe iyonyu, eni gbogbo ni i ba won tan*

(He who marries beauty marries trouble; everybody claims a relationship with her.) (Balogun 2010, 8)
The beauty of a wife is termed as a problem creating a phenomenon after marriage in Punjabi culture too: "Runn sohni tay jaan da khooh" (135) (A beauty of a wife is problematic for the whole life).

**Incapable for Leadership**

\[ Tio \text{ ba nidi obirin ki ije kumolu } \]

(Woman cannot be named Kumolu for any reason.) (Familusi 2012, 302)

This name is given to men, especially those who are potential leaders of their families. Kumolu is a name given to men who exhibit leadership traits; this proverb forbids calling any woman by this title. A similar belief is prevalent in Punjabi culture where women leaders are despised: ‘Os pind day hud na wassiye jithy onat howay muqadmani’ (p. 24) (Don’t live even at the boundary of a village where a lady makes decisions).

**Motherhood**

\[ Orisa bi iya ko si. \]

(There is no deity like a mother.) (Aluko, Onabanjo & Alliyu, 2011, 5)

\[ Iya la ba ma a bo \]

(It is the mother who is worthy of being worshipped.)

Just as in Punjabi society, these Yoruba proverbs describe women’s roles as mothers and eulogise them, and giving them more importance as compared to fathers.

**Responsible for training**

\[ Omo to ba da ni ti Baba eyi ti oku die fun ni tiyae \]

(A well-behaved child is the father’s, while the wayward one is attached to the mother.) (Aluko Onabanjo and Alliyu 2011, 13)

\[ Owu ti iya gbon, lomo ran \]

(The child takes after the behaviour of the mother.) (Balogun 2010, 8).

This adage is indicative of the fact that whenever men want to discipline their children for rowdy conduct, the mother will be held solely responsible. Punjabi culture similarly ascribes this duty of rearing to mothers and blame for any misconduct on the part of children: “burey nu na maro, burey dee maan nu maro” (Don’t beat/kill an evil doer, beat/kill his mother).

**Findings and Discussion**

The main research questions are answered in this section: how women and men have been represented in Punjabi and Nigerian proverbs. Second, these stereotypical representations of gender are compared and contrasted. The way these proverbs are (re)creating, reinforcing and perpetuating patriarchy, is also brought to light. Discussion of the findings
from both languages is elaborated within the perspective of Feminist CDA, specifically, and theories of gender construction generally. This article has investigated the portrayal of males and females in the folklore of the Punjabi and Nigerian (Yoruba) societies with the viewpoint of FCDA (Lazar 2005) which examines gender-based disparities and the propagation of male-centric inclinations in conventional social orders through various discursive practices. Wodak (2005) has suggested that one of the doctrines of FCDA is making transparent the prevailing gender ideology to deconstruct symbolic and hegemonic violence against females. On the surface, most of the Punjabi and Nigerian (Yoruba) proverbs in this research have explicitly or implicitly denigrated the personas of females and strengthened their inferior place in the respective societies. Women are portrayed in a positive light sometimes but only when they are mentioned as mothers and daughters. Cameron (2005) has concurred that, “one legitimate goal for language and gender scholarship is political: to contribute to the wider struggle against unjust and oppressive gender relations, by revealing and challenging the ideological propositions which support and naturalise those relations” (Cameron, 2005, 16).

In a great number of Nigerian (Yoruba) and Punjabi precepts, men have been eulogized through face-saving representation while women have been impaired through face-damaging typecasts. The analyst deliberately incorporated proverbs that express the African (Yoruba) and Punjabi societies' standard manufacture of masculinity as ‘gender relationality’ is emphasised in FCDA (Lazar 2005). This principle focuses on discursive co-construction of methods of doing and being a man and a woman in specific groups; it concerns both men and women within certain gender hierarchies. Thus ‘gender relationality’ also includes analysis of how men folk are textually represented (Johnson and Meinhof 1997).

Three noteworthy dimensions of verbal sexism are distinguished in the folk genre under scrutiny folk genre: i) it slanders women, ii) it depicts them as unimportant, and iii) it totally overlooks them. Women are for the most part delineated as below average and less critical residents in the proverbs of both the cultures. Men have been depicted as constructive, productive and open figures, while women are delineated as dangerous, nonsensical and restricted to domestic issues which require no intellectual brilliance. Men have also been portrayed as confident, aggressive, judicious, dominant, and confrontational, while women are portrayed as foolish, unreliable, quarrelsome, inefficient, selfish, loquacious, ungrateful, and deceiver.

Women have been presented as persons who lack intellect, wisdom, and insight. Their wits rest in a dormant condition and never work actively. In Punjabi and Yoruba languages, many such maxims are employed to refute the idea that women own intellectuality and competence, such as one needs to participate in stimulating economic,
political, and social matters. As a result, these maxims generate discursive conditions for legalizing women’s unparalleled dependence on men. Therefore, it is usually approved that men should manage the family domain and women must go along with their men’s plans. African proverbs also prescribe women as misfit for intellectually higher roles. Consequently, both Punjabi and Nigerian proverbs disapprove of females who are assertive. Females are regarded as incapable of handling authority and control. They will surely make negative use of the power and control given to them. According to Lazar (2005), a dual function is performed by semantic derogation and subjugation in discursive practices: feminine subservience is hypothesised as well as sanctioned (23).

The findings of the previous studies have been verified by the current analysis, although these investigations were carried out about other languages spoken in neighbouring contexts (Siddiqui 2013; Sanauddin 2015; Khan 2015; Rasul 2016; Khan, Mustafa and Ali 2017 and Nadil, Sultan and Kaker 2018). Gender bias and the respective mode of women’s lives have been perpetuated through strong proverbial folklore. These nuggets of traditional beliefs work as ISA (Ideological State Apparatuses) tools; and persons who remain unable to comply with these codes of conduct have to face admonition (Lazar 2005).

Motherhood, Fertility, and Procreation

Generally, in both cultures, mothers are portrayed comparatively in lesser negative and more positive terms. They are venerated and appreciated most, even more than fathers. Aluko (2018, 94) has made a valid point about mothers in Africa: “Women are the pedagogues to lead their children, and this requires them to live a life worthy of emulation”. In contrast, spouse, co-wives, mothers-in-law, and spinsters are all depicted in exceedingly disparaging images.

Young women are made to believe through these maxims that their value is attached to their procreative ability. Traditional societies expect at least 6 to 7 children from a married woman. So the wife who has given birth only to a single child is despised as compared to a lady who has given birth to a large number of children. The number of male babies is also a significant factor in determining the worth of a wife; the more male babies the stronger she will feel.

Another important theme that comes to light after analysing both Punjabi and Nigerian proverbs is that only mothers are responsible for the physical, mental and moral upbringing of children. It is described that an immoral woman cannot give birth to pious sons. It is even expressed explicitly that a sinner’s mother should be punished instead of the sinner himself.
Gender Segregation and Patriarchy

Men are required just to earn handsomely and have been assigned outdoor duties while women are expected to do domestic chores like making food, looking after the home and rearing children. Males are the reasonable side of humanity, while the physical side is constituted by the females; just as the body abides by orders given by the brain, so the female counterparts of humanity obey their husbands. An African proverb conveys a similar point: “Woe betide you if you have no male figure in your family” (Hussein 2009, 104). It means that a family will be complete only when it has male members; a family without males is like a house without a roof. Another Akan proverb also sheds light on the male’s significance for women: ‘The man is the woman’s honor.’ (Hussein 2009, 238).

Childbearing and rearing are ascribed to mothers while fathers are fully exempted, in both the Punjabi and Nigerian societies. As the focal concern of Feminist CDA experts (Lazar 2005) is with studying texts (here proverbs) which manage a male-dominated social hierarchy that methodically benefits males as a social group and undermines females as another social group, this exploration has presumed that Punjabi and Nigerian sayings are one-sided towards males emphatically and towards females contrarily.

On the other hand, Punjabi and African women have been presented in a very negative light. They are even devoid of and deprived of their humanity in some proverbs. They are bracketed with animals, insects, and lands to emphasise the devaluation attached to them in Punjabi and Nigerian societies. Women are compared with man’s shoe, knife, land, money, and property; with animals like ‘bitch’, ‘pig’, and ‘buffalo’ and with insects like ‘fly’ and ‘louse’ which suck blood and irritate all the time. Females have been portrayed as commodities instead of human beings. According to Freire (1998), the persecutors also internalise the adverse attitudes towards themselves which gives birth to self-abnegation in return. Subjugated people become convinced of their worthlessness and inferior status through being frequently informed about their ineffectiveness and unproductiveness (Freire 1998).

The fundamental motivation behind this investigation in the perspective of Feminist CDA is an emancipatory comparative analysis of Punjabi and Nigerian proverbs; it is transparently dedicated to the accomplishment of a simple social request through an evaluation of folkloric talk about males and females recognizing them as per their physiological differences. Feminist critical analysis of such gendered social practices and relations is pointed to at last as affecting social change (Lazar 2005).
Conclusion

According to Spender (1985), a twofold job is performed by the semantic subjugation and oppression of females in the maxims: it creates feminine acquiescence and naturalises it. In the Nigerian and Punjabi maxims, as a solid method for socialization, women have been displayed as inconvenience creators, talkative, unintelligent, unmanageable, narrow-minded, terrible chiefs, clever and negatively passionate. Women are contrasted and classified with belittling animals which underline their useless presence in the general public and home. Balogun (2010) has properly contended that these proverbs damage the rights and poise of females and that they are markers of victimization against women in Yoruba (and Punjabi) culture. These maxims leave a damaging impact on the self-confidence of women when they masquerade as a deep-rooted stamp on the mental self-image and confidence of women in the shroud of being 'truthful discourse' (Khan, Aziz and Hussain 2018; Khan and Ateeq 2017; Khan and Anwar 2016).

One difference found is that emphasis on the unreliability and promiscuity of women seems more prevalent in the Nigerian culture as compared to the Punjabi culture. Additionally, the sanction of physical punishment to control women has found explicit expression in Nigerian maxims, but no parallel proverbs could be found in the Punjabi corpus. However, both Punjabi and Nigerian (Yoruba) maxims about gender are relentlessly utilised to maintain misuse, prohibition, and control of women. Therefore, the free participation of females is hindered in everyday profitable exercises. This disabled commitment of females would restrain the significant growth and development of both social orders.

Recommendation

The scholarly people of both communities must pay heed to so profoundly established gender partiality depicted in their proverbs and must endeavour to develop and implement strategies to dispose of this linguistic usage from both the languages and explicitly from their proverbs. Consequently, we should be able to expect that women will assume useful jobs and use their maximum capacity to help themselves, support their families and contribute towards the general public.

Further Research

Only a small number of selected proverbs have been presented and discussed in this research. Future researchers may explore this genre more extensively and bring new angles into light. Further research can be done on gender bias, representation in and perpetuation of patriarchy in folk tales, folk songs, *tapas*, jokes and humorous writings in
different languages. Actual use of proverbs by native speakers living in urban and rural areas, based on their gender, age, academic qualification, and professional background can be analysed for further implications of this and other oral literature/s with reference to gender and other perspectives.

Bibliography


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