



Linguistic Representation of Women in Balochi Proverbial Discourse: A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

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Article Info

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Abstract

This study investigates the interplay of ideology and power in Balochi proverbial discourse, with a particular focus on how linguistic features perpetuate male dominance and female subjugation. It further critically examines the sociocultural mechanisms that normalize such gendered hierarchies within these proverbial expressions. By analyzing the discursive practices embedded in Balochi proverbs, this research elucidates the ways in which language functions as a medium for reinforcing asymmetrical power relations. This study employs a purposive sample of 30 Balochi proverbs, subjected to a feminist critical discourse analysis to examine gendered representations. Each proverb was translated into English while preserving its original linguistic structure. The analysis draws upon Cornell's (2009) theoretical framework to interrogate the discursive construction of gender within these proverbial texts. Additionally, the researchers involved 20 native elderly Balochi speakers both male and female to ensure linguistic accuracy. To mitigate potential interpretive bias, interviews were conducted with these community elders from the Markran Balochi region. Their insights facilitated a deeper contextual understanding of the proverbs' usage in everyday discourse. The major findings of the research are power imbalance and systemic gender inequality in forms of the suppression of female and male dominance in Baloch society established through various factors such as double standard of male, discrimination, and dichotomy of male characters, dependency of female characters over males, and norms and values of Baloch society. This study serves a dual purpose: to document the oral traditions of an indigenous language and to critically examine the linguistic construction of gender within the patriarchal framework of Balochi proverbial discourse. The scope of this research is confined to speakers of the Makrani dialect, ensuring a focused analysis of sociolinguistic patterns within this specific community.

Keywords:

Linguistic Representation,
Balochi Proverbial Discourse,
Gendered Hierarchies Female
Suppression,
Male Dominance,
Power Relation

Introduction

Proverbs form part and parcel of intangible cultural heritage. They are handed down from generation to generation and retained in the collective long-term memory of a people, constituting part of their language and culture. The proverbs play a pivotal role in the construction of knowledge in society because these are developed from the social and normative structure of society. Proverbs are the fruits of human wisdom because these represent the hidden aspects of culture and thoughts of a society (Storm, 1992). It is a kind of language through which messages are communicated. As Hussein (2005) contends, language functions as a symbolic medium that simultaneously represents and assigns value to objects and concepts. Through these proverbs society perceives and expects similar activities and

roles from male and female according to their gender. On other hand, both male and female follow the concepts of 'self-fulfilling prophecy' (Colhoun, 2010).

The present study is conducted on Balochi proverbs. The word '*Batal*' is used for proverb in Balochi language and proverbs have great importance in oral Balochi literature (Khan, 2000). The hegemony of dominant languages, including national lingua-francas, poses significant challenges to the preservation of oral traditions of the regional languages (Shams, S.A., Khan, M., & Shah, M., 2020). As these linguistically powerful varieties assume institutional and social dominance, they often marginalize indigenous dialects, gradually eroding their cultural transmission mechanisms. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the attrition of oral literary forms such as proverbs, folktales, and folk songs that constitute the intangible cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge of linguistic minorities (Manzoor, J., Khan, M., & Hussain, S.S., 2024).

Gender is all about the roles, characteristics, duties and behaviors which the society strives to tie with our identities as male and female. Similarly, gender domination is formed as an ideological structure that classifies people into two classes, male and female, based on the ordered association between domination and subordination (Noor, T., Khan, M., & Khan, S., 2022). Men have been considered superior, and women are considered weak, fragile, and inferior in many societies (Amerian, 2015; Noor et al., 2022). Although all this research is important and has made a great contribution to the study of Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth, CDA) and gender studies Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth, FCDA). A portion of the English language which has been recognized as undervaluing the significance of female is that masculine sorts of words that are considered to have more positive connotations than feminine ones (Koupal, 2014). Advocates of women believe that the language, across the history is used completely and patriarchal (Koupal, 2014). Feminists argue that language should not be used to undermine women and to construct women identity negatively.

This study employs feminist discourse analysis to critically examine the linguistic construction of gendered power relations in Balochi proverbial discourse. Specifically, it seeks to: (1) identify and analyze the discursive strategies that reinforce patriarchal dominance and female subjugation; (2) investigate the sociolinguistic markers that naturalize these asymmetrical power dynamics; and (3) uncover the underlying sociocultural mechanisms that sustain such gendered hierarchies within Baloch society. Through this tripartite investigation, the research illuminates the intersection of language, ideology, and social structure in the perpetuation of gender inequality. Based on the research objectives, the present paper formulates the following research questions.

1. How does Balochi proverbial discourse linguistically construct and represent gendered identities, particularly in relation to male and female social roles?
2. Through what specific discursive strategies and linguistic features does Balochi proverbial discourse naturalize patriarchal dominance and perpetuate female subjugation?
3. What sociocultural, historical, and ideological factors contribute to the systematic suppression of women as reflected in Balochi proverbs within their broader societal context?

This investigation offers critical insights into the discursive marginalization of women and the perpetuation of patriarchal norms within Balochi proverbial traditions. As a linguistic repository of cultural values, Balochi proverbs provide a strategic site for analyzing how gendered power structures become naturalized through everyday language use. The study makes three substantive contributions: First, it addresses a notable gap in regional sociolinguistic scholarship by systematically examining gender representations in a previously understudied oral tradition. Second, it advances feminist linguistic research by demonstrating how ostensibly neutral folkloric expressions can reinforce systemic gender asymmetries. Third, the analysis extends beyond mere documentation by employing liberal feminist frameworks to interrogate the sociolinguistic mechanisms of women's erasure in traditional discourse.

The findings hold implications for both cultural preservation efforts and gender equity initiatives, revealing how linguistic patterns reflect and reproduce social hierarchies. By deconstructing these proverbial constructions, the study provides empirical grounding for challenging essentialist narratives about gender roles in Baloch society while contributing to broader debates about language, power, and representation in indigenous knowledge systems.

This study acknowledges three principal methodological and conceptual boundaries: First, the analysis is deliberately restricted to gender-related proverbs within the Makrani dialect of Balochi, excluding other thematic or regional variations that might offer comparative insights. Second, while the primary data collected from elder consultants provides authentic cultural grounding, the sample size and demographic concentration may not capture the full spectrum of contemporary usage patterns across different age groups or social strata. Third, the investigation focuses specifically on manifestations of female subjugation and male hegemony in proverbial discourse, leaving other dimensions of gender representation (such as non-binary identities or intersectional factors) beyond its analytical scope.

These delimitations, while necessary for maintaining analytical depth, suggest avenues for future research. The exclusive focus on the Makrani dialect invites complementary studies of other Balochi variants, and the predominant emphasis on binary gender constructs points to potential investigations of more diverse identity constructions in oral traditions.

Literature review

Almi (2022) conducted research on the linguistic representation of woman in proverbial discourses of Persian and English. The previous study collected the Persian proverbs from *Amsal-o-Hekam* and *Ketab-e-Koucheh* encyclopedias, whereas he gathered the gendered based proverbs of English from *The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs*, *NTC's Dictionary of Proverbs and Clichés*, and *The Oxford Dictionary of English Idioms*. This study found that the given social identity of the women in the gendered based proverbs Persian and English languages. Further, based on the results obtained from a discursive juxtaposition, he found four major findings. First, female being is disclosed greater level of presence in Persian. Secondly, kinship system is more commonly used in Persian, and the familial ties are tighter and stronger than those in the English culture. Omotunde (2022) explored the metaphorization of women in 100 Yoruba proverbs on women by employing the Feminist Critical Analysis. The findings revealed four conceptual metaphors structure of women in the select proverbs such as: 1) women are weaklings; 2) women are evil; 3) women are whores; and 4) women are procrustean. The first three conceptual metaphors generically give women a “downward orientation”. The fourth assuredly underlines an “upward orientation”, which implicitly entails a down orientation. The downward image schema of these four metaphors indicates that, among the Yoruba, women are profiled negatively. This profiling revealed that the Yoruba's ideological gender structure advances a hierarchical order in which women are subordinated to men. Aleke (2021) contributed to examine the gender prejudice in the selected proverbs of English and Igbo. The study aimed to analyze the traditional views on the perception and the roles of women as well as how power relationships of different gender are determined through linguistic choices in different language societies. Using feminist critical discourse analysis, explored the sixteen purposely selected Igbo proverbs gathered from both oral and written source and the English proverbs selected from *Oxford Dictionary of English proverbs*. The findings revealed that both cultures have some elements that motivate their men to mistress women. It also brought to the limelight the inequalities that exist between the two sexes in English and Igbo societies in concrete and clearer term. Yasir (2017) explored the difference of gender between male and female in proverbs of Sundanese. He explored the traditional viewpoint regarding the role of female in Sundanese societies and determined the interconnection between gender, language and culture by using the method of feminist critical discourse analysis. This study selected seven proverbs of Sundanese. The findings revealed that females are represented in proverbs of Sundanese as submissive of men and further female were give negative identity which shows they inferior and weaker than men.

Parveen, T. Hussain, S.S., and Khattak, M.A., (2024) analyzed ecofeminist resistance to capitalist and patriarchal exploitation of both women and nature. Their study establishes ecofeminism as an intersectional framework linking environmental activism with gender liberation movements. Key findings reveal that environmental catastrophes disproportionately impact women due to structural inequalities, a dual oppression where patriarchal othering exacerbates women's vulnerability to ecological crises. The researchers demonstrate how anthropocentric and masculinist ideologies mutually reinforce systems that subordinate women while justifying environmental degradation for economic gain. This work critically bridges feminist and ecological theories to expose interconnected hierarchies of domination. In addition, Noor et al. (2022) investigated the representation of female in Pakistani dramas. This study examined how specific ideologies and power are being practiced through language in a Pakistani drama ‘*Ou Rangreza*’. The study reveals how language (especially in dialogues) is used to maintain power imbalances and promote certain beliefs. It shows that male characters are often portrayed as dominant, while female characters are shown as oppressed or inferior.

Farooq (2020) also conducted research on the Balochi proverbs and explored the background of many Balochi proverbs. The study found that every proverb has a great knowledge resource and have lesson that represents great implicit viewpoint of the Balochi society regrading. Further, Isaq (2017) also conducted research on the Balochi proverbs. He examined the collected proverbs from cultural and historical perspectives and ignored the analysis of the gender perspective. The past study found that Balochi proverbs represent Balochi culture, Baloch politics, Baloch history, and many more. Saima (2018) explored the construction of negative identity of female gender in the Punjabi Proverbs. She randomly selected 20 gender-based proverbs of Panjabi language from the famous book “*Punjabi Akhaan*”. The researcher analyzed data in many linguistic levels such as on the literal, contextual, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic levels. The findings established that man-controlled system in the Punjabi language is the fundamental reason for gender discrimination and negative representation of women identity. The kind of images constructed in the Punjabi proverbial language really labels the female gender lastingly with the negative meanings. Rasul (2015) conducted a study on the gender and power relationship in the proverbial discourse of Urdu and English purposively

selected from one Urdu and one English dictionaries of proverbs. By using the critical discourse analysis, the analysis of linguistic choices revealed similar representation of female as submissive being in both languages.

Research Method

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to critically analyse the gender representations in Balochi proverbs through feminist critical discourse analysis. The research focuses specifically on the Makrani dialect, utilizing purposeful sampling to select 30 gender-related proverbs along with their contextual background stories and cultural interpretations collected from elderly Balochi speakers. The primary data was collected through in-depth face-to-face interviews with 20 Balochi elders and cultural experts, identified through snowball sampling technique due to their extensive knowledge of traditional proverb usage. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and subsequently translated into English to facilitate comprehensive analysis while maintaining linguistic authenticity.

For analytical framework, the study employs Connell's (2009) model of gender relations, examining three key dimensions: power dynamics and male dominance, systemic gender inequalities, and socially constructed physical/behavioral differences between genders. The analysis operates at two levels: micro-linguistic examination of specific features (including metaphors, similes and gendered vocabulary) and macro-social analysis of broader cultural norms embedded in the proverbial discourse. This dual-level approach enables systematic investigation of how language reinforces patriarchal structures in Baloch society while maintaining focus on the original linguistic and cultural context of the proverbs. The translation process followed rigorous protocols to preserve original meanings while making the material accessible for academic scrutiny.

Results and Discussion

As it is mentioned in the research method section, the feminist critical discourse analysis of the Balochi proverbial discourse was performed and classified into by employing the Connell's (2009) model of gender relations, examining three key dimensions: power dynamics and male dominance, systemic gender inequalities, and socially constructed physical/behavioral differences between genders. are carefully analyzed the portrayal of male and female in Balochi proverbial discourse. The analysis of the 30 purposively selected proverbs is classified as per these three key dimensions.

Power and dominance

The ten proverbs taken from the research data of the study are classified under the key dimensions of power and dominance. The English translation of the proverbs is also provided.

Proverb 1

“Janen paad e Sawaas inth.”

The wife is a shoe for foot.

Proverb 2

“Brath gowarani haheni phal inth, peth janikani saheg inth sarten, math janikani shak o hadenk int.”

Brother is the strong protection wall for sister; father is the shadow of daughter and mother is the comb and mirror for girls.

Proverb 3

“Janen Satan e kudo inth.”

Woman is the nest of Satan.

Proverb 4

“Brath agan koren, Gowar chamdaren”

Sister expects from brother though he is blind.

Proverb 5

“Mard zamme loteth o janen luge lotith”

An honorable man needs a sword and woman needs a house.

Proverb 6

“Gohar o jn e pasban Huda inth”

God is the security of wife and Sister.

Proverb 7

“Janen chok naan pah kesmat warth”

Girl gets food by luck.

Proverb 8

“Janen chok mesal e pula, roche nah roche yke zorete roth”

Girl is like a flower, one day will come, and one will take her.

Proverb 9

“Gowar k brath nest, bezan kalathe waja e maan nest.”

A woman without brother is a fort without own

Proverb 10

“Janen e lagama mard dareth.”

The rod of a woman in a man's hand.

Proverb 1 and its background and context show the dominance of men and submissiveness of women. As the word ‘shoe’, semantically carries the meaning of an object or thing which is used for foot is used for women. Woman is compared with shoes for foot because shoes do not have any power to resist or to change its wearer, but the wearer can change it in any time. Similarly, woman is submissive to man; man can divorce his wife in any time. Women are powerless in front of men. In this proverb, women are given the identity of an object (shoe). Man uses that object. Thus, the proverb shows the superiority of men, inferiority of women, male domination, and suppression of female. Men have been considered powerful. On the other hand, women are still considered weak and powerless. Further, in this proverb 2, the vocabularies or metaphors which are used for brother, father, mother and daughter represent men are stronger and more powerful than women. The word ‘four walls’ is a symbol of protection and shelter which is compared with brother for sister. The word ‘shadow’ is used for father and mother is compared with comb and mirror. The comb and mirror have less importance than four walls and shadows. Thus, one can say that men are represented dominant and more powerful than women.

In proverb 3, there are three linguistic features that come under the category of vocabulary and metaphor which helped the researcher to bring out the ideology of male dominance and suppression of female. The proverb is used as a metaphor. As woman being is compared to the nest of Satan. She is given the identity of the nest of Satan. The word ‘nest’ semantically means house. The word ‘Satan’ consists of the meaning of evil. The proverb conveys the message that woman is the house of evil. Woman is considered an evil. Moreover, proverb 4 clearly shows power and dominance. As no one expects from the blind people but in this proverb the sister is expecting from blind brother, and she is depended even on her blind brother and her blind brother is able to support and feed her sister. As a woman, sister cannot go alone. She needs to take her blind brother along to cut the wood. The line, “thinks that she is a woman” in the background of proverb is making woman weak and motivating her towards her brother to take help. In her mind, women are weak and cannot go outside alone because they can be hunted. She is fearing. This fear is imposed in her mind by culture, socialization, parents and a male dominated society.

In proverb 5, there are two linguistic features that help the researchers to analyze power and dominance. The proverb says “man needs sword” which gives the meaning that man is for power, and he is brave. On the other hand, the proverb says, “woman needs a house” that represents that women cannot fight, and they are good for house jobs. Here the word ‘house’ symbolizes housework, and the word ‘sword’ symbolizes war and bravery. Practically, in the Balochi culture, women have been working in houses and Baloch men have been struggling and fighting for better lives. The proverb 6 shows the dominance of men and weakness and powerlessness of women. As the word ‘Gowar’ means sister and the word “jn” means wife. In history of Baloch, Baloch men regularly used to take their sheep for feeding them to different places. For that reason, their wives were alone at their houses. It is not good for them to be alone in houses because they were insecure. Baloch men were not happy to make their wives alone at their houses. It was famous that the wife should not be alone at home. Thus, the selected proverb is obviously representing that female is dependent on male in every condition and she cannot live alone even at her house because she is a weak creature, and she needs security and protection from strangers and unknown men.

In proverb 7, the weakness of woman is shown. The word “luck” shows in this proverb that women are powerless to earn and whatever they get by luck. But men get by struggle and power. As in the background of the proverb, the husband said to his wife that a woman gets what is written in her luck but not by her own struggle or earning. The proverb shows women are depended on luck, whatever the economic situation of women that is due to luck. The proverb portrays women identity negatively. In proverb 8, “Girl is like a flower” is used as a simile. It portrays woman identity as an object and not a human of freedom and choice. The second part of the proverb that contains a linguistic feature that is a vocabulary that ‘take her’ means woman is taken like a flower. It means that a girl is an object that one day will come, one will take it or buy it.

In the last, proverb 9, a metaphor is used that shows ideological association of power and dominance with men. The metaphorical proverb “A woman without brother is a fort without owner” represents the dependency and submissiveness of women and power and dominance of men. The female identity is portrayed as identity of depended on male. Proverb 10 also represents power and male domination. The Balochi word ‘Lagam’ means rod which represent slavery of wife by husband. This proverb means that a husband controls his wife. Hence, this proverb also represents suppression of women and submissive of women and power of man. The proverb portrays women identity as identity of a slave being.

Systemic Gender Inequality

The eleven proverbs taken from the research data of the study are classified under the key dimensions of systemic gender inequality. The English translation of the proverbs is also provided.

Proverb 11

“Janen e khor porenth bly nathacheth.
The river of woman is full but does not flow.

Proverb 12

“Janenk laj kanth bahe lack ant marden k laj kak bahe kahk int.”
A shy man is worth a goat, a shy woman is worth a lack

Proverb 13

“Sakian brath markaban oshtan, vshian athonen jn on noshan.”
Wife is with happiness and brother is with hardship.

Proverb 14

“Brath e shudeken lap ser beth, gowar e sothkagen magonag dara nabeeth”
Brother's hungry stomach is satisfied, but sister's wound is not healed.

Proverb 15

“Janen pah gap, marden pah kaar”
Women for words and men for action

Proverb: 16

“Janen e hakl padh ay ponzah e inth”
The intelligence of women lays under their feet.

Proverb 17

“Janen chok pah luge, marden chok pah sel o sawaad.”
Woman for house, man for outside

Proverb 18

“Janen pah neshten marden pah dewan”
Women for housework, man for gathering.

Proverb 19

“Janen ay hakal tank inth”
The thinking of women is narrow.

Proverb 20

Janen k janozam beth socheth o saman beth”
Woman becomes widow; she would be a burnt object.

Proverb 21

“Janen kashe goke nawarth, mard makeske man page thla int”
Woman is grass that cow does not eat it and man is a mustache in the turbon.

Proverb 11 represents gender inequality. In this proverb, there is one linguistic feature that comes under the category of vocabulary and metaphorical content. The proverb portrays woman identity as a weak creature. In this proverb, the woman's river is full but does not flow'. It shows that the woman's river is the only river in the world which does not flow. In reality, all rivers in the world flow but when is associated with a woman, the river does not flow. Here the phrase 'does not flow' symbolizes the weakness and limited power of women. In proverb 12, the word "Laj" lateral meaning is to shy. The word 'shy' in the Balochi culture for girl carries the meaning of honor and respect. In Balochi culture, a woman is a symbol of honour and respect for a family. Therefore, she must be restricted to live inside the four walls of houses. In case the woman steps out from the house, the honour and respect of the family can be in stake. If it is essential to go outside the house, and women should feel shy to go outside of the house. In contrast, if women go outside in bold manner, they can lose the owner and dignity of the family. In the same proverb, if a man feels shyness in contrast, then he is good for nothing. As the word 'kahk' (worth a goat) is used for shy man and the word cost of lacks (worth of city) is used for shy woman. This metaphorical association of men and women shows the gender inequality in Balochi culture.

In proverb 13, women are being blamed, and men are being praised. The proverb exhibits that women can live and survive during the happiness. She cannot bear hardship. In contrast, the brother of her husband lives in hard times and supports his brother. The proverb is creating a kind of inequality between man and women. It symbolizes that the brother being a man is faithful whereas the woman as a wife is a deceiver and a selfish creature. Meanwhile, proverb 14 suggests that a poor and a hungry man would become prosperous someday, but the person who does not help her brother would always have an ill name. The person in this proverb refers to the sister of the man. In directly, she is blamed for not cooking food for her brother which is her social and moral responsibility in the Balochi culture. In this proverb, sister represents women. The proverb conveys the message that women are not equal to men. As it is only the prime responsibility of the woman to prepare and serve food for a man. The brother is represented as a person who always sacrifices and helps sister, but sister does not help her brother even in the time of hardship. In proverb 15,

there are two linguistic features that have some ideological association which reflect gender inequality. The proverbs can be used in the context where man acts and women only speaks but does not act. The word 'speak' is attached with woman and the word 'action' is associated with man. Thus, the proverb shows that women cannot do any productive work as they can speak only. On the other hand, man is represented as a man of action. This idea conveys the message of gender inequality. Women are considered inferior and humans of words, but men are considered superior and humans of action. The proverb 16 employs derogatory language that systematically undermines women's intellectual capacity by suggesting their rationality lies "under their feet". It is a metaphorical representation of irrationality. The linguistic framing is particularly significant, as no equivalent proverb exists within Balochi discourse that similarly diminishes male intelligence. This asymmetrical representation reinforces a binary gender hierarchy, positioning men as inherently rational and women as intellectually deficient.

The proverb 17 clearly promotes gender inequality by strictly dividing roles: women belong indoors 'house' while men operate outdoors or 'outside'. The language enforces traditional stereotypes, suggesting women should stay confined to domestic spaces while men handle public matters. Such proverbs limit women's freedom by normalizing their exclusion from society. Unlike similar sayings about men, this proverb reinforces the idea that women's place is only at home, showing clear discrimination in Balochi cultural attitudes. The message not only restricts women physically but also supports unequal social expectations. Proverb 18 also shows gender inequality by assigning fixed roles to gender. Women handle housework while men socialize at gatherings. When guests visit, women are expected to work in the kitchen while men entertain, reinforcing unequal divisions of labor. The language directly links women to domestic chores and men to social activities, maintaining traditional stereotypes that limit women's participation in the community life. This reflects broader cultural attitudes that restrict women to private spaces while men dominate public interactions.

This proverb 19 reinforces gender stereotypes by portraying women as narrow-minded and intellectually inferior. The statement "thinking of women is narrow" not only dismisses women's reasoning abilities but also implies that men naturally possess broader, superior thinking. Such language perpetuates inequality by framing these biased assumptions as inherent truths rather than cultural constructs. The proverb's harm lies in its ability to normalize discrimination, shaping perceptions that limit women's roles in society. Unlike proverbs about men, which rarely question their intellect, this example highlights a clear double standard in how genders are represented. By reducing women's capabilities to simplistic stereotypes, it upholds patriarchal views that suppress female voices and agency. Furthermore, the Proverb 20 employs dehumanizing language by comparing a widow to "a burnt object," stripping her of dignity and social value. The simile reinforces patriarchal norms that marginalize widows while maintaining different standards for widowers. Unlike men who lose spouses, widows face complete social erasure, denied remarriage opportunities and reduced to worthless objects. This stark contrast reveals systemic gender bias, where women's worth remains tied to marital status while men retain their humanity. Finally, the proverb 21 employs contrasting metaphors to establish gendered value systems. The first metaphor, "woman is a grass that cow does not eat" reduces female identity to worthless vegetation, implying women lack purpose or utility. Conversely, the second metaphor, "man is a mustache in the turban" symbolically elevates male identity by associating it with honor (mustache) and cultural pride (turban). These opposing linguistic markers create a binary valuation system in the Balochi culture.

Socially Constructed Physical Features and Behavioral Differences

The eight proverbs taken from the research data of the study are classified under the key dimensions of socially constructed physical features and behavioral differences. The English translation of the proverbs is also provided.

Proverb 22

"Janen yare shetane"

Wife or women is the friend of evil.

Proverb 23

"Janen a besat cho pasa tra vsh nam knth gon arksa"

Feed your wife like a goat, she will praise you to everyone.

Proverb 24

"Janen kape Basen"

Half a wife was enough.

Proverb 25

"Janen chok charpen zike"

Women is oily cooker.

Proverb 26

"Janen kuchambaken pah goshag sharkar nabeth"

Women are corrupt beings, cannot be good by suggestions.

Proverb 27

“Janek cho aska be bath, bachik cho sher a be bath.”

Woman should be like a deer and man should be like a lion.

Proverb 28

“Janen kanizge, raste kne prosheth”

Woman is fruit stalk; it breaks when you straight it.

Proverb 29

“Du pad e math a shar kn, char pad e peth a.”

Two feet mother should be good and four feet father.

In proverb 22, a powerful metaphor equating women with evil by calling them “friends of Satan,” is used that reinforces the negative gender stereotypes. It portrays women as inherently sinful, emotional, and untrustworthy, while men are depicted as rational, loyal, and virtuous. Such language creates a sharp contrast between genders, systematically devaluing female identity and behavior. The metaphor not only reflects but also perpetuates biased cultural attitudes that label women as naturally inferior. This representation aligns with patriarchal norms that justify women’s subordination by characterizing them as morally deficient as compared to the men. The proverb demonstrates how language choices can normalize and sustain gender inequality through vivid, memorable imagery. The proverb 23 reinforces gender stereotypes by comparing women to goats through simile. It suggests women act purely out of self-interest. It also portrays women as greedy creatures who only praise men when fed, implying their loyalty depends on material provision. Such language reduces women to animal-like behavior, denying them complex human qualities while promoting negative perceptions. The comparison systematically devalues women’s character, presenting them as untrustworthy and motivated by basic needs rather than genuine emotions. This reflects patriarchal attitudes that justify controlling women by framing them as simple-minded and dependent. The imagery used in the proverb reinforces harmful gender norms by equating female nature with livestock behavior. It perpetuates a biased cultural belief about women’s inherent traits.

The proverb 24 proverb reinforces gender stereotypes by portraying wives as excessively demanding and greedy, suggesting their desires can financially ruin husbands. It presents women's expectations as unreasonable and burdensome, implying men must control or limit them “half of wife is enough”. The language constructs female identity as inherently insatiable and problematic, while positioning men as victims of women's supposed greed. This representation serves to justify male dominance by framing women’s needs as dangerous to household stability. In proverb 25, there is one ‘metaphor’ that reflects the ideological association. In this proverb, unmarried woman is compared with oily cooker. The object ‘oily cooker’ is something that can make a person dirty. Likewise, the association of woman with the ‘oily cooker’ refers to the possibility of defaming a man anytime. This behaviour of women in the proverb is shown as an uncontrollable and irrational attribute. An unmarried girl is blamed for her elopement with a boy. The background social interpretation of the proverb constructs a negative identity of female by associating it with the ‘oily cooker’.

The proverb 26 also constructs the identity of women negatively. As the Balochi word ‘Kuchambak’ means *cheap, defame, corrupt and characterless*. Identity of women is characterized with the Balochi word ‘kuchambak’. Negative connotations are associated with women. It suggests women are inherently flawed, incapable of improvement through reason or guidance, as seen when a man is advised to pray rather than speak to ‘fix’ his wife. By framing female identity as irredeemably dishonorable, the proverb justifies patriarchal control while denying women agency or moral complexity. The language not only demeans women but also naturalizes their subjugation, portraying them as morally inferior beings requiring divine intervention rather than fair treatment. Proverb 27 represents gender identity construction and physical difference. The proverb is constructed by using two similes. The first part of the proverb is simile that is “women should be like a deer”. It reduces female identity to fragility and passivity. Woman is compared with deer that is a soft animal. The second part of the proverb is “Man should be like a lion”. This part of the proverb comparing man with the lion that is a brave animal and king of the jungle. It is the symbols of strength and dominance which position masculinity as inherently superior. The proverb's power lies in its binary framing, which denies women attributes of courage or leadership while reserving these exclusively for men.

In proverb 28, there is an ideological association that compares women’s behavior, and physical appearance with a ‘fruit stalk’. The word ‘Kanizg’ is metaphorically used for woman because ‘Kanizg’ is such a wood which is always bent. When someone tries to make it straight it breaks due to the dryness and stiffness. Likewise, if a woman is forced to change her habits, she refuses. If she is asked to follow some social rules, she will refuse too. This reflects the perception that women possess a fragile mentality, governed by rigid cognitive frameworks that, when challenged, cause them to fracture under pressure like a ‘Kanizg’. Similarly, it is said that women are supposed to have one set of behaviors and men have another. Traditional gender stereotypes often portray women as nurturing, emotionally

expressive, and socially influenced, while men are typically framed as rational, decisive, and logical. These constructed binaries reinforce patriarchal norms by attributing fixed traits to each gender, positioning masculinity as inherently dominant and femininity as passive. In proverb 29, there are some other ideological associations which portray women's behavior, physical differences and her identity different from the men. The proverb suggests that if someone wants to have good children, one must make his wife good. It exhibits that if a child of a human is bad, it means fault lies in his or her mother not father, but for an animal child, the father is responsible for it. Once again, women is framed as inferior to even an animal. When a child does bad activities, people mostly blame his or her mother. In contrast, whenever a child does good things or gets some reputable social status, the credit goes to his or her father (Chesler, 2005; Connel, 2009).

Conclusion

This study employed feminist critical discourse analysis to examine the linguistic construction of gender ideologies in Balochi proverbs, with three primary objectives: (1) to identify discursive strategies reinforcing male dominance, (2) to analyze sociolinguistic markers of female subjugation, and (3) to uncover the social construction of physical appearance and behavioural appearances of gender among the cultural mechanisms sustaining these power asymmetries. Focused on 29 purposefully selected proverbs from the Makrani dialect, the research revealed systematic patterns of gendered representation through rigorous qualitative analysis.


Three key findings emerged. First, proverbs institutionalize male hegemony through metaphors of strength such as *lions*, *mustaches* and spatial control such as *man for outside*, while reducing women to fragile creature i.e. *deer* or devalued objects for instance *burnt items*, and *shoes*. Second, linguistic inequality manifests in asymmetrical similes, women are '*friends of Satan*' whereas men face no equivalent moral denigration. Third, behavioral dichotomies naturalize women as irrational '*thinking is narrow*' and men as decision-makers, reinforcing Connell's (2009) theory of hegemonic masculinity.

These representations stem from intersecting factors: illiteracy, cultural preservation of patriarchal norms, and absence of counter-discourses. Unlike progressive gender discourses globally, Balochi proverbs uncritically replicate regressive stereotypes. The study underscores the necessity of educational interventions to challenge these entrenched linguistic patterns and foster equitable gender narratives in indigenous knowledge systems. This study suggests examining additional gender-related social issues including male double standards, polygamy, educational disparities, and systemic inequality within other Balochi oral traditions for instance folktales, songs, and folk poetry to further explore the intersection of language and patriarchal norms.

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