



Portrayal of Men and Women in English and Palestinian Arabic Proverbs (Focus on Negative Attributes)

Yusra Shadeed

English Language Instructor, Palestine Polytechnic University, Hebron, Palestine

Email: yusra.sh2024@gmail.com

Prof. Aziz Khalil

Palestine Ahliya University, Bethlehem, Palestine

Email: a.khalil@paluniv.edu.ps

ABSTRACT

Proverbs reflect unique beliefs, values and experiences of cultures and societies. This study was mainly undertaken to investigate the representation of men and women in English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs, focusing on negative attributes. The study employed a qualitative approach, and the sample consisted of English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs that mention men or women explicitly or implicitly. All proverbs were collected from various resources including books, dictionaries and online sites. Proverbs were thematically categorized focusing on the meaning of these proverbs and the negative personal attributes reflected by them. This study adopted Fairclough's (1989) three-dimensional model to analyze English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs. Finally, the researchers contrasted the representation of men and women in English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs to identify any aspects of imbalance and bias in the portrayal of men and women in the selected proverbs. This study revealed similarities between English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs despite the many differences in both societies in terms of their cultures, language, religion, history, family structures, social standards, and geographical locations. The researchers recommend that further research be conducted into how women and men are portrayed in proverbs from around the world to reinforce the findings reached in the present study.

Keywords: proverbs, critical discourse analysis, English culture, Palestinian culture, men, women.



Introduction

According to the Cambridge Dictionary of English, a proverb is a short statement known by many people for a long time that expresses some common truth or gives advice. As the English writer William Penn (1782) said: "The wisdom of nations lies in their proverbs, which are brief and pithy. Collect and learn them; they are notable measures of directions for human life; you have much in little" (448). Each nation's proverbs reveal a person's culture, social values, and way of life. Moreover, it is worth noticing that proverbs were created over a long period of time in the history of a certain culture. Proverbs contain specific, recognizable imagery that is generalized by usage and thought.

Schipper's (2004) study is the most well-known and comprehensive study on the representation of women in proverbs. According to Schipper, proverbial sayings are a good indicator for measuring how long people will continue to accept certain stereotypes of women. Schipper (2010) asserted that proverbs' fundamental themes are originated from human experience and behavior. Based on the researchers' experience, proverbs provide an excellent opportunity to get acquainted with the lifestyle and culture of those who are native speakers of the language, and they persuade us that people from diverse cultures can share moral principles and views. The study of proverbs helps to understand the mentality and national character of the language speakers. Overall, proverbs touch on a wide range of human experiences.

In general, proverbs are used for some practical purposes in various circumstances of everyday communication. According to Mieder (1993), "By employing proverbs in our speech we wish to strengthen our arguments, express generalizations, influence or manipulate other people, rationalize our own shortcomings, question certain behavioral patterns, satirize social ills, poke fun at ridiculous situations" (11). When used in different occasions, proverbs summarize a situation, give an opinion, or recommend an action. They offer consolation in both big and small difficulties and serve as a guidance when making decisions (Taylor, 1996).

We can learn about the social realities of a certain gender in a country's culture by studying gender-related proverbs. There are innumerable proverbs on gender roles, traits and identities from different cultures. There has been a lot of scholarly interest in the study of the relationship between proverbs and gender portrayals.

Hashem & Muhi (2021) investigated the semantic deviation in Arabic and English proverbs of love. The study suggested that semantic deviations in the Arabic and English proverbs of love make it easier and more entertaining to communicate the didactic messages they contain and increase their persuasive power. Based on the semantic deviation model created by Leech (1969), this study examined (50) proverbs of love (25 in each language) from a stylistic point of view. The analysis demonstrated that the persuasive effects and ultimately effective transmission of cultural wisdom are maximized by the extensive usage of various forms of semantic deviations. In addition, such deviations were discovered to support and facilitate the enjoyable delivery of proverbs' didactic function.



Al- Zubeidi (2017) discussed how proverbs in Arabic and English depict women's issues. She examined how women, sexuality, and gender had been used to send specific messages about issues like patriarchal concepts. The analysis aimed to highlight the shared concepts of patriarchy through feminist "Theory of Patriarchy," rather than to compare and analyze proverbs in the languages mentioned. This study demonstrated that proverbs contain patriarchal views on women.

The focus of Ahmad's (2005) research has been on how proverbs from Sudan and England reflect social and educational values. The study of how women are portrayed in Arabic proverbs provided rich information that is essential to understanding how women are portrayed in the selected sample of proverbs. Ahmad examined how women are portrayed in proverbs in relation to several societal facets, including education, God, religion, family, and friendship, among others. The purpose of the study was to compare how proverbs were used in two distinct countries and to shed light on the Sudanese people's rich and little-known cultural history. The findings revealed that regardless of educational, social, economic, or personal values, women had been portrayed extremely negative.

Ibrahim (2003) conducted a contrastive study of proverbs in both English and Arabic from a pragmatic approach. He explored how second-language speakers, either Arabic or English, could benefit from it. The analysis led to several elements that determined how Egyptian Arabic proverbs are used in the end. Furthermore, it is strongly advised that English language instructors teach their students how to translate proverbs from English to Arabic or vice versa.

The present contrastive study investigates the negative representation of men and women in selected English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs, seeking to explore the typical negative images portrayed for men and women in English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs. Many researchers have conducted research-contrasting languages, mainly focusing on the phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic aspects of the languages. However, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, very scant research has dealt with proverbs in different languages, especially English and Arabic. The present research study seeks to fill a gap in this area of contrastive linguistics.

The present study falls within two sub-fields of applied linguistics, namely contrastive linguistics and critical discourse analysis. Contrastive linguistics can be referred to as the theoretically supported, systematic, and synchronic comparison of, typically, no more than two languages, and in certain cases, a smaller number of languages. Comparative studies were frequently conducted in the early stages of the field's growth with the goal of using the results to benefit the community, such as in translation or foreign-language education (Gast, 2012). Contrastive linguistic research has value to a wide range of applied- and theoretical-linguistic domains, including second-language acquisition (SLA) research, translation studies and theory, lexicography, the study of cross-cultural communication, and even cultural studies.

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed a certain diversification in the field of contrastive linguistics insofar as new topics came into the focus of attention (e.g., pragmatics and discourse studies, House & Blum-Kulka 1986, Oleksy 1989), and new empirical methods were introduced, especially corpus-based ones. The availability of



specialized corpora (parallel corpora and learner corpora) further led to a renewal of the link between contrastive linguistics and linguistic applications. The study of contrastive linguistics in the 1980s and 1990s included diverse and new topics such as pragmatics and discourse studies.

The second sub-field of applied linguistics relevant to the present study is critical discourse analysis (CDA). There are several definitions of what CDA claims to be and do. These definitions can range from the highly politicized: "to explain existing conventions as the outcome of power relations and power struggle" (Fairclough, 1989, 2) to the almost anodyne: "to answer questions about the relationships between language and society" (Rogers, 2005, 365). The two key components of critical discourse analysis, according to the majority opinion, are a more or less political concern with how ideology and power operate in society and a particular focus on how language affects, supports, and exposes these processes. Consequently, all of the definitions that place a focus on the connection between language (text, conversation), and power (dominance, inequality and political struggle).

One popular technique used in critical discourse analysis is Norman Fairclough's analytical theory and model. He is one of the most recognized theorists in this essential field. Fairclough's theory of discourse analysis was influenced by many linguists including Michel Foucault, Mikhail Bakhtin, Louis Althusser in addition to Michael Halliday in the field of social sciences, as well as Pierre Bourdieu in the field of ideology (Capdevila, 2011).

The Fairclough's paradigm integrated both theory and practice. Theoretically, he supports the idea that text analysis is inadequate without considering language in the social context. This discourse analysis theoretical and applied paradigm has three interconnected analytical layers. In this approach, linguistic ideas and methods are used to explore the relationship between discourse and society's politics, ideologies, and power as well as discourse's place within the power structure (Zanous, 2016).

According to Rodgers et al. (2005), the Fairclough's 3D analytic paradigm is classified into three levels of analysis: the text, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice. Mirzaee and Hamidi (2012) claim that these three levels can be referred to as: (1) text, which can be written or spoken; (2) production and interpretation of the text, which is an example of discourse practice; and (3) text considered as a component of social practice. In the Fairclough 3D model, the second level of analysis emphasizes comprehension and examination of the description, interpretation, and consumption of a text, while the third level, or "sociocultural practice," tackles with issues of power (Rodgers et al., 2005, 372).

Methods and Procedures

Research Questions

The research seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the typical negative images portrayed for men and women by English proverbs?
2. What are the typical negative images portrayed for men and women by Palestinian Arabic proverbs?



3. What are the major differences and similarities between the portrayal of men and women in English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs.

Research Objectives

This study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. Identifying the negative attributes of men and women reflected by English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs.
2. Contrasting the portrayal of men and women in English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs.

Significance of the Study

The significance of proverbs in reflecting the unique beliefs, values and experiences of both English and Palestinian Arabic cultures helps people to be acquainted with their cultures and social views. Furthermore, by contrasting English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs, we could view how these cultures portray men and women, their roles and identify biases or differences in the representation of men and women in both societies. There is still a lack of relevant contrastive studies of gender representation in English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs. Therefore, this study aims at filling a gap in the available literature.

Limitations of the Study

This study is restricted to a specific corpus of English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs on women and men. Due to differences between English and Arabic, the researchers presented the material in both the source language (Arabic) and the target language (English) providing translation of the intended Arabic proverbs to convey the meaning to readers who do not understand Arabic.

Results and Discussion

The results are presented according to the three research questions.

First Research Question

What are the typical negative images portrayed for men and women by English proverbs?

All selected proverbs were thematically categorized according to their meanings and the negative personal attributes reflected by them.

A) Categories of Women Proverbs:

1. Women as evil, stubborn, source of danger and threat
2. Women as demanding, hesitant, fragile and manipulative
3. Women as inferior, unproductive, irresponsible and negative homemaker
4. Women as unintelligent or sexual objects
5. Women as loquacious

**Table 1****Proverbs portraying women as evil, stubborn, source of danger and threat**

Corpus	Description	Explanation
He that has a wife, has strife	Women are the cause of troubles	Expressing a man's regret for getting married because of troubles and disagreements his wife has brought to his life
Three things drive a man out of his house- smoke, rain and a scolding wife	A man leaves his house because of smoke, rain and a scolding wife	Stating the reasons that push a man to leave his house including a criticizing wife

In the above set of proverbs women are described as evil, source of danger and threat. For instance, the first proverb reflects that having a wife means having a strife because marriage means sharing responsibilities, decisions and emotions which may naturally lead to troubles, tensions and quarreling to couples especially newly married ones. In addition, women are one of the reasons behind family breakdown and a father's abandoning his children because his wife keeps reprimanding him and criticizing his attitudes. The words "rain" and "fire" are used to refer to difficult situations that may push the man to leave his house urgently such as a leaking roof or a fire.

Table 2**Proverbs portraying Women as demanding, hesitant, fragile and manipulative**

Corpus	Description	Explanation
A Woman is a weathercock	Women often change their opinions and thoughts	Scolding a man for trusting a woman who has failed him and changed her mind easily
Mills and wives are ever wanting	Mills and wives can never be satisfied	Reprimanding women for asking their husbands to bring their requests and achieve their desires

The above proverbs describe women as demanding, hesitant and emotional object. Women are unpredictable, fickle and their words cannot be trusted as expressed in the first proverb. The 'weathercock' is a vane in the figure of a cock that turns freely in any direction with the wind, and 'weathercock' is used here to refer to women who change their thoughts and opinions easily as the weathercock moves freely in the air. The second proverb likens women to wind mills. Wind mills are used for grinding grain and need to be filled time after time. Similarly, women are also demanding and greedy as they continue to ask for more wishes to be achieved without being satisfied.

Table 3**Proverbs portraying Women as inferior, unproductive, irresponsible and negative homemakers**

Corpus	Description	Explanation
It is a sorry flock where the ewe bears the bell	It's a shame and a sign of weakness when women are in charge of others	Reprimanding people who choose a woman as a leader
Women in state affairs are like monkeys in glass-shops	Women in high positions are similar to monkeys in glass-shops	Underestimating women in high positions and their lack of competencies

The above proverbs represent women as inferior, unproductive and negative homemakers. For instance, the first proverb expresses pity and undesirability over a group for taking a female leader. The word 'flock' refers to groups of people, or institutions. The 'ewe' refers to females who are unproductive, irresponsible, and they shouldn't hold high positions. Finally, 'bell' refers to authority and power. Moreover, women in high positions are likened to monkeys because women are not worthy of leadership, since they are inferior to men as they cause chaos and commit mistakes. 'Monkeys', on the other hand, are known for causing trouble. Moreover, back in the old days, women were prohibited from giving their opinion in the matters of state affairs or politics.

Table 4**Proverbs portraying women as unintelligent or sexual objects**

Corpus	Description	Explanation
A man is as old as he feels, a woman as old as she looks	What you feel reflects on your appearance	Stating the difference between old men and women
Women are wacky, women are vain: they'd rather be pretty than have a good brain	Women prefer to look beautiful than being smart	Underestimating women who gear their efforts mostly to look beautiful and neglect the need to be logical and think reasonably

The first proverb in this category states the difference between men and women. On one hand, women are sexual objects and what matters most is their physical appearance. On the other hand, men's age is linked to their emotional status of being strong and well. Consequently, it's a woman's duty to maintain her beauty and appearance to please her husband. Moreover, women are stigmatized for having low mental abilities, and they would care for their beauty rather than improving their thinking abilities. This fact is clearly mentioned in the second proverb which underestimates women's confidence, self-esteem and mental abilities.

**Table 5****Proverbs portraying women as loquacious**

Corpus	Description	Explanation
Woman's tongue wags like a lamb's tail	A woman's tongue keeps moving (she keeps talking)	Reprimanding talkative women
The only secret that a woman can keep is that of her age	You can get any answer from a woman except answers regarding her private matters	Reprimanding a man for trusting a woman

The first proverb describes women as loquacious. A woman's tongue is likened to a "lamb's tail" that moves quickly, signifying that women keep talking. Moreover, a woman will reveal any secret she is told except the ones that harm her or cause embarrassment such as her age. As expressed in the second proverb, talkative women are not trustworthy as long as the subject is not related to their private matters. Women are not secret keepers but rather gossipers as they find pleasure and excitement in causing conflicts.

B) Categories of men Proverbs:

1. Men as sinners and ambiguous
2. Men as superior and the ruling gender
3. Men as opponents
4. Men as immature

Table 6**Proverbs portraying men as sinners and ambiguous**

Corpus	Description	Explanation
Men are not angels	Men are not infallible	Acknowledging the true nature of men as an inherent thing
Men and melons are hard to know	It's difficult to get to know men and melons	Expressing annoyance for the inability to properly pass judgement on a man because of his appearance

The above proverbs perceived man as sinners and ambiguous. Men are not infallible, they have both negative and positive traits; they have emotions, imperfections and they're also willing to make mistakes. The word 'angels' is used to refer to infallible creatures with divine qualities. In the first proverb, people are advised to stop describing men as superior because men can also be sinners, have imperfections and



commit mistakes. Men are also ambiguous as expressed in the second proverb. Women have limited abilities to form a full understanding of men's characters, beliefs and true values because of their ambiguous nature. The fruit 'melons' resembles men as its external appearance is quite different from its internal appearance which may trick others.

Table 7**Proverbs portraying men as superior and the ruling gender**

Corpus	Description	Explanation
It's a man's world	This world is only for men	Highlighting the gender differences in favor of men including power, privilege and influence
A man of straw is worth a woman of gold	The least valuable man is more precious than the most valuable woman	Reflecting the traditional stereotypes of viewing men and women

The phrase 'man's world' has been used to express men as the ruling gender. The first proverb, for instance, clearly states that this is a man's world because society is biased towards men who traditionally have greater positions, opportunities and influence than women. These gender differences are inherited as men continue to take advantage of their power, privilege and influence to neglect and oppress women.

On the other hand, men are supported by their society to show their superiority over women. This notion is highlighted in the second proverb which underestimates woman while elevating men regardless of their true value or qualities. The word 'straw' is used to refer to something or someone with little worth and value. 'Gold', on the other hand, is a precious metal that refers to wealth and great value. Gender bias is highly manifested in this proverb.

Table 8**Proverbs portraying men as opponents**

Corpus	Description	Explanation
So many Men (Heads), so many minds	Men have different thoughts and opinions	Acknowledging the various opinions and perspectives that men could have in a society
The ship which has two captains must drown	Two men responsible of something will ruin it	Expressing the resulting conflict and imbalance when two men are in charge



The above proverbs introduce men as opponents and diverse. The first proverb acknowledges that men are unique and each one of them has his own way of thinking, analyzing actions, in addition to making decisions. This difference in thinking may lead to disagreements and chaos. However, in this storm of various visions and thoughts, men compete to prove their distinctiveness. As expressed in the second proverb, men who are in charge of the same mission are more likely to generate conflicts, chaos and failure. 'The ship' refers to any task, job or responsibility, while 'captains' refers to men in charge.

Table 9**Proverbs portraying men as immature**

Corpus	Description	Explanation
Men are but children of larger growth	Men may grow but stay children at the same time	Recognizing the complexity of men's nature and their retaining of some childlike features throughout different stages of life
Boys will be boys	Boys will behave as boys	Normalizing certain behaviors related to boys naturally such as being mischievous and taking risks

Sometimes, it comes to mind that men are overrated, where they hold responsibility more than they can tolerate, and people have high hopes in them. However, men are only children as shown in the above proverbs. Adulthood doesn't eliminate the childlike characteristics of a man including playfulness and emotions. Immaturity is a feature of men who refuse to accept their mistakes or bad consequences. The first proverb could also be used to convince a wife to tolerate the bad actions or behavior of her husband simply because this is part of his nature. Moreover, boys will continue to act childish because they naturally retain some childlike features throughout different stages of life. Boys will be boys is a proverb that is used to prevent parents from punishing their sons when they misbehave simply because it is in their nature.

Second Research Question**What are the typical negative images portrayed for both men and women by Palestinian Arabic proverbs?**

All selected proverbs were thematically categorized according to their meanings and the personal negative attributes reflected by them.

A) Categories of Women Proverbs:

1. Women as fragile, obedient and sexual object
2. Women as unintelligent, unproductive and gullible
3. Women as willful and evil
4. Women as burden
5. Women as loquacious



6. Women as irresponsible and negative homemakers

7. Women as despised, shameful and worthless

Table 10

Proverbs portraying women as fragile, obedient and sexual object

Corpus	Description	Explanation
طريق البنات شوك	Girl's road is paved with thorns	Convincing a girl to refrain from going after her dreams
طويلات شعر قصيرات عقول	They have long hair but limited brains	Reprimanding women who care much about their appearance

In this category, women are described as fragile, obedient and sexual objects. The first proverb mentions that girls' road is full of thorns to express the negative feelings of disappointment and fragility of a girl after failing in achieving her goals. The word 'Thorns' refers to the troubles and obstacles that may hurt girls without even being aware of them. Through history, women have been treated as sexual objects without any consideration of their mental abilities. The second proverb confirms this notion. Women who care much about their appearance and maintain their beauty will not have the time to improve their thinking abilities. Further, Beautiful girls are described as gullible, unintelligent and not aware of the consequences of their actions.

Table 11

Proverbs portraying women as unintelligent, unproductive and gullible

Corpus	Description	Explanation
المرءة بنص عقل	A woman has half a brain	Underestimating women
ما في عتب على بلد حاكمتها مره	A city ruled by a woman is not to be blamed	Underestimating women and belittling them

Here in this category of proverbs, describing women as unintelligent, unproductive and gullible has been targeted. The first proverb describes women as unintelligent and gullible by mentioning that they have only half a brain. This proverb promotes harmful stereotypes and undermines the intelligence and capabilities of women. Moreover, the second proverb shows that women are not worthy of high positions, unproductive and irresponsible because women may make unreasonable decisions and regret them. Moreover, ancient societies generally held traditional and patriarchal views, which often limited the opportunities for women. This also means that these societies were designed to prioritize male domination and privilege.

**Table 12****Proverbs of women as willful and evil**

Corpus	Description	Explanation
مبغوضة وجابت بنت	She is hated and she gave birth to a baby-girl	Expressing abhorrence and dissatisfaction for having another daughter
الدنيا بلاها ملاها وأكثر بلاها من نساها	The world is full of evil and most evil originates from women	Expressing hatred and disgust of women

In this set of proverbs, phrases like ‘most evil originates from women, hated’ are used to present women as evil and willful. The first proverb expresses abhorrence and dissatisfaction for having another daughter. This proverb also refers to women as abominable who can’t even fulfill their biological responsibility which lies in giving birth to male children. The second proverb indicates that the world is full of evil, and most of this evil originates from women because they are willful and source of troubles.

Table 13**Proverbs portraying women as burden**

Corpus	Description	Explanation
بنتي في طبريا وهمها واصل لي	My daughter is a burden even though she is in Tiberias	Complaining of having a daughter
العرض زي القزاز	Honor is like glass	Despising having daughters because their honor must be protected fiercely

The first proverb refers to a father complaining of having a daughter who occupies his thoughts although she is married or living in another city faraway. Moreover, the negative feelings of having a daughter since she’s fragile and her reputation could be smeared easily are clearly expressed in the second proverb. Resembling women’s honor with glass is because glass needs to be protected in order to avoid being broken. The negative perception of women as burden led to negative circumstances. The second proverb indicates that girls are burden to their families and source of shame so their death relieves their families. Also, since girls are viewed as source of shame and humiliation to their families, being unmarried overburdens them and increases their fear of long spinsterhood.

**Table 14****Proverbs of women as loquacious**

Corpus	Description	Explanation
جهنم مبلطة بالسنة النسوان	Hell is courted with women's tongues	Blaming a talkative woman
شاورهم وخالف شورهم	Consult them (women) and do the opposite of what they say	Advising men not to consider their wives' opinions

Women in this set of proverbs are described as loquacious. As described in the first proverb, women are blamed for being loquacious and for saying hurtful or harsh words. Moreover, men are advised to neglect women's advice and do the opposite of what they say because women are loquacious with limited thinking abilities who may also manipulate men with their twisted talk.

Table 15**Proverbs portraying women as irresponsible and negative homemakers**

Corpus	Description	Explanation
النسوان كثار وربات البيت قلال	Women are so many but housewives are few	Addressing women who ignore their duties as homemakers
مثل الجاجة بتحكمش ع بيضتها	She is like a hen that can't control her egg	Addressing women who are ruled and controlled by others

The first proverb in this category indicates that there are many women but few are considered homemakers. This proverb addresses women who ignore their duties and focus on their appearance. Besides, irresponsible women who do not have the ability to control their lives are fragile and not capable of handling their responsibilities. The aforementioned notion is highlighted in the second proverb through resembling irresponsible women with hens who cannot control their eggs. 'hens' on the other hand are associated with unreliability and foolishness.

Table 16**Proverbs portraying women as despised shameful and worthless**

Corpus	Description	Explanation
صباح الحية ولا صباح البنية / تكبر حية ولا بنية	The face of a snake is better than a girl's face/ Raise a snake rather than a girl	Expressing hatred and contempt towards daughters



دلل ابنك بغنيك ودلل بنتك بتخزيك

Spoil your son and he'll
enrich you, spoil your
daughter and she will
shame you

Acknowledging parents' role in
shaping their children's
personalities

The first proverb in this category suggests that the face of a snake is better than a girl's face to indicate that girls are despised and pariah. Moreover, it is better for women to have girls better than not having children at all. On the other hand, girls are source of shame and humiliation compared to boys who are source of pride and wealth. Therefore, fathers are advised to be tolerant towards their sons and strict with their daughters. Consequently, fathers should limit their daughters' potentials, because a daughter who wants to have her goals achieved might cause troubles to her family. Therefore, daughters must be treated harshly and violently.

B) Categories of men Proverbs:

1. Males as irresponsible, unproductive and troublemakers
2. Men as violent, cruel and burden
3. Men as unintelligent, gullible and spineless
4. Men as evil and cunning
5. The financial situation of men

Table 17

Proverbs portraying males as irresponsible, unproductive and troublemakers

Corpus	Description	Explanation
الولد ولد ولو حكم بلد	A boy is still a boy even if he rules a country	Normalizing certain boys' natural behaviors
فلان لا سقف ولا قاع	He has neither ground nor a ceiling	Reprimanding a man who is irresponsible and unproductive

Males in this category are featured as irresponsible, unproductive and troublemakers. The first proverb indicates that boys shouldn't be judged when they misbehave simply because it's in their nature. The second proverb reprimands unproductive and irresponsible men for being useless and fruitless.

Table 18

Proverbs portraying men as violent, cruel and burden

Corpus	Description	Explanation
تربية الصبيان مثل قرش الصوان	Raising boys is similar to rocks biting	A father expressing his struggle while raising his son



من كثرت ولاده قل زاده

He who has many children
has little moneyExpressing parents' exhaustion of
their many children

The first proverb in this category expresses the struggle parents go through while raising their sons because boys are stubborn, argumentative and competitive. 'Rocks biting' refers to extremely difficult tasks that require patience and tolerance. Moreover, children are considered burden on their families especially at a young age for their multiple demands that must be provided by their provider, who is usually their father. Many factors contribute to forming men's cruel and violent characters. These factors include the acquired behavior which means that some men have grown up in environments where they witnessed or experienced violence. As a result, they normalize such behavior. Also, violence may originate from men's obsession with power and control, especially while being aware of the traditional gender roles that oppress women and express men's domination.

Table 19**Proverbs portraying men as unintelligent, gullible and spineless**

Corpus	Description	Explanation
طوله طول النخلة وعقله عقل سخلة	He is in the length of a palm tree but he has a goat's brain	Reprimanding idiot men
اللي بشاور المرأة مرة	He who consults a woman is a woman	Scolding unintelligent men

The first proverb reprimands idiot men who may fool you with their external appearance and physical features. On the other hand, men who seek women's advice are considered foolish and gullible. The second proverb likens men to women as a result of the former's resorting to consult the latter about their matters.

Women's abilities and intelligence is worthless in patriarchal societies because women are often judged and valued based on their beauty and external appearance. Consequently, this promotes harmful stereotypes that affects how men perceive women. Therefore, this set of proverbs stigmatize men who seek women's advice as gullible, stupid and lacking masculinity.

Table 20**Proverbs of men as evil and cunning**

Corpus	Description	Explanation
لسان ملس وقلب نجس	A smooth tongue and an impure heart	Scolding men who hide behind their true characters



يا مأمنة بالرجال يا مأمنة بالمى
فى الغربال

Trusting men is like
trusting water in a sieve

Scolding unfaithful men who
deceive women

This category features men as evil and cunning. Men who tend to fool people with their sweet- sounding words are evil, cunning and manipulative. In the second proverb, women are advised to be careful with men because trusting them resembles trusting that water will not pass through the holes of a sieve. This proverb expresses the bad feelings of foolishness and betrayal.

Table 21

Proverbs portraying the financial situation of men

Corpus	Description	Explanation
يا مآخذ القرد على ماله يروح المال ويبقى القرد على حاله	He who marries the monkey for his money will wake up when the money is gone and the monkey is still the same	Reprimanding getting married for superficial reasons
عيب الرجل جيبه	A man's flaw is his pocket	Underestimating poor men

In this set of proverbs, the financial situation of men is highlighted. The first proverb reprimands people who get married for superficial reasons. Marriage is a crucial decision that should be made reasonably and not based on superficial standards. On the other hand, poor men are maligned because their character, manners and accomplishments are worthless if they are not capable of providing the essential requirements of a good life. As a result, accepting a poor man's marriage proposal is opposed, especially if the girl is also poor.

Third Research Question:

What are the major differences and similarities between the portrayal of men and women in English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs?

The representation of men and women in both English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs varies in various aspects. In English proverbs women are likened to animals such as horses, hens and monkeys. Moreover, women are compared to fruit such as cherry and grapes, in addition to objects including glass and vessels. Some proverbs represent women negatively as being stubborn, dangerous, demanding, unproductive, irresponsible, fragile, unintelligent, loquacious and a source of evil or threat. Men in English proverbs are represented negatively referring to their evil, irresponsibility, superiority to women, immaturity and being opponents.

In Palestinian Arabic proverbs women are likened to animals such as geese, hens and snakes. Moreover, proverbs refer to women as glass and a door knocker, as they are also depicted negatively such as being fragile, sexual objects, obedient, evil, burdensome, irresponsible, despised and shameful. Palestinian Arabic proverbs



represent men negatively such as being unproductive, troublemakers, cruel, burden, unintelligent, gullible and evil. Men are also likened to monkeys. The representation of men and women in these proverbs reflects cultural norms and expectations.

The portrayal of men and women in English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs have been influenced by many factors. Men have power and influence in patriarchal societies which might be an explanation for the negative depiction of women in some proverbs. Moreover, proverbs could be also an indication for the bias against women mainly because the creators of these proverbs were men. Males' perspective could be perceived in proverbs describing women. Also, proverbs have been utilized to reinforce or discourage certain behaviors. Ultimately, proverbs commonly employ satire or humor to convey a message rather than to be taken literally.

The portrayal of men and women in English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs can vary significantly due to the cultural, historical, and social contexts of each language. While it is challenging to generalize, some major differences in the portrayal of men and women in these proverbs can be observed:

A. Traditional Gender Roles:

In both English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs, traditional gender roles are often reflected. English proverbs depict women as homemakers and nurturers especially because they are responsible for preserving and handling the household finances and taking care of the children. On the other hand, men are portrayed as authoritative figures who in turn protect their wives and fulfill their role as the providers who offer financial stability to the family.

Palestinian Arabic proverbs have depicted women negatively by minimizing their role, restricting their abilities to the kitchen and preventing them from being engaged in social life or going out to work. Women are also portrayed as obedient daughters or devoted wives who may depend on their children as a shield to protect themselves from being abused or mistreated by their husbands. Furthermore, cultural norms and societal pressure convinced women to seek men's protection in addition to economic, physical and psychological safety which women will never have without men. On the other hand, men are depicted as protectors and providers for their families who must treat their wives with dignity, respect, mutual understanding and consideration. Men in Palestinian Arabic proverbs tend to defend their honor (women) fiercely.

B. Power and Authority:

English proverbs reveal that gender differences are inherited as men continue to take advantage of their power, privilege and influence to neglect and oppress women. Men held the majority of positions of power and authority in government, politics and dominated the legal system. Boys from wealthy families had better access to education and career opportunities compared to girls. Besides, men are supported by their society to show their superiority over women who are underestimated while elevating men regardless of their true value or qualities. Consequently, men in English proverbs are dominant, superior and powerful. On the other hand, women in English



proverbs are inferior not only to men, but also inferior to women with higher advantages. Compared to men, women are inferior and weaker who should not hold high positions because they cause chaos and commit mistakes. Women's access to education was limited, and the majority were not formally educated. Wealthy and noble families might have allowed their daughters to get education that focused on etiquette. Women had limited legal and political rights. In addition, they were typically subject to the authority of their fathers or husbands.

In Palestinian Arabic proverbs, men are superior to women as they have the authority to make crucial decisions, and adjust women's behavior. Besides, even if men commit mistakes, they are not judged or punished because they are the ruling gender who has authority, influence and power. Women are portrayed as obedient and inferior to men because women need men's protection to preserve their honor. However, the protection intended is economic and care provided by them rather than ruling women and limiting their potentials.

C. Beauty and Appearance:

Both English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs frequently make reference to women's beauty and appearance, reinforcing societal expectations about the importance of physical attractiveness of women. In English proverbs, for instance, women are sexual objects and the thing that matters most is their physical appearance. Consequently, it is a woman's duty to maintain her beauty and appearance to please her husband. Women are likened to fruit such as 'cherry', 'grapes' for their attractive nature. Moreover, women are stigmatized as having low mental abilities since they would care for their beauty rather than improving their thinking abilities. On the other hand, Palestinian Arabic proverbs highlight the importance of women's attractiveness and physical appearance as they allow women to reach their goals and desires compared to those who are less fortunate. Moreover, choosing a wife should be only based on her physical beauty even if her mental abilities are low. Palestinian Arabic proverbs mention the physical attributes of women which include their skin color, height, facial beauty and other physical traits. Besides, some proverbs encourage men to seek getting married again because their wives lost their youth and beauty.

Despite that, both English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs do not care much about men's external appearance. A man is only judged by his manners, accomplishments and character without restricting men's value to superficial criteria including handsomeness, height or skin.

D. Wisdom and Intelligence:

While both English and Palestinian Arabic cultures may contain proverbs that highlight the wisdom and intelligence of both men and women, the focus on these qualities may differ. In some English proverbs, women are stigmatized as having low mental abilities particularly because they would care for their beauty rather than improving their thinking abilities. Men in English proverbs are not clearly featured with intelligence or wisdom.



On the other hand, the folk culture in the Palestinian society confirms that women use their intelligence and cunningness as part of their nature to get their rights. However, women have been treated as sexual objects without any consideration of their mental abilities. Furthermore, some proverbs suggest that parents should make decisions instead of their daughters because they are not aware of their personal interests, and they are not capable of making logical decisions. Moreover, girls were prevented from studying and achieving self-actualization. Even women who try to speak up and express their opinions loudly are neglected and oppressed. Men, on the other hand are featured as unintelligent and gullible in Palestinian Arabic proverbs particularly those who may fool you with their external appearance and physical features, or men who seek women's advice.

E. Gender stereotypes:

Both English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs contain gender stereotypes that reinforce traditional views of men and women. Gender stereotypes in English proverbs have been prevalent historically. The following are some common gender stereotypes found in English proverbs:

1. Women's emotional nature:

Some proverbs reinforce the stereotype that women are more emotional or sensitive than men. Women are described to be hesitant, unpredictable and fickle. Moreover, women are featured as a source of danger and threat, especially when provoked. Women are aggressive since they get furious and lose control over their feelings easily.

2. Women's submissiveness:

Some proverbs imply that women should be submissive to men or that they should follow the decisions of their male partners.

3. Men's aggressive nature and irresponsibility:

Some proverbs show men as opponents and diverse. Each man has his own way of thinking which may lead to disagreements and chaos. Therefore, men who are in charge of the same mission are more likely to generate conflicts, chaos and failure. Moreover, men naturally tend to avoid their behavior's complete responsibility or even minimizing their mistakes.

On the other hand, gender stereotypes in Palestinian Arabic proverbs reflect traditional beliefs and norms about the roles and behaviors of men and women in society. Here are some common gender stereotypes found in Palestinian Arabic proverbs:

1. Women's emotional nature:

Some proverbs portray women as emotional with complex and weak nature. This stereotype may suggest that women's emotions are unpredictable or irrational.



2. Women's subordination:

Some proverbs imply that women should be subservient to men and that their primary role is to serve and please men. Many Palestinian Arabic proverbs expressed a man's abuse and bad treatment towards his wife, which reflects men's tendency to release their anger and exasperation on their wives who are naturally weaker, obedient and tolerant.

3. Women's unworthiness and evil nature:

Many proverbs portray women as evil, dangerous and cunning especially manipulative women who are aware of their bad intentions. This stereotype may suggest that women are despised and source of threat. Women are perceived as burden in many Palestinian Arabic proverbs since females are source of shame so their death relieves their families especially if they are unmarried.

5. Men's irresponsibility and cruelty:

Some proverbs emphasize men's irresponsibility and cruelty through expressing the struggle parents go through while raising their sons. Palestinian proverbs show that boys are tough and mostly reckless at a young age.

6. Men's material situation:

Some proverbs focus on men's material situation; whereas some emphasizing that a man's character, manners and accomplishments are worthless if he is not capable of providing the essential requirements of a good life. Other proverbs refuse getting married according to superficial reasons.

In spite of the fact that the analysis of English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs has revealed interesting differences, they still share similarities in how men and women are perceived within their cultures. The following statements reveal the similarities between English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs in describing women and referring to their negative traits.

1) Both English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes through describing women as evil and a source of danger or threat.

Example (English)	Example (Palestinian Arabic)
"Women are the devil's nets."	"Women are Satan's tools." "النسوان حبال ابليس"

2) Both English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs underestimate the value of women's intelligence, knowledge, and achievements, reducing them to superficial and insignificant characteristics.

Example (English)	Example (Palestinian Arabic)
"A blind man's wife needs no paint."	"A girl is like a door knocker; anyone can knock her." "البنت مثل مدقة الباب مين ما كان بدقها"



3) Both English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs reflect historical gender biases and stereotypes that have often relegated women to subservient roles.

Example (English)	Example (Palestinian Arabic)
"It is a sorry flock where the ewe bears the bell."	"What a woman gains in a year is gained by a man in a day" "اللي بتجيبه المرة بسنة بجيبه الزلعة بيوم"

The following statements reveal the similarities between English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs referring to men's negative traits.

1) Both English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs refer to men as unproductive and immature.

Example (English)	Example (Palestinian Arabic)
"He only loosed the tent-pegs"	"He smells fresh air and picks flowers" "شمام هوا وقطاف ورد"

2) Both English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs reprimand men for being troublemakers and cunning.

Example (English)	Example (Palestinian Arabic)
"So many Men (heads), so many minds"	"The bad boy brings shame and worries to his family" "الولد المشوم بجيب لاهله المسبات والهموم"

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Both corpora show that the English and Palestinian Arabic cultures acknowledge specific social roles for women. Proverbs portraying women in both English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs are greater in number than those portraying men. This indicates that she has been a subject of interest for centuries and this may be attributed to many reasons including societal roles and expectations. Proverbs frequently reflect society norms and expectations and emphasize the importance of women's roles. Additionally, a lot of proverbs reflect concepts related to marriage, family, and relationships, where women are essential participants. Additionally, in some communities, women may have experienced more challenges or obstacles in the past, which has resulted in a stronger emphasis on their experiences and roles in proverbs. A large number of English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs present negative and harmful portrayal through describing women as evil and a source of danger or threat. Other negative proverbs in English and Palestinian Arabic cultures are related to women's low mental abilities, unproductiveness, wickedness, weakness and reducing them to superficial and insignificant characteristics. When proverbs relate to women's beauty or intelligence, they refer to them as possessions for the advancement and progress of patriarchal view in the society. Women's representation in English and



Palestinian Arabic proverbs is noticeable through a number of ways in which these proverbs refer to women as property, objects, animals, and fruit.

We can argue that the set of negative attributes related to women in English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs is large and distressing as they stigmatize women in a patriarchal society and restrict their roles, functions and positions. As a result, women in both English and Palestinian cultures are inferior and forced to be silent or obedient to the male authority. Furthermore, proverbs in English and Palestinian Arabic cultures present women in need of guidance, caution and punishment since women are perceived as people lacking in agency and efficiency who consequently shouldn't occupy high positions. Moreover, proverbs related not to seeking any kind of advice from women and showing them as forbidden ones in politics are a mirror to patriarchy at the time of formulation of these proverbs. Findings of the study also show that both English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs depict women as sexual objects and the thing what matters most is their physical appearance, especially Palestinian Arabic proverbs.

Both proverbs related to women in English and Palestinian Arabic reprimand women who are gullible, in addition to being negative homemakers who ignore their duties and responsibilities. Women in English and mainly Palestinian Arabic proverbs are described as worthless. On the other hand, women in Palestinian Arabic proverbs are considered burdensome, despised and shameful. Furthermore, in Palestinian Arabic proverbs, a woman is typically expected to be completely submissive to her husband or males in the family to preserve her honor. In fact, women may depend on their children as a shield to protect themselves from being abused or mistreated by their husbands. On the other hand, the fact that women are seen responsible for having children as their normal biological role is frustrating because of the societal pressure that makes reproduction a matter of life or death in the Palestinian society.

Gender stereotypes can be found in both English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs, which can support the imbalance of power between men and women. For instance, certain proverbs from both cultures support the notion that women are more sensitive or emotionally involved than males. Thus, women's representation in English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs is noticeable through a number of ways in which these proverbs refer to women as property, objects, animals, and fruit. Moreover, when proverbs praise women, the former mainly focus on women or wives fulfilling their roles that are restricted to home and family.

On the other hand, English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs refer to men's unproductivity in addition to their immaturity, especially men who refuse to accept the consequences of their actions. Besides, in both English and Palestinian societies, men are overrated as they may be seen as infallible beings. Moreover, men in both societies may be perceived as burden because of their cruelty and disagreement since they have a tendency to initiate conflicts and chaos. Men are depicted in some Palestinian Arabic proverbs as stupid and gullible, especially those who might trick you with their external looks and physical attributes or men who ask women for



guidance or advice. English and Palestinian societies equally support men's superiority and dominance over women regardless of men's true value.

Proverbs, which reflect different cultural values in particular countries, show a lot about people's inner lives and views toward their environment. Proverbs are prominently used in Palestinian culture, but they are also present in English culture, although being less common there. This study has further shown that proverbs in both English and Palestinian Arabic, although having completely different cultural origins and language, may be utilized to convey the same or opposing messages in similar contexts.

Recommendations

This study may open the way for further research into how women and men are portrayed in proverbs from around the world. Additionally, this research raises interest in assessing how well we comprehend Palestinian culture, particularly regarding gender differences in society. Examining how Palestinian proverbs affect Palestinian culture and the creation of our identity is another fascinating field of research. Further research could be implemented on the educational and social values expressed by proverbs in Palestinian and English cultures. With more extensive study, such proverbs can reinforce the findings reached in the present study.

References

1. Ahmed, S. (2005). Educational and social values expressed by proverbs in two cultures: knowledge and use of proverbs in Sudan and in England (Doctoral dissertation, Berlin, Techn. Univ., Diss., 2005).
2. Al-Zubeidi, A. J. A. (2017). Patriarchal Concepts of Woman in English, and Arabic Proverbs. In The 18th yearly conference of the College of Basic Education.
3. Bayumi, M. (2004). A dictionary of Arabic proverbs. Cairo, university of Ainu Shamsi
4. Capdevila I. (2011), Critical Discourses Analysis, the Critical Study of Language.
5. Fairclough, N. (1989) Language and Power. London: Longman.
6. Gast, V. (2012). Contrastive linguistics: Theories and methods. Dictionaries of linguistics and communication science: linguistic theory and methodology. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter
7. Hashem, Z. A., & Muhi, T. H. (2021). Semantic deviation in Arabic and English proverbs of love. International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Culture, 7(3), 130-138.
8. House, Juliane and Shoshana Blum-Kulka (eds.) (1986). Interlingual and intercultural communication: Discourse and cognition in translation and second language acquisition studies. Tübingen: Narr.
9. Ibrahim, A. A. (2003). A contrastive study of proverbs in both English and Arabic. A pragmatic approach. Grazer linguistische Studien, (60), 17-32.



10. Kerschen, L. (2012). American proverbs about women: A reference guide. Greenwood Publishing Group.
11. Mieder, W. Mieder, Wolfgang. (1993). Proverbs are never out of season: Popular Wisdom in the Modern Age. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
12. Mirzaee, S., & Hamidi, H. (2012). Critical discourse analysis and Fairclough's model. International electronic journal for the teachers of English, 2(5), 182-191.
13. Oleksy, Wieslaw (ed.) (1989). Contrastive pragmatics. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
14. Pasha Zanous, Ahmad, (2016), Critical Discourse Analysis of a Sermon by Ziad ibn Abih Using Fairclough's Model ,Arabic Literary Criticism Journal. No. 11 pp.40-65.
15. Rogers, R., E. Malancharuvil-Berkes, M. Mosley, D. Hui, and Joseph G. O'Garro (2005) Critical discourse analysis in education: A review of the literature. Review of Educational Research 75.3: 365- 416.
16. Schipper, M. (2004). Never marry a woman with big feet: Women in proverbs from around the world. Yale University Press.
17. Taylor, A. (1996). The Study of Proverbs. in De Proverbio, Vol 2, No. 1
18. Penn, W. (1825). The select works of William Penn (Vol. 1). W. Phillips.
19. Wilson, F. P. (1970). The Oxford Dictionary of English proverbs: Third edition. Oxford University Press.
20. الراوي، محمد. (2000). موسوعة الأمثال الشعبية في الوطن العربي. عمان، الاردن: دار أسامة للنشر والتوزيع.
21. المبيض، سليم عرفات. (1990). ملامح الشخصية الفلسطينية في أمثالها الشعبية. القاهرة، مصر: الهيئة المصرية العامة للكتاب.
22. السهلي، محمد توفيق. (2002). موسوعة الأمثال الشعبية الفلسطينية. مصر: مؤسسة هنداوي.
23. الزريعي، عابد. (1989). المرأة في الادب الشعبي الفلسطيني. عكا، فلسطين: دار الاسوار.
24. عودة، هشام. (2011). الأمثال الشعبية الفلسطينية: قراءة معاصرة. عمان: دار دجلة ناشرون وموزعون.
25. علامة، امل. (2000). دراسة في: ملامح المرأة في الامثال الشعبية الفلسطينية، فلسطين: مكتب وزارة الثقافة.
26. كناعنة، شريف. (1999). الدار دار ابونا: دراسات في التراث الشعبي الفلسطيني: مركز القدس العالمي للدراسات الفلسطينية.
27. انسطاس، قسيس، حزبون. (2015). امثالنا الشعبية في فلسطين - ألف مثل ومثل. بيت لحم، فلسطين.