

## Gender Formulation in the Daily English Proverbs: A Discourse Analysis Study

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### ABSTRACT

Proverbs are utilized in all languages to communicate particular messages. However, when proverbs are translated from one language to another, translation difficulties arise due to the cultural and linguistic connotations inherent to proverbs. The concept of power, and more specifically the social power of organizations or institutions, is typically considered to be one of the most important aspects of critical study on discourse. The role of women that is wife, daughter, mother or sister is being described and analyzed throughout discourse concepts such as power and social inequality. This study presents violence in critical discourse analysis of Proverbs of English to examine how power relationships of different genders are determined through linguistic choices in different languages/societies. The data of this study are 17 proverbs which have been selected from different sources about proverbs which are the most prominent in the English culture. Van Dijk (1988/1995) Model of Dominance and Power is used: When it comes to power problems, van Dijk (1995) tends to take a cognitive approach. The study has shown that Femininity can be seen as an established ideological term, portraying women as mere victims of subjugation.

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### Introduction

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is defined by Fairclough (1993) as “the relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events, and texts, and (b) larger social and cultural structures, interactions, and processes” (p. 135). It is used to examine how power relations and struggles over power generate and ideologically affect behaviors, events, and texts. Furthermore, CDA explores how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society serves to secure power and hegemony.

The present study investigates the issue of violence to understand and describe how women are treated from a social perspective. Despite women’s access to education and paid employment, many challenges they face in public spaces are rooted in persistent gendered social structures. These challenges include exclusion and alienation among peers and subordinates, the scarcity of female role models and self-directed

leadership styles for women managers, the silencing of non-mainstream perspectives in peer discussions, and the burden of managing dual roles at work and home.

Violence against women has been a pervasive issue from ancient times to the 20th century. Any act of physical, sexual, or psychological aggression toward women, including threats or arbitrary deprivation of liberty—whether in public or private spheres—is considered an act of violence against women. This study focuses on proverbs that reflect such violence by analyzing three themes: treating women, women's appearance, and the role of women in life.

As Hildebrandt (2005) notes, proverbs—ranging from Sumerian clay tablets (circa 2500 B.C.) to modern Internet pop-ups—are found across cultures and mediums. They appear in collections of proverbs, epics, poems, musicals, dramas, novels, and even advertisements.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Discourse***

Crystal (2008) defines discourse as a term in linguistics that refers to a continuous stretch of language—particularly spoken—that extends beyond the sentence level. However, this concept encompasses a range of interpretations. At its broadest, discourse is considered a pre-theoretical linguistic behavioral unit: a group of utterances that form a recognizable speech event, such as a conversation, joke, sermon, or interview, without necessarily referencing its grammatical structure. Similarly, Van Dijk (1997) explains that the term discourse typically refers to a form of language use—such as public speeches—or more generally to spoken language or styles of speaking, such as the discourse of former President Ronald Reagan.

Another important aspect of discourse concerns the questions of “who” and “what”—that is, who is speaking and what the speaker is doing. As Gee (2005) notes, when something is spoken or written, the resources of language are employed to project a particular identity, such as that of a researcher engaged in a specific activity. This identity varies depending on the context. Without an awareness of who they are and what they are doing, individuals cannot fully comprehend or make sense of their speech, writing, or actions.

### ***Microstructure of Discourse***

Microstructures refer to the parts of discourse that are explicitly and directly expressed. While the term is often used in a practical sense to group linguistic features, it may also carry theoretical significance from a cognitive perspective. Concepts such as “sentence” and “sequence of sentences” are commonly used in discussing ideas at this level. The term sentence originates from classical grammar, whereas sequence of sentences has been widely applied in text grammars—grammatical approaches that go beyond the sentence to consider larger structures comprising discourse and conversation. In this context, “text” represents the abstract structure of a discourse. Therefore, discourse can be seen as a lens through which we interpret meaning, while text is a conceptual framework for organizing language. For a discourse to be accepted

within a language community, it typically needs to include sentence and text structures, although this is not always the case (Van Dijk, 1980, p. 26).

In discussions of language use and cognitive processing, discourse refers to communicative events that may include spoken interactions, written texts, body language, visuals, and other semiotic forms. This broader view contrasts with the term text, which is usually limited to the abstract grammatical representation of language. The term sentence is also used in both theoretical and observational contexts, highlighting its dual function. The construction and interpretation of discourse are governed by general rules that require deeper levels of analysis to assign global semantic structures. These structures constrain sentence-level interpretation and enhance overall textual coherence (Van Dijk, 1980, p. 26).

### ***Discourse Analysis***

Zellig Harris introduced the term discourse analysis (henceforth DA) in 1952 as a method for examining how speech and writing function together. He was primarily concerned with two aspects: language beyond the sentence level and the relationship between language and non-linguistic behavior. His main focus was on the former, aiming to describe how different text types and styles utilize specific linguistic elements. Harris's foundational point was that "whether someone is talking, conversing, or sitting down several times a month to produce a specific genre of book inside a specific academic or literary canon, they are engaging in connected discourse" (Paltridge, 2012, p. 2).

DA explores how language is used in various texts and how it interacts with the social and cultural contexts in which it is embedded. It investigates how language reflects different ideologies and worldviews, how relationships between speakers influence language use, and how language contributes to shaping social identities and interpersonal dynamics. Furthermore, DA examines the role of discourse in constructing individuals' perceptions of the world and their sense of self.

### ***Critical Discourse Analysis***

Brown and Miller (2013) define Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as "the analysis of texts in connection to social and political systems and power, especially in the light of Marxist theory" (p. 115). CDA emphasizes the relationship between language and power structures, viewing discourse not merely as text, but as a social practice. Fairclough (1989) further argues that while the choices of text, structure, or discourse are contextually constrained—usable only in specific times and places—ideologies transcend particular situations or institutions. Therefore, it is important to examine how ideologies extend beyond specific discursive conventions and influence the relationships between social constructs (e.g., equating the nation with a family) (p. 191).

Critical Discourse Analysis explores how language is embedded within and shaped by social and political contexts. It pays attention to issues such as gender, race, cultural differences, ideology, and identity, and how these are constructed and represented in discourse. CDA also investigates how language both shapes and is

shaped by social relationships. As Paltridge (2012) explains, CDA often involves a close analysis of text followed by interpretation and critique. This may include uncovering the ideologies embedded in the language, identifying biases and assumptions, and drawing connections between the text, other discourses, and broader social experiences and beliefs (p. 186).

### ***Violence against Women in English Proverbs***

Put simply, power dynamics involve struggles over conflicting interests that may be expressed, reflected, reinforced, or challenged in various contexts and with differing levels of explicitness. Sexism is often evident through discriminatory laws and practices, hostile work environments for women, and derogatory language directed at female colleagues. Despite existing legislation that prohibits overt sex discrimination, a pervasive "rape culture" persists in Western societies such as the United States, where displays of dominance—or threats thereof—remain a daily reality for many women. Contemporary politics is increasingly shaped by a more diffuse and insidious form of power—discursive power—that, while subtle in appearance, can have significant consequences. According to Foucault (1977), this form of power is omnipresent, self-regulating, and productive; it creates and shapes subjects in the broadest sense.

Discursive power is particularly dangerous because it operates covertly, presenting itself as harmless while deeply influencing societal structures and identities. Feminist perspectives highlight that while power may be "everywhere," as Foucault suggests, it affects individuals differently based on gender. Incorporating Gramsci's concept of hegemony into this discussion enriches the critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework by viewing power as both dominance and consent (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA), in particular, investigates access to discourse—such as communicative events and culturally valued genres—as potential sites for empowering women. It examines how gendered social practices are textually represented to uncover the multiple ways in which power and dominance are constructed, maintained, and contested (van Dijk, 1993, 1996).

### ***The Meaning of Proverbs across cultures and Contextualization***

Women are subjected to "two discourses," which, according to Rojo and Esteban (2003), means they are constantly required to justify their presence and achievements at every level of society, even at the highest levels. Individuals with similar qualifications or credentials are not always evaluated equally, highlighting persistent gender-based disparities. While gender roles and expressions of sexism have evolved over time, the fundamental structure of gender has remained relatively consistent across cultures and historical periods. As Rubin (as cited in Fraser & Nicholson, 1990, p. 28) states, feminist critical discourse analysis aims to examine the "endless diversity and monotonous similarity" of women's oppression.

Mieder (1970) defines a proverb as "a short sentence of wisdom" (p. 219). When a proverb is metaphorical, understanding its literal meaning is essential. For instance, the proverb "don't weep over spilled milk" conveys the idea that one should not dwell on the past, as it cannot be changed. This interpretation allows the proverb to be applied

in various contexts: a football coach may use it to console a team after a loss, or a friend might jokingly quote it after winning a Scrabble game. Proverbs, therefore, offer a valuable lens for examining the interplay between authority and ideology. As van Dijk (2001) notes, the exercise of power—whether legitimate or illegitimate—can often be observed through such linguistic expressions (p. 355).

## Method

After giving an overview of the study's theoretical foundation, data description, data analysis tools, and the model used to analyze the data will be briefly tackled in this section.

## Data Collection and Description

It is essential to provide an overview of the data analyzed in this study. The selected sources of proverbs include *Never Marry a Woman with Big Feet: Women in Proverbs from Around the World* by Mineke Schipper (2004), *The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs* by Jennifer Speake (1999), and *English Proverbs Explained* by Ridout and Witting (2009). A total of twenty proverbs are examined, distributed evenly across the three sources to ensure validity and reliability. Specifically, seven proverbs are selected from Schipper, seven from Ridout and Witting, and six from Speake. These twenty proverbs form the primary data set for the current investigation. Understanding the original context in which these proverbs were used is crucial for interpreting their meaning. Therefore, this study analyzes the literal and metaphorical meanings of each proverb while contextualizing them within the cultural frameworks in which they are embedded.

Women Related Proverbs and violence against them is a very broad topic, so a certain theme concerning the status and value of women are tackled and the themes are the following: 1. Women's Appearance; 2. Treating Women; 3. Women's Roles in Life.

## Method of Analysis

To get the best findings, each study must have a clear, disciplined, systematic (coordinated, planned and public) methodology. Mixed method is used in this study.

## Model of Analysis

### *Van Dijk's Model (1988/1995) Model of Dominance and Power*

van Dijk (1995) approaches power issues cognitively. He believes all power-exercising devices aim to control, modify, and guide to benefit more powerful, domineering people. Hence, he believes that mental information, beliefs, and attitudes generate language and social interaction (van Dijk, 2009, p.64).

van Dijk (1995, p. 22) believes that powerful participants can influence recipients' minds for their own benefit. Some actors' mental models "embody social information and attitudes" and influence others' actions directly or indirectly. In general, van Dijk (1995) offers two CDA framework analysis dimensions:

i. Micro and Macro Levels

## ii. Discourse, Cognition and Society.

Those two dimensions interact, discourse, communication, and language use are examined at the micro level, whereas social order, power, dominant hierarchy, and inequality are examined at the macro level. Hence, CDA techniques must reconcile the micro-macro divide, which is a sociological construct (van Dijk, 2000, p.354). Dijk's triangle includes:

- I. Discourse, which encompasses spoken and written communication, body language, visuals, and other semiotic signifiers. van Dijk (1995) believes that ideology analysis requires dialogue. According to him, speech and communication rarely express and reproduce ideologies, and social cognition mediates society and discourse.
- II. Cognition—beliefs, values, emotions, objectives, and other mental structures—can be personal or social.
- III. Society, which encompasses local micro structures and political, social, and universal macro structures defined by groups and their power, dominance, and inequality.

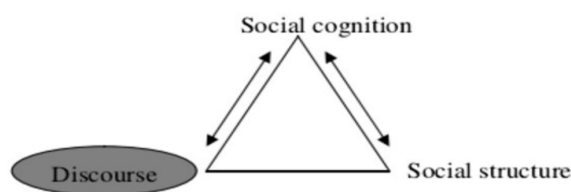


Figure 1. Discourse-cognitive-society triangle

## Data Analysis

### *Women's Appearance*

It seems that women's appearance is frequently emphasized in English WRPs. However, it is not important in as much as proverbs care about women's well-being. In fact, it is common because English WRPs usually look at women as if they are part of men's property. That is, these proverbs make it look like men own women; and as a result, men should make sure that their property is beautiful and pleasant so as to keep it around. To illustrate this, consider the following proverb:

1. *"Never pick women or horses by candlelight."* (Kerschen, 1998, p. 68)

This proverb is somehow straightforward. The second level macro analysis can be clearly seen when the proverb is analyzed. This proverb glorifies the importance men as opposed to the misshapen and deforming importance of women in society by comparing women to animals. In other words, women are violated by likening them to livestock. The last prepositional phrase "by Candlelight" indicated that men must choose their wives in the daytime but not at night and darkness where everyone could hardly see everything. Therefore, women's appearance is crucial to men and when a



women is ugly, she is disregarded from the choice. Another proverb which enhances the appearance and violence of women is as follows:

2. *"A man is as old as he feels, and a woman is as old as she looks."* (Ridout and Witting, 1983, p.115)

The discourse which refers to personal believes and goals is noticed. The relation between the members of society , as for instance between a husband and a wife , can be also seen. This relates to the second point of the triangle. The different ageing matter is compared between man and women. The proverb summarizes the fact that men are appreciated and respected for their inner self even when they are old. On the other hand , women are only desired and demanded when they are young and physically attractive. This is a cognitive process which Van Dijk called as relations between the members of the society.

3. *"A woman's tongue wags like a lamb's tail. "* (Ridout and Witting, 1983, p.117)

Women are frequently mentioned in the same breath as animals when people talk about them. The goose, a type of bird, is frequently connected with women. In general, a "talkative" goose who goes around the town yelling, much as those who live in groups and like gossip and slander. According to a physiological research, women's brain capacity for language is far more than men's, thus their ability to communicate with others is not a flaw. Nagging is a means for women to express their unhappiness. Men, on the other hand, do not grasp this need of women, do not listen to their voices, and instead criticize them blindly.

4. *"A man of straw is worth of a woman of gold"*(Kerschen, 1998, p. 68)

The aforementioned proverbs are replete with male chauvinism and are indicative of the oppressed and bullied position that women hold in society. If a poor guy is better than a woman, his wife is nothing more than a piece of clothing he can discard whenever he chooses. Others even go so far as to say that women aren't actually human and are instead some sort of supernatural being on par with the devil. According to the Bible, man is God's first creation, the one from whom all else originates, and the one who rules over the rest of creation. One may see that when God created humans, he gave the man authority and paired the woman with him.

Social structure which entails the relationship between the members of the community is noticed and utilized. In other words , dominance of men over women , social inequality that men had received more education and training. Unlike them, women is portrayed as being mistreated in terms of power , goals , and mental structure.

5. *"A man without ambition is like a woman without looks."* (Speare , 2000, p.45)

Here, the proverb implies the notion that men are extremely respected and valued only when they have ambition, otherwise they resemble the ugly women without appearance and pretty look. Violence against women is any act of gender-based violence that causes or is likely to cause physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women. It has been seen, disvaluing social status of women, in Van Dijk model as social inequality. The represent the relationship between a man who is unambitious and a plain woman as a factual one. Creating this relationship may be considered as a way to encourage men to do their utmost in order to have a success in life, but it is definitely derogatory since it stresses what women look like as if this is all what women have in their armory to give to the world.

6. “*A blind man's wife needs no paint.*” (Spear, 2000, p. 323)

It's because blind individuals can't see what's going on around them. In other words, a blind man does not need to know whether his wife is attractive or not; her body does. Another interpretation of this pre-modifier is that it is a metaphor. To repeat, this blind man may not be actually blind; he may simply be blinded by love. As a result, his appearance is unimportant to him.

In regard to implying, the sensual implicature which exists in the proverb above can also be found in other proverbs which are constructed with different diction. Nevertheless, other proverbs may be more explicitly implicit than the one above: being explicitly implicit seems like an oxymoron, but those proverbs do exist. To clarify this, the proverb below is provided:

7. “*Dirty water will quench fire.*” (Spear, 2000, p. 135)

According to “The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs”, the proverb at hand is usually used to refer to women's physical ability to satisfy men. And what makes this one offensive is the hostile sexism that it contains. That is, it uses the noun phrase dirty water as metaphor to refer to women. The last thing to touch on here is the process of the action. Although it seems like women are able to control men's lust, the co-text of the proverb makes the action (quench) look like an event occurring without the existence of an animate Actor (women).

8. “*Men make houses, women make homes.*” Ridout Witting (1983, p.5)

This proverb prioritizes men because it is believed that men should make efforts to build houses, and then women come to make this house warm and full of love homes. Another thing to note here is the use of the verb make. In the co-text of this adage, there could be two implications. Although make is employed in both phrases, its metaphorical roles and meanings are likely to differ. That is, it alludes to men's efforts to go out and earn a living, but it also relates to women's established duty to offer love and comfort in the home. For this reason, verbs like build or provide are not used. The relation between the members of society, as for instance between a husband and a wife, can be



also seen. This relates to the second point of the triangle. The different ageing matter is compared between man and women. According to Van Dijk(1995) the powerful principle between the participant is fulfilled. This refers to one of the triangles if the model referring to believes and emotions.

9. *“A good wife is a perfect lady in the living room, a good cook in the kitchen, and a whore in bed.”* (Ridout , 1983, p. 216)

According to the cognitive perspective of power relations , there are three characteristics in this proverb. Macro-structures which describe the social relation not only between husband and a wife but also between for example , employee and his boss , maid-housewife et... Therefore , if the woman does not fulfill theses three condition , then she would be a bad wife. This is because enumerating indicates that a list is complete. Therefore, the three characteristics/activities stated in the list are not just some desired examples which should be found in a wife. According the proverb, they are all what a woman needs in order to be a good wife. As far as the content of the list is concerned, the reader/hearer will find three salient characteristics a woman should have: a perfect lady, a good cook, and a whore. These three noun phrases are tinged with a good wife. In the absence of the proverb's context, these noun phrases lose much of their clarity. That's right—the sex worker is what the disapproving and pejorative epithet "whore" actually means. It follows that her husband is a procurer. But the original sense of the phrase was a wife who does her husband's bidding.

### ***Treating Women***

In the last section, some proverbs about how women can only do so much in life have been tackled. Another thing that people who study proverbs often talk about is the wisdom and advice that English proverbs give about how to treat women, especially wives. So, this is what the part at hand will be about. “Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs” (2008) is selected to have some proverbs regarding the aspect of treating women, especially wives.

10. *“A woman, a dog, and a walnut, the more you beat them the better they be.”*  
(Scipper 1998, p. 510)

CDA analyses texts and dialogues concerning social practices, social interactions, and personal identities to determine how gender ideology and gendered power relationships are constructed, modified, negotiated, and contested. In this proverb , women are equated with animals and trees. In this proverb several features related to treating women are not coincidental, particularly with regards to walnut trees. And it is not uncommon for women-related proverbs to involve animals or things. Hence, women are typically compared to inanimate objects and living things (e.g., livestock and dogs). Obviously, comparing a human (in this case, a lady) to an animal (in this case, a dog) is a disparaging statement.

Like the proverb analyzed above, some English proverbs seem to be interested in equating women with animals and objects. However, some of them have gone to the extent that they portray women as inferior to animals. For instance, some proverbs say that animals are more trustworthy than women. To clarify this, consider the following proverb from Kerschen's (1998):

11. *"Trust your dog to the end, and a woman to the first opportunity"* (Scipper, 1998, p. 95)

This proverb starts with the verb trust which relates to the cognitive portray and relation between a husband and a wife, for instance. This is a micro level analysis which is specified to the social relations instead of generalized matters like politics and parliamentary debates. It is extremely concerned with treating women only. How bad or good the relation is between the man and his wife. This proverb shows two ends. The first one the dog's end and the second is the women's end. It entails that animals and women are of equal value. Moreover, if dogs are highly relying on them in daily issues, they may be treated better than women.

12. *"Handle with care women and glass."* (Ridout, 1983, p. 70)

The proverb at hand begins with the verb handle, followed by the prepositional phrase with care, which works as a postmodifier of the verb handle. These two phrases (handle + with care) are commonly found on packages containing fragile items. This phrase also serves as the title of a song by the English-American band The Traveling Wilbur's. The singer communicates his unhappiness and dissatisfaction in the song. As a result, he desires that his beloved "handle [him] with care" because he is fragile and in need of care. Hence, the term treat with caution implies that the thing that follows the statement is fragile. Furthermore, the phrase 'handle with care' may treat women as fragile and sensitive as glasses so this is indirect comparison (hence a metaphor is used). So, women are dealt with as an object or a pattern but not as a human being which must be respected and honored.

13. *"He knows a little who tells his wife all he knows."* (Kerschen, 1998, p. 20)

Groups and their relationships, such as control, power, dominance, and inequality, characterize society at all scales, from the individual to the global. It appears that the proverb as a whole implies that women are not to be trusted. And if a man confides in them, he will not be considered wise enough to understand how cunning they are.

The last proverb to be tackled in this theme (Treating Women) has almost a similar proposition to the ones analyzed above. However, different metaphors are used in order to convey a slightly different message. This proverb also places emphasis on the importance of treating women carefully because they might turn against their husbands without any prior warning.

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14. “*If you make your wife an ass, she will make you an ox.*” (Ridout, 1983, p. 200)

This proverb hypothesizes what will happen if a husband treats his wife a certain way. An ass and an ox must be discussed to properly grasp these analogies. First, the proverb's author named the wife an ass (donkey) since donkeys are associated with stupidity. Oxen are draught animals like water buffaloes and mules, and this foolish wife can turn her husband into one. Donkeys, unlike oxen and other draught animals, make decisions and will not work if they feel insecure. They suffer in silence, so people don't notice they're sick. This naming symbolizes that a husband who takes his wife for granted may be betrayed without notice.

### ***Women's Role in Life***

The guiding concept of feminist critical discourse analysis is that feminists should engage in self-reflective assessments of their theoretical perspectives, and that they should care about progressive institutional activities (including subversive uses of feminism). What we do and how we act. There are two main topics discussed. The first is what we call "institutional reflexivity," which encompasses both progressive measures like implementing gender programmed in institutions like businesses and schools, and restorative practices like making good use of feminist concepts for non-feminist or anti-feminist objectives. In the second section, we move our attention to feminist researchers and the necessity of feminists critically evaluating their own analytic stances and behaviors, lest they unwittingly aid in maintaining hierarchically unequal conduct towards women's groups rather than eliminating it. (Lazar, 2008 , p. 92).

It's worth noting that this theme uses the same structure as the last one, but it's about something different. This theme might be harder than the last one because it's about what women are expected to do over the course of their lives. This theme will start with a proverb from Ridout Witting (1983) to show this point:

15. “*A prudent woman studies the comfort of her husband and house; whereas a scold and spendthrift thinks of parties and fashions.*” (Downey, 1858, p. 19)

It has just been mentioned above that these two clauses express two opposite propositions. The first clause is about a type of woman who is different from the one found in the second clause. Importantly, in this world, if a woman is interested in parties and fashions, this means she is not prudent. This is a cognitive analytical level that is the second level of analysis in Van Dijk's discourse model. Verbs that belong to the mental cognition category are those that have to do with thoughts and not with actions. Maybe this is why this wife is such a nag: she cares a lot about clothes and going to parties, and she keeps bugging her husband to get her what she wants, but she doesn't always do these things, she just thinks about them. How a lady might earn her husband's praise as a worthy wife. Being that it is not an overt attack on women, it can also be seen as an expression of benign sexism. Simply put, it advises wives on how to avoid appearing shallow to their partners.

16. *"A wife is a young man's slave and an old man's darling."* (Spear, 2000, p. 19)

To begin with, women, and especially wives, are portrayed as slaves and beloved things at the same time, and that they belong to men. This implies that women are generally considered men's property. This view must be considered in CDA and particularly in the model being used. Likewise, this proverb does not mention whether the girl or woman is poor or rich. It is in common-sense knowledge it is a man's property. Domination, inequality, power are well-taken in consideration in contemporary critical discourse analysis. There are also two men in the proverb not one, the young and the old. Man's slave and old man's darling. Finally, if a young man is described as having a slave, it could be seen as an indication that he is confident enough in his good looks and physical condition to resist being dominated by his wife. In contrast, an elderly man needs to tread lightly so as not to offend his lovely young wife.

17. *"Any woman can keep a secret, but she generally needs one other woman to help her."* (Spear, 2000, p. 200)

According to van Dijk (2000: 354), there are two levels of micro and macro situation and interaction between discourse and society. The first level is represented in the depiction of the interactions between members of society and the structure of society. Women in this proverb is treated like a child who needs help to play or do something. Similarly, women's role in life summarizes the way they do so. A woman needs another one to share a secret. In short, there are two characteristics related to women being mentioned in a hand proverb: 1- they are unreliable and 2- they are not confident because of their talkativeness in sharing a secret, unlike men who have been shown as they can keep secrets and also, they are vulnerable. Women's role in life and how they are portrayed in the above mentioned proverbs show the nature of CDA and its importance in society and the relationship among the members of society. This is what Van Dijk and other discourse analyst concentrate on. Beside this, there are other aspects of critical discourse like women sexist, political speeches, debates, interview and spoken and written discourse.

## Results and Discussion

The three-dimensional model of discourse proposed by van Dijk was adopted to address the research questions and guide the overall analysis. In response to the first question, the study found that women were often treated as property of men, subjected to degradation, humiliation, and disrespect. These themes were evident in the eighteen proverbs analyzed. Issues of power, inequality, and social hierarchy were explored using van Dijk's model. Secondly, the analysis revealed that violence against women is discursively constructed, with some proverbs advising women to suppress their identities and avoid being "shallow" for the sake of their husbands. Additionally, several English proverbs related to women's roles were found to be hostile or impolite, reflecting negative societal attitudes.

Thirdly, the study addressed societal stratification by analyzing both micro- and

macro-level discourse structures. At the micro level, linguistic elements and structures were examined, while the macro level—emphasized in this study—revealed broader ideological patterns in which women were portrayed as inferior or even compared to animals. A qualitative research method was employed, focusing on the analysis of themes and linguistic meanings rather than statistical data. This approach was appropriate, as the study dealt with socially constructed knowledge and moral frameworks regarding the treatment of women. Notably, the analysis of proverbs highlighted the complex interplay between power and ideology. As van Dijk (2001) notes, power may be exercised either legitimately or coercively (p. 355).

**Table 1. Analysis of Proverbs**

Dimension of the Model	Women's Appearance		Treating Women		Women's Role in Life	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Discourse	7	0.35	7	0.3	6	0.4
Cognition	7	0.35	7	0.3	6	0.4
Society	7	0.35	7	0.3	6	0.4

First, when compared to the other tools of the models, the proverbs' emphasis on women's physical attractiveness ranks higher, as does the proverbs' emphasis on their roles in society and how they should be treated. The proverb's co-text and the traditional interpretations of the linguistic components utilized in the proverb were significant factors in generating discourse about women's appearances based on the model of male dominance and power. In proverbs, for instance, a threshold of 0.35 is reached in order to convey an extremely strong idea of authority over women. Furthermore, another prominent discursual device, the role of women in life, was identified in the proverbs and used six times (0.4) in the data, indicating the reliability and validity of both the data and the model. This suggests that the role of women is degraded in society, with women making homes while men are the dominant and are responsible for everything pertaining to all aspects of life. When compared to the other two ideas, the idea of respecting women is far more frequent, appearing seven times. This is due to the fact that their processes (i.e., whether physical, mental, etc.) can be affected by the environment in which they occur.

## Conclusion

In proverbs, women are often portrayed as being dependent on their male counterparts for their well-being. They are frequently represented in relational roles—such as wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters—while men are more commonly depicted either independently or as dominant figures like husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers. There is a notable scarcity of proverbs that highlight women in contexts beyond the domestic sphere or family responsibilities. Moreover, many of these proverbs tend to depict women negatively, focusing on their behavior in a critical manner. Even when women are acknowledged for their positive qualities or achievements, it is typically men who receive the most praise and benefits. Some proverbs also reflect deep-rooted gender biases and societal inequalities, such as suggesting that women and animals are of similar societal value, that women's worth

declines with age, that only men's ambitions are worthy of admiration, and that women are considered property. These sayings also imply that women should not take part in construction or leadership roles, and that a woman focused on her looks and social life is unsuitable for marriage.

For future research, several avenues can be explored. One possible study is a comparative analysis of the deterioration of women's image in English and Arabic proverbs. Another potential topic is a critical stylistic analysis of the oppression of women as represented in selected communist and feminist texts. Additionally, a cognitive analysis focusing on cultural values embedded in selected English proverbs would provide further insight into how gender ideologies are linguistically constructed and perpetuated.

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