

Comment [AD1]: Is there any reason that the author used the word "foolish" in the title?

# Wise Saying or "Foolish" Saying: Assessing the Views on the Impact of Some Ghanaian Proverbs and Sayings on Gender Relations in the Frafra Traditional Area of Ghana

---

## Abstract

Most cultures recognize gender differences, but the problem emerges when such differences are misunderstood as gender inequity, especially to the detriment of women. Gender disparity is evident in one component of culture, namely language, and more specifically the use of wise saying also known as proverbs. Wise saying is used interchangeably with proverbs which are said to contain a society's wisdom. People's action or inactions are frequently reflected in the meanings and interpretations of proverbs in some communities. This study investigates how wise saying or proverbs among the Frafra Traditional Area in the Upper East Region in Ghana may impact on gender relations. Using a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), we discovered that wholesome proverbs show masculine supremacy such as the construction of masculinity, ironically, exposes males to significant hazards in their attempts to meet society's expectations. These proverbs implicitly limit the socio-cultural space in which men can communicate their socially created ordeals. To address gender inequality in the Frafra traditional area in Ghana holistically, we recommend that the traditional image of men in proverbs needs to be critically re-examined.

## Subject Areas

Anthropology, Culture and Development

## Keywords

Frafra Wise Saying, Proverbs, Critical Discourse Analysis, Gender (In) Equality, Masculinity, Gurune

---

## 1. Introduction

Men are frequently considered as being stronger, more intelligent, and possessing leadership qualities as well as the ability to give security, nourishment, and livelihood in traditional Ghanaian communities (Gyan *et al.*, 2018) [1]. Females are socialized to accept their male counterparts as smarter and naturally capable leaders. Males gain authority and wield it at all levels of decision-making in their societies as a result of these socialization processes. Men tend to use and exert their power in the context of community development by dominating all aspects of decision-making throughout the process, including inception, development, implementation, monitoring, assessment, and feedback (Gyan *et al.*, 2018) [1].

According to Foucault (1972) [2], power is not something men have and the “other” (women) do not have. This “power” is disseminated and embodied in discourse, information, and “truth regimes”. This suggests that in Ghana, decision-making authority is diffused rather than centralized, embodied and enacted rather than held, discursive rather than solely coercive, and constitutes agents rather than being deployed (Gaventa, 2003 [3]; Adjei-Poku, 2018 [4]). Men’s power is not “an agency nor a structure” (Foucault, 1972) [2], but rather a “regime of truth” that pervades Ghanaian society and is unyielding in its fluidity and compromise. In community development decision-making, the “regime of truth” and the type of speech that is portrayed as the truth benefit men. Through the socialization process, the media, and even the educational system, these regimes and politics are constantly reinforced (and reinvented).

As stated in Gyan (2018) [1], the socialization process, as well as the agents and agencies involved in it, strengthen masculinity and femininity in traditional Ghanaian communities.

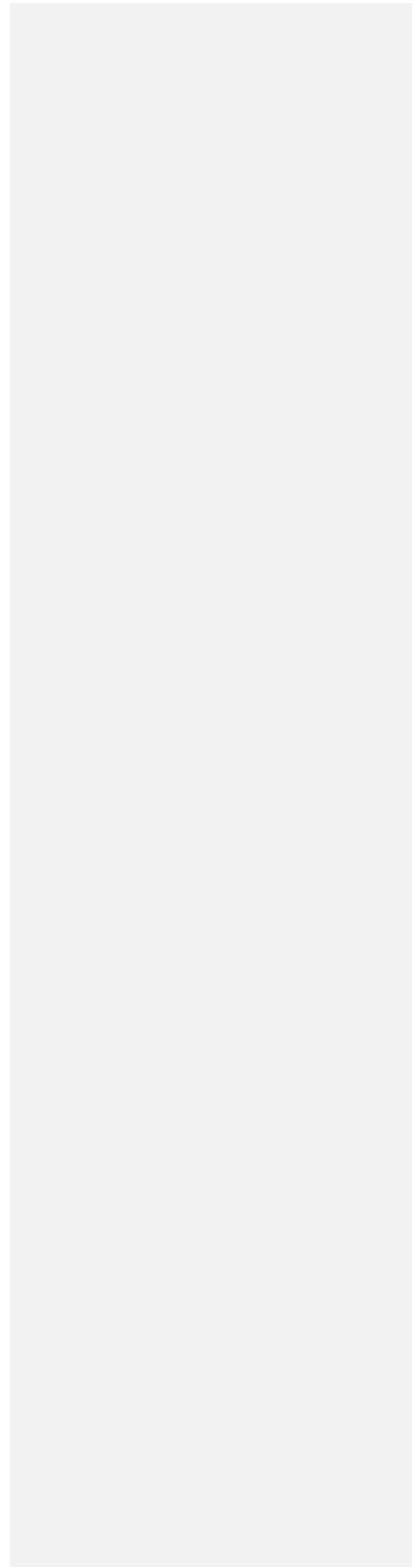
Children all over the world are born either female or male. Through the enculturation process, the girl child grows up as an African girl and then becomes a woman. The cognitive and emotional aspects of the enculturation process are both present. Both are learned and internalized by the girl child who grows up to be a woman. This learning-to-become is complete in the sense that both negative and positive thoughts, judgments, and attitudes toward women are learned and internalized. This learning occurs through observation, direct instruction, and patterns of behavior, as well as through songs, proverbs, wise sayings, and folktales. What is learned leads to similar behavioral habits.

This illustrates a link between gender roles in Ghanaian society and Africa as a whole, as well as language, actions, passivity, rituals, and oral traditions. Traditional Ghanaian culture, as well as other Africans, must understand the consequences of proverbs, oral traditions, and discourses for gender disparities, discrimination, and stereotyping. As a result, this study looks at some selected African proverbs and shows how men and women are portrayed in them. Oral traditions and proverbs are systematically employed as instruments in patriarchal cultures to perpetuate gender inequity and injustice,

**Comment [AG2]:** It is suggested that the term “regime of truth” be explained as a footnote for more clarification.

according to thereport.

UNDER PEER REVIEW



## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. African Culture and Proverbs

Proverbs are historic moral and wisdom statements that are passed down from generation to generation (Fayemi, 2009) [5]. They are an heirloom in Africa that is passed down from the generations via word of mouth (Olatunji, 1984) [6]. Traditional sayings such as proverbs describe culturally distinct acknowledged truths about how a community acts and lives. They are utilized in context and provide the cornerstone of linguistic interaction. Grant and Asimeng-Boahene (2006) [7] contend, however, that proverbs are universalized truths that can be applied to a variety of situations.

Proverbs are considered very important in the lives of indigenous peoples and play an important role in the culture of the native Africans. They serve as tools for portraying and interpreting all of Africa's ideas and values. Despite the present technical improvement and urbanization in Africa as a result of globalization, proverbs still remain an important part of traditional Africans' lives. "A proverb is the horse that can convey one fast to the discovery of ideas," says a Yoruba proverb.

Discussions govern the phenomenological interpretation of our daily lives, and they have an impact on the way we think and interact with one another in the world. The key characteristics of a human and knowledge, according to Gyekye (1996) [8], are relevant in overcoming personal and communal problems and challenges in African societies. Oral traditions in Africa, such as proverbs, are meant to express and demonstrate truths as well as the society's expected structure. Oral traditions have a pervasive effect and impact in traditional Akan society, according to Gyekye (1996) [8]. Life in Africa is mediated by wise sayings, proverbs and discourses.

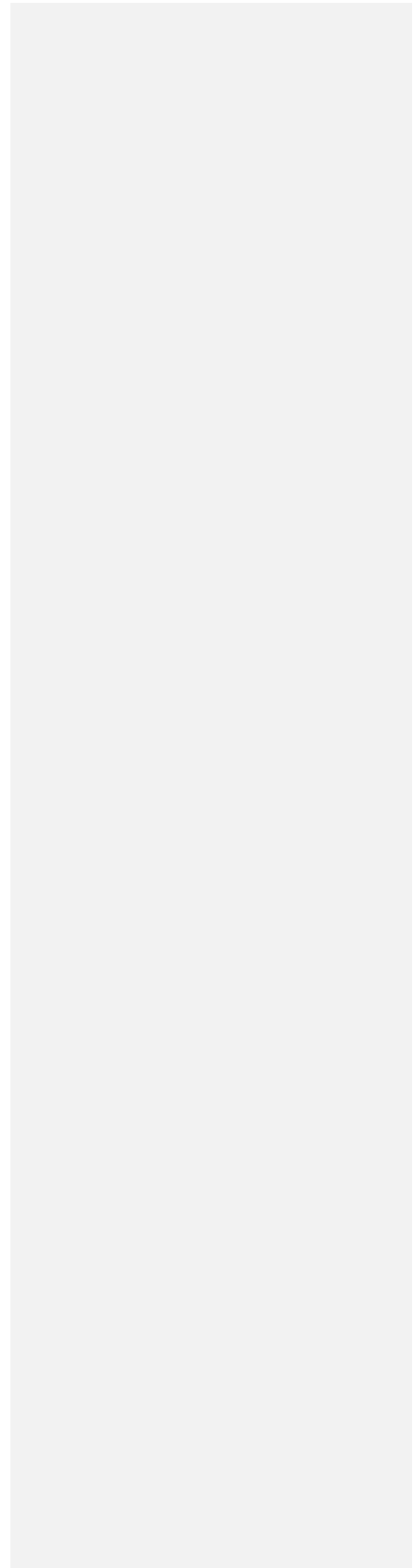
Oral traditions in Africa, such as proverbs and wise sayings, are revered and regarded as divine and perfect truth. Traditional Ghanaian societies' linguistic resources reflect distinct sacred knowledge (Addo-Fening, 2001) [9], which necessitates entire conformity rather than interrogation. The proverb is regarded as a great genre of African oral tradition that has the status of a custodian of a people's wisdom and philosophy of life (Ssetuba, 2002) [10]. "It's a proverb... cannot be contested. By their actions, 'Ghanaians' appear to have implicitly accepted that questioning the adage and its teachings is unseemly. To do so would appear to be a challenge to the wise ancestors, not only an act of arrogance but also a sacrilege" (Awedoba, 2000, p.25) [11]. The treasured nature of these oral traditions, defined by Chinua (1994) [12] as the palm-oil with which words are spoken. Gender imbalances, inequalities, and the preconceptions that accompany them have made it difficult to address them (p.2).

Women's competences are harmed by traditional Ghanaian society's discourses, which portray women as survival dependent on males. These discourses reflect a sex-based hierarchical structure that reinforces prejudices and

**Comment [AG3]:** These sentences need connectors to act as links of ideas.

subjectivities  
that have already been established. 'The proverbs' gender concepts encourage mas-

UNDER PEER REVIEW



culine dominance and feminine subjugation, forming a system of gender hegemony” (Anderson, 2012, p. 10) [13]. In other words, oral traditions are employed to maintain patriarchal culture, which fosters gender inequity, stereotypes, and injustice in traditional Ghanaian communities. Traditional Ghanaian ideas and values are strengthened by these customs. “Proverbs represent make-believe

ideas, male ideal that impose rules of submissive behavior for women and legitimize these rules by pointing to purportedly inferior feminine attributes,” (van der Geest, 1975, p. 51) [14].

Proverbs set the groundwork for gender stereotyping and construction, and they play a significant role in defining women’s place and role in Ghana and Africa as a whole. A proverb is a “noble genre of African oral tradition that enjoys the status of a custodian of a people’s wisdom and philosophy of life”, (Sse-tuba 2002, p. 1) [10].

To understand the meaning of a proverb, the addressee must pay attention to the context and circumstances of use, because, in isolation, proverbs do not have a single meaning (Orwenjo, 2009) [15]. According to Kemper (1989) [16], there are two ways to understand the meaning of proverbs: 1) by inference from the literal meaning of the proverb or 2) with the aid of contextually-based expectations that make it unnecessary to establish their literal meaning. In sum, proverbs provide strategies for dealing with a variety of communicative situations (Obeng, 1994) [17].

## 2.2. Who are the Frafra?

There are four major ethnic groups that make up the Frafra people: the Gu-rune speaking people, the Nabdan speaking, the Boone Speaking and the Talleni/Tallensi speaking people (Boatbil & Guure, 2014) [18]. The Frafra are one of the Ghanaian ethnic groups who live primarily in the Sahelian Upper East Region. The name Frafra stems from Christian missionaries who were greeted with the common greeting for those working “Ya Fare Fare!” when they first met Frafra farmers. The phrase “Ya Fare Fare” literally means we did it.

The missionaries began to refer to these people as Frafra, a derivation of the greeting, which the villagers soon adopted. The Frafra people the missionaries met, on the other hand, are part of a broader ethnic group known as the

Gurene or Grunshi, whose ethnic boundaries now extend into what is now Southern Burkina Faso. Despite the years of separation that began with the 1884 Berlin Conference, which partitioned African soil among European powers without consideration for existing ethnic geographies, the Frafra of Ghana maintain a peoplehood link with their Burkinabe brothers and sisters. Bolgatanga is their largest city, including additional cities such as Zuarungu, Bongo, and Navrongo. Frafra has also been a part of West Africa’s growing urbanization, forming small villages in Ghana’s urban centers of Accra and Kumasi. Frafra are still primarily a farming community. Millet and sorghum are common crops, as well as rearing of animals.

**Comment [AG4]:** This quotation suits the initial part of the introduction where the nature of proverbs is explained. I suggest that this quotation be replaced with a one that reflects women in proverbs in general and women in proverbs in the Ghanaian context in particular. For the former, the following paper is suggested:

Dabbagh, A., & Babai, E. (2023). Representation of women in English and Persian proverbs: A Cultural-Linguistics perspective. *Pragmatics and Society*, x(x), xxx-xxx. <https://www.jbe-platform.com/content/journals/10.1075/ps.21019.dab>

**Comment [AG5]:** The first section of the literature review starts with the general notion of review and moves on to the significance of proverbs of women. However, quite shockingly, this section ends with proverb interpretation with no link to gender issues.

Rather than a strong centralized chieftaincy, the political structure is based on a council of elders, which is made up of the oldest members of various lineages. This council of elders is frequently the guardian of Frafra law and history. They wield control over their citizens alongside religious priests, leading them in moral and pragmatic ways.

Farmers who practice subsistence farming make up the majority of Frafra speakers. They also keep domestic animals on their farms. These animals include goats, sheep, and cattle. Animals are bred for both home and commercial purposes. Cattle is transferred as dowry in other Frafra sub-tribes. Frafra's

ancestors are patrilineal. They are grouped into Yizuo clans, which are similar to families to them. The term Yizuo refers to the household's leader. The Yizuo are a group of people who share the same ancestry. The Yizuo are united by their totemic ancestors and taboos. This characteristic enables them to stay together despite distance and other factors that could otherwise separate them.

It is forbidden to marry someone with the same totemic ancestor, and the clan's oldest living son is the automatic leader and in charge of the clan's direction. The Frafra maintain strong familial ties within their clans, with each member expected to assist one another in areas like funerals, marriages, providing sacrifices to their ancestors, and the overall well-being of an individual and the clan as a whole.

It's also worth noting that the system has evolved in recent years, with the community boasting a big number of literates who have gone on to form the BONABOTO, a strong Frafra organization. The Frafra's political and social goals are promoted by this organization.

Nancy A. Schaefer, a researcher, recorded a verbal law code and history of Frafra elders in 1974 that is full of proverbial knowledge on issues such as acquiring a bride, "getting along in a family", (Schaefer, 1997) [19] connection with white people, herbal medicines, and other proverbial wisdoms. One such example from this document is "a weak person can't carry a donkey's head" (Schaefer, 1997) [19], meaning that one should not do more than he is capable of doing. Another proverb is "the ant says that her vagina isn't big but she will show it to her husband" (Schaefer, 1997) [19] meaning "we don't have much, but the little we have we give". Throughout the entire text, proverbs such as these can be found and they are an important display of the style of narrative the Frafra employ to communicate something, a style utilized excellently by kologo musician. This document was recorded by a council of 8 village elders from Zuarungu, the pre-colonial center of the Farefare people of northern Ghana, (Schaefer, 1997) [19] displaying that it is the elders that are the guardians of time and memory. Related to this research, this document proves invaluable because it displays

the proverbial nature of the Frafra and the moral code, both of which are commonly utilized in the lyrics of kologo music.

Although, some studies have been conducted on proverbs and gender identities in some ethnic groups, including the Ewe (Agbemabiese, 2016 [20]; Asimeng-Boahene, 2013 [21]; Asimeng-Boahene, 2009 [22]; Gyantetal., 2020 [23];

Diabah&Amfo, 2015 [24], 2018 [25]) in Ghana in the Upper East Region and other northern parts of Ghana, there appears to be no study on the impact of proverbs and wise sayings on gender relations. This study will look at wise sayings or proverbs through the lens of the Frafraculture in Ghana, in the Upper East Region.

### 2.3. Social Construction Theory

Gender, according to the social construction theory, is a social construct rather than a biological fact. Gender distinction, in other words, is based on social and institutional behaviors rather than permanent human characteristics. Gender is shaped and reshaped by human contact and experience. It is an organized system of social practices for classifying people into two distinct groups, men and women, and organizing inequitable social connections based on that distinction (Ridgeway & Correll 2004: 510) [26]. The male-female social constructs, according to Lorber (1997) [27], begins with the assignment of a sex category based on the appearance of one's genitalia at birth. Once the facts about a new born's external genitalia or sex organs are known, society begins to assign diverse meanings to these facts, meanings drawn from the culture into which the kid is born. Individuals are born sexed, not gendered, in this regard, but culture shapes how these two sexes are treated and ultimately see themselves. The Social Construction Theory fits into this study since the study is based on proverbs and gender relations.

### 3. Methodology

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was used to examine the wise saying in other words known as proverbs. The key tenet of CDA is that "discursive practices contribute to the construction of social identities and relations, discourse constitutes the social world and is constituted by other social practices, and language should be analyzed within its social context, discursive practices create and re-produce unequal power relations", (Phillips & Jørgensen 2006, pp. 61-65) [28]. We used CDA to learn about the function of proverbs in preserving women's subjugation in Ghana and to propose solutions for change. Discourse, according to Wetherell (2001) [29] and Richardson (2007) [30] is a social action that can be used to effect social change.

To discover the most up-to-date material about women and Frafra proverbs, we used a large collection of data and sources, as well as search engines like Google, MSN, Lycos, Ask, and Yahoo. In order to find relevant sources or re-sources, we were quite specific in our search phrases. Alternative terms and spellings were checked against the search terms. For example, we looked for "Ghana proverbs" and "Ghana wise sayings". We also entered in broad terms like "proverbs" or "gender discourses", which yielded far too many results, so we refined the search terms by adding modifiers to them, such as "proverbs + Ghana", "wise sayings + Ghana", "Frafra proverbs", and "Frafra wise sayings".

**Comment [AG6]:** Some empirical related study to the topic of the present study, either in relation to Ghana or other cultures, should be reviewed.

**Comment [AD7]:** I do not think that Social Constructivism is a good theoretical model for this study. Rather the author should have referred to theories and models in Cognitive Linguistics since they analyzed how Ghanaians conceptualized women in their proverbs,

**Comment [AG8]:** It is good that the authors differentiate between 'sex' and 'gender'. However, the authors should write also about the suitability of Social Construction Theory for the analysis of proverbs in terms of 'gender' representation. I think adding one or two sentences to that last sentence of section 2.3 will do.

**Comment [AG9]:** Most of the method section was dedicated to data collection procedure. However, few information was revealed on data analysis. The authors just limited their data analysis explanation to CDA, but they did not mention which approach of CDA they decided to apply and follow.

To ensure that we were able to identify relevant items, we included Boolean operators such as “and” and “or” to the search. The search turned up a lot of gray literature, with just a few publications and research on frafra proverbs, many of which were ruled out due to the paper’s focus. The majority of the materials were not only about gender issues or proverbs, but rather on other topics that were beyond the focus of this article. For example, the majority of the materials focused on proverbs and discrimination towards people with disabilities. The majority of the materials that passed the screening test came from a monolingual document, “fifteen Unique and popular Frafra proverbs and wise sayings (Atibilla, 2022) [31] and Dubei (2013) [32]. In all, 20 literature are in line with the objective of this work.

To validate what have been collected online, interviews were conducted on some Key Informants to obtain detail information on some Frafra’s proverbs and/or wise saying. These Key Informants were basically elderly people in the study area, family heads, clan heads and the fetish priest.

These materials were used to compile a list of proverbs concerning men and women.

#### **4. Results and Discussions**

A number of gender relations themes emerged from the findings as a result of the use of wise sayings and proverbs in the frafra language. Among the themes include Men as resilient, brave, and strong, Women as subject of harassment, Women as Child Producers, Home keepers and preservation of family lineage, Women as Compassionate, Women as Motherhood and Hardworking, Men as defenders and Providers.

##### **4.1. Men as Resilient, Brave, and Strong**

Every culture has a vast collection of proverbs and wise sayings, and while some are universal and may be applied to various cultures and languages, others are specific to each society, and some will make no sense to people from other civilizations. The proverbs and wise sayings from the Frafra tradition provide insightfulness into the Frafra culture and teachings. The Frafra proverbs and wisdom sayings are one of the wise sayings or proverbs emphasized by Bolga Online (2022) [31] that shows gender relations: “Bundoo ka zotikunkura” to wit, a Jack (the male donkey) is not afraid of kicks or blows from a Jenny (female donkey).

This proverb teaches us that in matters of love, a man should expect “kicks” and “blows” from a woman. Literally mean that men do not run away at the first sight of trouble, but keep pursuing the target, overcome whatever obstacle there might be to achieve the target, keeping the goal in sight. This frafra wise saying or proverb portrays men as resilient, brave, and strong.

According to Adinkrah (2012:475) [33], cultural constructs of masculinity and femininity in contemporary Ghanaian culture include belief in fundamental biological disparities between male and female human existence, as well as

related behavioral prescriptions. As a result, males are expected to work hard, while women are expected to care for and nurture their children. Furthermore, when a man exhibits female-like behavioural tendencies and vice versa, he is looked upon. Several patriarchal features are common in Ghanaian societies.

In most social contexts, men have a dominant social rank, and women are expected to submit to them (Adinkrah, 2012) [33]. Men are frequently considered as stronger, more intelligent, and possessing leadership skills, as well as the ability to give stability, nourishment, and livelihood in traditional Ghanaian society as indicated by (Adinkrah, 2012 [33]; Diabah & Amfo, 2015 [24], 2018 [25]). As a result, most Ghanaian proverbs including that of the Frafra portray males as brave and capable of coping with difficult situations, and they are even expected to die in such a position to prove their masculinity (Adinkrah, 2012 [33]; Asi-meng-Boahene, 2013 [21]; Diabah & Amfo, 2015 [24], 2018 [25]).

One of the Frafra's core masculine virtues is courage, as exemplified by the above-mentioned proverb. That is, once a man makes a decision, he should ad-

here to it and not alter his mind readily. Similarly, because a man is the head of the family, he is expected to make the most critical and tough decisions and not to back down.

For example, if a man agrees to undertake a difficult task, he will do it and not complain because he agreed to it; yet, he may struggle and want to leave, but as a true man, he will finish the assignment regardless of how difficult it is for him:

This proverb states that anytime a war needs to be waged (or any difficult scenario arises), a man should instantly accept the challenge, even if he is not told to. As a result, in the Frafra society, a man is not informed of his responsibilities; rather, the society assumes he already understands.

As a result, a man should always be prepared to take on a challenge when the opportunity arises. This means that a man must know how, when, and where to act firmly in order to protect himself and his family from embarrassment. During an interview session with a Key Informant to authenticate this bravery, he said: "*fosankakeko'om, fonamkadeboda*" (Key Informant, 02/11/22). Literally, if you have not '*entered the water*', you are not yet a man. Entering the water is a spiritual bathing that prepares a man for any event in life. It is a ritual believed to be capable of healing and strengthening a man for both spiritual and physical attacks. According to him, a Frafra man who has not undergone this ritual cannot lead a battle, cannot be an undertaker, cannot eat raw meat, cannot eat some food from the smaller gods. Hence it is part and parcel of being a full-grown man in the Frafra community.

#### 4.2. Women as Subject of Harassment

Another thematic element that emerged from the findings is the seemingly nature in which the Frafra proverbs and wise saying portray women as subject of harassment in the society. The below wise sayings or proverbs confirm this phenomenon.

**Comment [AG10]:** The second paragraph of the results section seems to be a good literature review on the studies related to women proverbs in Ghana. Therefore, I suggest that the authors moved this part to the ending part of literature review.

“Doseka n gmpogi keema la, n gme’erepogsariga.” Literally means the stick that is used to beat the first wife will be the same stick that will be used on the second wife (Atibila, Bolga online, 2022) [31]. The rhetoric question likely to be posed by Gender Advocates could be that why is this not applicable to men but women. In African Society and Ghana for that matter, women are the most victims when it comes to domestic violence issues. Gender, according to the social construction theory, is a social construct rather than a biological fact (Ridgeway & Correll 2004: 510) [26]. This younger generation who are the future leaders may be indoctrinated through such socialization concepts and they may grow up to exhibit such traits leading to cyclical nature. The culture of widowhood rites associated with the Frafra traditional area and some parts of Northern Ghana which seems to be dying off gradually in recent years often subject widows to all forms of harassment during the late husbands’ funeral rites such as being indoors with the dead body of the husband for some days, stripping the widow naked and having her wear only shea tree leaves, having the widow bathed naked in public, forcing the widow to marry a man from her late husband’s family, etc. The irony is that when the woman passes on, the man is not subjected to this barbaric and negative culture practices.

#### 4.3. Women as Child Producers, Home Keepers and Preservation of Family Lineage

“Hobotipoka la biainya.” Literally means you marry a woman because of a child. In the Frafra traditional areas people adore and cherish children a lot and they feed into the family system to sustain the growth of family lineages which is seen as one of the sources of wealth—look for a woman for future gain. It is against this background that most married women in the area who are married and have not given birth are divorced by their husbands for another woman. The issue whether birth problem may be related to man is often ruled out. This is what the social construction theory said gender distinction is a social construct rather than a biological fact (Ridgeway & Correll 2004: 510) [26]. In a typical Frafra traditional area, women are seen as the preservation of family lineage and they produce children to fill in those family members who have lost their lives. In other words, they are seen as the sustainability of family lineage and preservation. According to a Key Informant: “*Pokadahloolizaariga. Bodaakandigeli-gre ka daaloolizaariga*” (Key Informant, 01/11/22). Literally, no woman is a castrated bull and no man will buy a castrated bull. Meaning, if the woman cannot give birth, there is no need to marry her.

#### 4.4. Women as Compassionate

Another Frafra proverb or wise saying is the proverb “the ant says that her vagina isn’t big but she will show it to her husband” (Schaefer, 1997) [19] meaning “we don’t have much, but the little we have we give”. The import of this wise saying seems to depict women as compassionate toward their families and would sa-

crifice and do everything within their means to support the families. In the Fra-fra traditional area, this is often seen when majority of women have to go into farming activities which is noted to be the preserved of men to help feed the family particularly children. There are many cases where a lot of Fra-fra women become the breadwinners of the families and pay school fees of their children as well as cater for their health needs. Here the gender relation norm states that men are the breadwinner of the family or the providers of the families are defeated. When we questioned a Key Informant on the above, he said: “*Gobgapaarizuoh, tezuohpaaragobga*”. (Key Informant, 12/12/22). Literally, the left hand and right hand help each other when washing. Meaning, women have to give their husbands a helping hand. It is in line with this that the Social Construction Theory said the gender distinction is an organized system of social practices for classifying people into two distinct groups, men and women, and organizing inequitable social connections based on that distinction (Ridgeway & Correll 2004: 510) [26].

#### 4.5. Women as Motherhood and Hardworking

Furthermore, another finding that emerged from the study was the depicting of women by some of the proverbs and wise saying as motherhood. The proverb “*pogminga*” has some gender role related. *Pogminga* could be interpreted as a very industrious woman who is caring and has the welfare of the family and the entire community at heart and will do everything within her means to achieve such results. Such women are often seen as a man preferred wife and perform multiple roles ranging from engaging economic activities such as shea

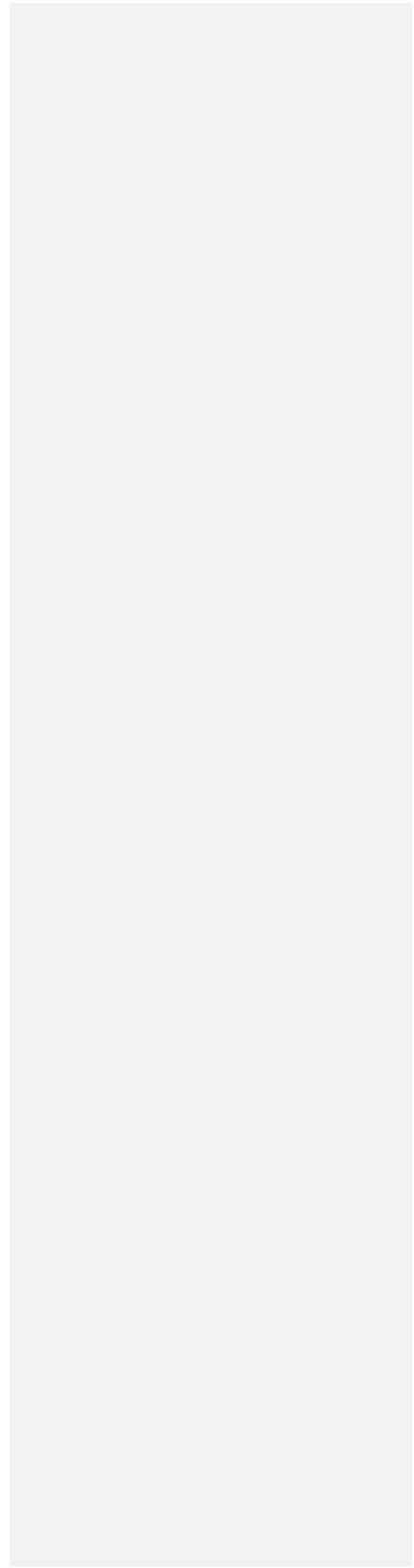
butter processing, dawadawa processing, pitobrewing and traditional brooms and mats. She is a source of inspiration to other women, uniting and resolving conflicts between the women within the marriage space. She is a mother to all the young women, young men and children within that space. She is patient, never showing her anger by talking back in a harsh tone; rather, she accommodates everything. She submits to the authority of her husband and all male members of her marital family no matter what their age; she never challenges men or speaks in their presence. A *pogminga*, even if she suffers physical abuse, does not share this with other community members. A *pogminga* is hardworking, yet she does not “steal” farm produce from the house, even if she is denied food. Rather, if her husband does not provide her with food stuffs, she works hard to provide food for the family. She caters to the needs of her husband’s guests, finding ways to provide food for a poor husband’s visitors and thereby shielding him from shame. She stays in the marriage no matter what happens.

#### 4.6. Men as Providers

This wise saying, “*Bodaanbeeriyire*”. Meaning, man is caretaker of the house. Men are expected to play the provider role in a variety of situations, just as

they are expected to play the guardian role. The extended family and marriage are

UNDER PEER REVIEW



two of the most common settings in which males are considered as providers. Proverbs also clearly state what males are to provide for women. To begin with, in Frafra tradition, it is inappropriate for a man to be financially dependent on a woman; instead, a man must work hard and care for the female members of the family. As a result, women are depicted in proverbs as financial obligations to males. Men must provide women with psychological support in addition to financial help.

According to certain proverbs, men are the legitimate owners and rulers of resources. According to Cummins (2021) [34], the most powerful individuals in society's dominance hierarchy control the behavior of subordinates in order to preserve priority access to competitive resources (such as food), and the Frafra are no exception. Men have to surrender a share of their resources to women and other perceived lower-ranking members of society, which may come as a surprise to them as resource controllers. However, the irony is that not all men have the power to manage society resources. As a result, not all men have access to riches, lest they gain control over them. This perception of power, and hence resource controllers, is developed.

To ensure the success of their marriages, both women and men have roles to perform. Husbands are responsible for providing for their families, among other things. A significant feature of all Frafra traditional marriages is the concept of the male breadwinner. The importance of men taking care of women's bodily needs is emphasized in. If a married woman doesn't look nice in terms of her body and clothing, it's a sign that her husband isn't doing his job as a "provider" effectively. In other circumstances, the woman's family and even neighborhood people may query the male about his wife's appearance. Some males may work to support their families and meet the physical requirements of their spouses.

The provider role can also put (financially troubled) men under social strain. Although some scholars (Diabah & Amfo, 2015 [24]; Gyan *et al.*, 2020 [23]) have interpreted some of the proverbs as depicting females as inferior to males, the implicit twist is that they reveal society's expectations of males in providing for females, even if they (males) lack the physical and economic resources to do so.

## 5. Conclusions

Findings from the study suggest that, Frafra wise saying other words known as proverbs have a strong influence on gender relations. While some of the proverbs portray men as brave, strong, resilient, defenders and providers of women and families, women are stereotypically seen as weak and dependent on husbands.

Another interesting thing is that, the findings from the Frafra proverbs and wise sayings portray women as subject of harassment, compassionate, motherhood and hardworking.

The findings also revealed that, in their description of women and men, the proverbs and wise saying demonstrated the stereotypical elements by placing

man as supreme being who control power and resources while women are seen as the weak vessel.

The findings further demonstrated enormous cultural expectations of men, which may put them in dangerous situations. Men either conform to these expectations or risk being regarded as weak if they do not. These expectations have the power to influence and regulate men's conduct. This can be challenging for males, especially those who are unable to reach these criteria owing to their physical and emotional nature. As a result, males who do not fit that stereotype are subjected to excessive and discriminatory treatment.

The significance of this paper can be explained on numerous levels. Our research is relevant to policymakers at the global, national and local levels including other language and culture, and stakeholders because it provides a balanced examination of how gender (in)equality is portrayed in proverbs. As a result, it provides a new viewpoint on gender inequality as a societal blight in Ghana. This paper will help people become more conscious of the numerous ways in which proverbs influence gender inequality, as well as change their minds about the types of proverbs they employ in everyday discourse.

The report has a lot of research potential because it opens up a fresh line of investigation into how proverbs work in different cultures.

## 6. Limitation and Future Direction

This paper, like other scientific undertakings, is not without flaws. To begin with, Frafra traditional area is a large language group with small variances in the interpretation of some of these proverbs. In our research, only the Gurunelan-  
guages were used to translate these proverbs. As a result, more Frafra sub groups should be included in future research to discover if their interpretation of these proverbs differ.

## References

- [1] Gyan, C. (2018) Gasping for Breath: Women's Concerns and the Politics of Community Development in Rural Ghana. PhD Dissertation, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo.
- [2] Foucault, M. (1972) The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language. Pantheon Books, New York.
- [3] Gaventa, J. (2003) Power after Lukes: An Overview of Theories of Power since Lukes and Their Application to Development. Institute of Development Studies, Brighton.
- [4] Adjei-Poku, B. (2018) Rationality and Power in Land Use Planning: A Conceptual View of the Relationship. *Journal of Planning Literature*, **33**, 45-60. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0885412217723616>
- [5] Fayemi, A. K. (2009) Deconstructing Proverbs in African Discourse: The Yoruba Example. *Afroeuropa: Journal of European Studies*, **3**, 1-18.

- [6] Olatunji, O.O. (1984) Features of Yoruba Oral Poetry. University of Ibadan, Ibadan.
- [7] Grant, R.A. and Asimeng-Boahene, L. (2006) Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in Citizenship Education: Using African Proverbs as Tools for Teaching in Urban Schools. *Multicultural Perspectives*, **8**, 17-24. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327892mcp0804\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327892mcp0804_4)
- [8] Gyekye, K. (1996) African Cultural Values: An Introduction. Sankofa Publishing, Accra.
- [9] Addo-Fening, R. (2001) Akyem Abuakwa 1700-1960: From Ofori Panin to Sir Ofori Atta. Department of History, Trondheim.
- [10] Ssetuba, I. (2002) The Hold of Patriarchy: An Appraisal of the Ganda Proverb in the Light of Modern Gender Relations. In *Cairo Gender Symposium organized by CODESRIA/ARC, Cairo 7th-10th*.
- [11] Awedoba, A.K. (2000) An Introduction to Kasena Society and Culture through Their Proverbs. University Press of America, Lanham.
- [12] Chinua, A. (1994) Things Fall Apart. Anchor Books, New York.
- [13] Anderson, D. (2012) Courting Is like Trading Horses, You Have to Keep Your Eyes Open: Gender-Related Proverbs in a Peasant Society in Northern Sweden. *Journal of Northern Studies*, **6**, 9-36.
- [14] VanderGeest, S. (1975) Appearance and Reality: The Ambiguous Position of Women in Kwaahu, Ghana. In: Kloos, P. and van der Veen, K.W., Eds., *Rule and Reality: Essays in Honour of André J.F. Köbben*, Antropologisch-Sociologisch Centrum, Amsterdam, 50-65.
- [15] Orwenjo, D.O. (2009) Political Grandstanding and the Use of Proverbs in African Political Discourse. *Discourse & Society*, **20**, 123-146. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926508097097>
- [16] Kemper, S. (1989) Priming the Comprehension of Metaphors: Metaphor and Symbol. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, **10**, 179-198. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01068037>
- [17] Obeng, S.G. (1994) Verbal Indirection in Akan Discourse. *Journal of Pragmatics*, **21**, 37-65. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(94\)90046-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(94)90046-9)
- [18] Boatbil, C.S. and Guure, C.B. (2014) Implication of Cultural Factors in Spatial Patterns of Stunting among the Three Main Frafra Groups in Upper East Region of Ghana. *International Journal of Nutrition and Food Sciences*, **3**, 37-43. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ijnfs.20140302.14>
- [19] Schaefer, G. (1997) Frafra (Gurune) People: The Hardworking Agrarian, Basket Weaving Experts and Musical People of the Upper Region of Ghana. <https://kwekudee-tripdownmemorylane.blogspot.com/2013/08/frafra-gurune-people-hardworking.html>
- [20] Agbemabiese, P. (2016) Gender Implications in Ewe Proverbs from Slideserve Online. <http://www.slideserve.co.uk/gender-implications-in-ewe-proverbs>
- [21] Asimeng-Boahene, L. (2013) The Social Construction of Sub-Saharan Women's Status through African Proverbs. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, **4**, 123-131.
- [22] Asimeng-Boahene, L. (2009) Educational Wisdom of African oral Literature: African Proverbs as Vehicles for Enhancing Critical Thinking Skills. *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning*, **5**, 59-69. <https://doi.org/10.5172/ijpl.5.3.59>
- [23] Gyan, et al. (2020) Proverbs and Patriarchy: Analysis of Linguistic Prejudice and Representation of Women in Traditional Akan Communities of Ghana. *Social Sciences*, **9**, 22. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci9030022>

- [24] Diabah, G. and Amfo, N.A.A. (2015) Caring Supporters or Daring Usurpers? Representation of Women in Akan Proverbs. *Discourse & Society*, **26**, 3-28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926514541343>
- [25] Diabah, G. and Amfo, N.A.A. (2018) To Dance or Not to Dance: Masculinities in Akan Proverbs and Their Implications for Contemporary Societies. *Ghana Journal of Linguistics*, **7**, 179-198. <https://doi.org/10.4314/gjl.v7i2.8>
- [26] Ridgeway, C.L. and Correll, S.J. (2004) Unpacking the Gender System: A Theoretical Perspective on Gender Beliefs and Social Relations. *Gender & Society*, **18**, 510-531. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243204265269>
- [27] Lorber, J. (1997) *The Variety of Feminisms and Their Contributions to Gender Equality*. BIS Verlag, Oldenburg.
- [28] Phillips, L. and Jorgensen, M.W. (2006) *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. Sage Publications, London.
- [29] Wetherell, M. (2001) Themes in Discourse Research: The Case of Diana. In: Margaret, W., Stephanie, T. and Simeon, Y., Eds., *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*, Sage Publications, London, 1428.
- [30] Richardson, J. (2007) *Analyzing Newspapers: An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis*. Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-230-20968-8\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-230-20968-8_7)
- [31] Atibila, S. (2022) 15 Unique and Popular Frafra Proverbs and Wise Sayings. Bolga. <https://mybolgaonlinegh.com/2022/04/16/15-unique-and-popular-frafra-proverbs-and-wise-sayings>
- [32] Dubei, R. and Woodbridge, D.N.B. (2013) *Towards an Effective Approach of Communicating Scripture for Evangelising the Oral Communities in Central Gonja, Ghana*. Master Thesis in Practical Theology, University of Ghana, Legon.
- [33] Adinkrah, M. (2012) Better Dead than Dishonoured: Masculinity and Male Suicidal Behavior in Contemporary Ghana. *Social Science and Medicine*, **74**, 474-481. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2010.10.011>
- [34] Cummins, D.D. (2021) Dominance Theory (Cummins). In: Shackelford, T.K. and Weekes-Shackelford, V.A., Eds., *Encyclopedia of Evolutionary Psychological Science*, Springer International Publishing, Cham, 2104-2112. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-19650-3\\_2620](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-19650-3_2620)