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Proverbs and Patriarchy: Analysis of Linguistic Prejudice and Representation of Women in Traditional Akan Communities of Ghana

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Abstract: Discourses govern the phenomenological interpretation of our everyday existence and influence both our way of thinking and our relationship with one another in the world. Undoubtedly, popular sayings and proverbs mediate the way of being in African context. This paper examines the role of proverbs and wise sayings in the African culture. This paper attempts to analyze the representation of women in sampled Akan proverbs and the ways in which these proverbs institutionalize the position, identity, and roles of women in traditional Akan communities of Ghana. This paper suggests that oral traditions are used in the systematic perpetuation of patriarchal culture, gender inequities, and inequality. Therefore, it recommends the revolutionization of oral traditions to assist in the deinstitutionalization of the prevailing patriarchal discourses and culture in traditional Akan communities of Ghana.

Keywords: proverbs; gender inequality; oral traditions; patriarchy

1. Introduction

In traditional Ghanaian communities, men are often seen as being strong, more intelligent, and possessing leadership traits and the competence to provide security, sustenance, and livelihood. (Gyan 2018). This shapes the socialization of females to accept their male counterparts as wiser and having the natural capabilities to lead. By these socialization processes, males accrue power and use the power at all levels of decision making in the communities. Within the context of community development, men tend to use and exert this power by controlling all aspects of decision making throughout the process, including inception, development, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and feedback.

Drawing on the work of (Foucault 1972), power is not something men have and the “other” (women) do not possess. This “power is everywhere”, diffused and embodied in discourse, knowledge, and “regimes of truth” (Foucault 1972). This implies that decision-making power in Ghana is “diffused rather than concentrated, embodied and enacted rather than possessed, discursive rather than purely coercive, and constitutes agents rather than being deployed” (Gaventa 2003, p. 1) by men. This power wielded by men is neither “an agency nor a structure” (Foucault 1998, p. 63); rather, it is a “regime of truth” that permeates Ghanaian society and is relentless in its fluidity and compromise. The “regime of truth” and the kind of discourse that is portrayed as the truth in community development decision-making favor men. These regimes and politics are reinforced (and redefined) relentlessly through the socialization process, the media, and even the educational system.

Masculinity and femininity are bolstered in traditional Ghanaian communities by the socialization process and the agents and agencies involved in the process. As posited by (Umorem 1995 as cited in Gyan 2018),

The African child is born female or male. The girl child grows up as an African girl and later becomes a woman through the said process of enculturation. This enculturation process has both cognitive and emotional elements. The girl child who later becomes a woman learns and internalizes both. This learning-to-become is comprehensive in the sense that one learns and internalizes both the derogatory and positive concepts, judgements and attitudes towards womanhood. This learning takes place through example, direct teaching and in patterns of behavior, in songs, proverbs, wise sayings and folktales. What is learnt directs towards corresponding patterns of behavior. (p. 71)

This demonstrates a relationship between words, behaviors, passivity, rituals, oral traditions, and the existing gender roles in Ghanaian society and Africa as a whole. Traditional Ghanaian society and Africans as a whole need to be mindful of proverbs, oral traditions, and discourses, considering their implications for gender inequalities, discrimination, and stereotyping. Therefore, this paper examines selected Akan proverbs and demonstrates the way women are portrayed in them. The paper argues that oral traditions and proverbs are systematically used as tools in patriarchal cultures for the perpetuation of gender inequities and inequality.

2. Proverbs and African Culture

According to (Fayemi 2009), proverbs are traditional moral and wisdom expressions that are handed over from generation to generation. In Africa, they are an inheritance that is passed on through words of mouth (Olatunji 1984). Proverbs as traditional sayings depict culturally-specific accepted truths about how a community acts and lives. They constitute the foundation of verbal interaction and are used within context. However, (Grant and Asimeng-Boahene 2006) argue that proverbs are universalized truths and applicable to other contexts.

Proverbs are considered very essential in the life of indigenous people and occupy a valuable place in the matrix of the local African's culture. They serve as tools that portray and interpret all the beliefs and values of the African. Notwithstanding the current technological advancement and urbanization emanating from globalization in Africa, proverbs continue to be a great pillar in traditional Africans' life. A Yoruba proverb emphasizes that, "A proverb is the horse that can carry one swiftly to the discovery of ideas".

Discourses govern the phenomenological interpretation of our everyday existence, and these discourses influence the way we think as well as our relationship with one another in the world. (Gyekye 1996) posits that the key dimensions of acumen and knowledge are pertinent in solving personal and community problems and challenges in African societies. African oral traditions such as proverbs are intended to express and demonstrate truths and the expected structure of the society. According to (Gyekye 1996), the effect and impact of oral traditions is pervasive in traditional Akan society. Proverbs, wise sayings, and discourses have power in mediating life in Africa.

African oral traditions such as wise sayings and proverbs are cherished and regarded as divine and complete truth. Linguistic resources in traditional Ghanaian communities express unique sacred information (Addo-Fening 2001), which requires total conformity rather than interrogating them. (Ssetuba 2002) adds that "the proverb is regarded as a noble genre of African oral tradition that enjoys the prestige of a custodian of a people's wisdom and philosophy of life" (p. 1). "[A] proverb ... cannot be challenged. 'Ghanaians' seem by their attitudes to accept tacitly that it is unseemly to call into question the proverb and its tenets. To do so would appear to amount to a challenging of the wise ancestors, an exercise not only in arrogance, but also in itself a sacrilege." (Awedoba 2000, p. 34). The revered nature of these oral traditions that (Chinua 1994) defines as "the palm-oil with which words are

eaten" (p. 2) have made it strenuous to challenge gender inequities, inequalities, and the stereotypes within them.

The discourses in traditional Ghanaian society dent the competences of women and present women as dependents of men for survival. These discourses portray a sex-based hierarchical arrangement that buttresses already institutionalized prejudices and subjectivities. "The gender conceptions found in the proverbs form a system of gender hegemony that supports masculine superiority and feminine subordination" (Anderson 2012, p. 10). That is, the oral traditions are used in the perpetuation of patriarchal culture, which in turn promotes gender inequities, stereotypes, and inequality in traditional Ghanaian communities. These traditions bolster the traditional beliefs and values amongst Ghanaians. According to (van der Geest 1975), "proverbs represent make-believe values, male ideals which prescribe rules of deferential behavior for women and validate these rules by pointing to allegedly inferior female qualities" (p. 51).

Proverbs establish the basis of gender stereotyping and construction, and play a great role in defining the place and role of women within the Ghanaian context and Africa as a whole. As summed up by (Ssetuba 2002), a proverb constitutes a "noble genre of African oral tradition that enjoys the prestige of a custodian of a people's wisdom and philosophy of life" (p. 1).

3. Methodology

We used desk collection of data and sources with search engines including Google, MSN, Lycos, Ask, and Yahoo to find the most available information on women and Akan proverbs. In the search, we were very specific in our search terms in order to get relevant sources or materials. The search terms were scrutinized for alternative terms and spellings. For example, we searched for "proverbs in Ghana", and "wise sayings in Ghana". We also typed in general terms such as "proverbs" or "gender discourses", which brought back far too many results, so we narrowed the search term by adding modifiers to them; for instance, we used search terms such as "proverbs + Ghana", "wise sayings + Ghana", "Akan proverbs", and "Akan wise sayings". We ended up adding Boolean operators such as "and" and "or" in the search to ensure that we were able to find relevant materials. The search produced a lot of gray literature with few papers and studies on Akan proverbs, many of which were excluded on the basis of the focus of this paper. Most of the materials were not looking at gender issues and proverbs but other issues that were out of the scope of this paper. For instance, most of the materials were looking at proverbs and discrimination against persons with disability. The majority of the materials that passed the screening were from a book written by (Appiah et al. 2001) entitled "Bu me be: Akan proverbs" and Dogbevi's article on gender construction in African proverbs. The proverbs that talk about women were sampled from these materials. Over 44 proverbs were found in these materials.

The proverbs were analyzed using critical discourse analysis (CDA). According to (Phillips and Jørgensen 2006, pp. 61–65), 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 reproduce unequal power relations". We used CDA to discover the role proverbs play in maintaining the subordination of women in Ghana and recommend ideas for achieving positive change. As stated by (Wetherell 2001; Richardson 2007), discourse is a social action and can therefore be used as a tool for social change.

4. Representation of Women and Proverbs

Proverbs are very vital in illuminating the condition of women in traditional Ghanaian society. They highlight several ideas and beliefs that at all times continue to reflect and define women and their roles. These include the definition of women as being reliant on men, portray women as imprudent, kittenish, frail, envious, evil, needy, and immature (Hussein 2005).

5. Women's Dependence on Men

In every interaction between a woman and a man, their positions are predetermined. One of the proverbs that depict women as reliant on men is “*ɔ̄baa tɔ̄ tuo a ɛtwere ɔ̄barima dan mu*” (which literally means “If a woman purchases a firearm, it is kept in a man’s room”). According to (Dogbevi 2007) men have the privilege to own a firearm; therefore, no matter the financial strength or social position of a woman, she is reliant on a man. Again, the proverb depicts women as unqualified to manage or handle valuable possessions and inform decisions in sensitive situations. This emphasizes the subordinate roles of women in decision making and the management of resources and properties. This proverb further portrays women’s dependence on men for protection, as a gun is linked with safety and protection. That is, a woman cannot protect herself or feel safe without a man. This eventually demonstrates that women lack agency.

Additional proverbs with similar meaning are “*ɔ̄baa tɔ̄n nyaadewa na ɔ̄ntɔ̄n atuduro*” (A woman sells eggplant but not gunpowder), “*ɔ̄baa se ɔ̄behye torɔ̄sa a, momma ɔ̄nhye, na ɛbetɔ̄ ne dɔ̄wɔ̄nsɔ̄*” (A woman who puts on trousers will face challenges when she wants to urinate), “*ɔ̄baa ho ye fe a, na ɛfiri ɔ̄barima*” (A woman’s beauty should be credited to a man), and “*ɔ̄baa da ɔ̄barima akyi*” (A woman lies behind a man) (Dogbevi 2007). These proverbs portray the different gender roles and describe women as subservient to men. The central idea of women being subordinate, inferior, or reliant on men make society perceive women as unproductive and parasitic.

Further, some of these sayings demonstrate the lack of value for the work women do in the house, and as a result they are seen as scrounging, lethargic, and spenders of the resources of men. For example, the following Akan proverbs illustrate the construction of women as impediments, particularly as financial liabilities to men:

1. “*ɔ̄baa te ɛs ohuriiɛ; ɔ̄nom mogya na ɔ̄mma mogya*” (A woman is a tsetsefly that sucks blood but doesn’t give blood’).
2. “As women admire your good looks, they admire your expenditure”.
3. If a woman says, “You are handsome!”, it leads to debt”.

Generally, the man is considered the provider, while the woman is pushed to a parasitic position, hence disregarding any ideal equal partnership relationship in any social setting, including marriage. Therefore, it can be argued that some of the Akan proverbs’ portraiture of women underrate the potential of women in every social setting, hence having the potential to affect the people’s perception of and treatment of women.

6. Women and Intelligence

Some of the Akan proverbs portray women as being imprudent, inane, and unintelligent. An example of such proverbs is “*ɔ̄baa te ɛs abɔ̄fra*” (A woman behaves like a kid and as a result must be guided at all times) (Appiah et al. 2001). This proverb dents the agency of women. It portrays women as unintelligent and unable to make any decisions without the guidance of a man. Similarly, proverbs such “*ɔ̄baa adwene akyikyim ɛs ne nofo*” (The woman’s mind is as twisted as her breasts), “*Odwan ɔ̄sradɔ̄m a ɔ̄sebɔ̄ di wɔ̄n anim ɛtumi di nkunim ɛwɔ̄ ɔ̄sebɔ̄ ɔ̄sradɔ̄m a odwan di wɔ̄n anim*” (An army of sheep led by a lion can defeat an army of lions led by a sheep), “*ɔ̄baa kuta a, ɔ̄twa no abɛnkum mu*” (If anything important goes to a woman, she misuses it), and “*ɔ̄baa ennwene ɛntera ɛmpa a ɔ̄daso*” (A woman’s thinking capacity does not go beyond the bed she sleeps on) (Appiah et al. 2001). These proverbs depict men as being more intelligent than their women counterparts. Women are presumed generally to have limited forethought and a dearth of the ability to make sound judgment and decisions. These ideas in the oral traditions have the potential of influencing men’s role in decision-making processes in most traditional communities.

Semantically, traits associated to women by these proverbs include “twisted mind”, “child”, and “never thinks” among others, portraying a nuance of devaluation, negativity, and stereotyping. Women

are presented in these proverbs as slothful, dependent, opportunist, foolish, and incapable of deciding for themselves.

It is usually assumed that a woman in a leadership or decision-making position would probably not make good and visionary decisions (Oboler 1985). Proverbs such as these in traditional societies can serve as tools for the consolidation of men's position and the undervaluing of the socio-economic and political roles of women in community development processes (Collins 1986).

7. Women and Leadership

Undoubtedly, women play a very significant part in the development of Ghana and Africa as a whole. However, they continue to face stereotypes and discrimination in all spheres of life. In terms of leadership, women in Ghana face a high level of exclusion from and discrimination within decision making in the public sphere. It is disheartening to state that women continue to be underrepresented in political and community leadership and governance (Offei-Aboagye 2000). This status of women in Ghana more especially in traditional Ghanaian communities is reflected in some Akan proverbs. Some of these proverbs are stated below:

1. The man is the woman's honor.
2. A strong woman uses cutlass to trim her pubic hair.
3. A wealthy woman changes into a man.
4. Words for women, action for men.
5. Man head, woman neck.
6. An army of sheep led by a lion can defeat an army of lions led by a sheep.
7. It is awful to ask a woman to guard a hyena.

Semantically, concepts used to describe women in these proverbs include "sheep", "words", "never thinks", and "lies behind a man", among others. These concepts portray the subordination of women when it comes to leadership.

8. The Objectification of Women

The objectification of women permeates traditional Ghanaian communities (Anyidoho et al. 2016). In traditional Ghanaian society's dominant narratives, women are most of the time objectified, whereas their male counterparts are accorded subject status. These messages are passed onto generations through the socialization process. Having been socialized through patriarchal stories, this male-centeredness continues to shape the way women are viewed. The snowballing upshot of this is that generation after generation continue to view women from the point of view of men. That is, men are seen as complete human beings with agency while women are denied agency. In everyday conversation, marriage institution among others, women are objectified. For instance, the practice of bride price in the marriage institution often solidifies the objectification of women in marriage and relationships.

The society through its oral traditions tell us that women are not subjects but objects. Some of the concepts used frequently portray them as having no agency and sexual objects meant to gratify men's sexual demands. Some of the proverbs that objectify women include:

1. Too many wives bring poverty.
2. A wife's good appearance is a credit to her husband.
3. An unmarried woman is like a cloth in the market but a married woman is the property of her husband.
4. A woman would ask to be sexed with the idea that she owns the vagina, but when there is trouble, the real owner of the vagina would be looked for. (A woman's sexuality belongs to a man).
5. When a woman gets a treasure, no one hears of it but whenever she is in trouble it becomes a man's problem. (Only the problems of women are shared with men).
6. Women like pleasure (but) abhor debt.

7. A woman is like chicken; we use maize to lure her.
8. If a woman is in debt, she uses her vagina to get rid of it.
9. A woman's hand gets wet when she urinates like a man.

The above Akan proverbs portray women as sex objects. The representation of women in these proverbs may reflect as well as influence the socialization process of children and the social regulations in traditional Akan communities. These proverbs build up people's sense of reality and influence the course of their actions. According to (Moscovici 1984), "*where reality is concerned, these representations are all we have, that to which our perceptual, as well as our cognitive systems are adjusted*".

9. Women and Marriage

Traditional Ghanaian society puts pressure on women to marry and make marriage a form of social identity (Dery and Bawa 2019). Heterosexual marriage is presented as a normative life choice or requirement for women. That is, in order for a woman to be successful and be respected in the community, she has to be married. However, it should be indicated that the pressure to get married exists for both men and women, but it manifests differently. We have been socialized to believe that for a woman to have a fulfilled life, she must be married. A single woman's accomplishments are not often recognized. This makes women desperate to get married. Oral traditions such as proverbs are the main foundations for the pressure society mounts on women to get married. These proverbs include:

1. An unmarried woman is like a cloth in the market but a married woman is the property of her husband.
2. A woman does not know the value of her husband until she becomes a widow.
3. A woman carrying a vagina would ask to be sexed, that the vagina is her own, but when it causes trouble, the (real owner of the vagina) would be looked for. (A woman's sexuality belongs to a man).

Again, marriage constitutes a heteronormative environment of women subordination where men's social position continues to be revered. That is, male supremacy is upheld in marriages in traditional Ghanaian communities. The institution of marriage and most of its elements such as the payment of bride price convince women to conform to restrictive gender roles. The following proverbs shed some light on the traditional gender roles of women in a marriage setting within a traditional Akan setting:

1. A woman knows when her husband is hungry.
2. When a woman gets married without knowing how to do house chores, her soup is always poured into a water pot and showed to the public.
3. A barren woman is like a leaking pot.
4. If a woman uses beauty only to get married, she will not be successful.
5. Having a good-looking woman is like planting a vine on the roadside: everyone feeds on it.

A semantic interpretation of the concepts such as *pour her soup*, *barren*, *on her back*, and *she carries a load* in some of the proverbs depicts the socially engrained expectations of woman and seeks to maintain the adherence to gender roles in marriage in traditional Ghanaian societies.

10. Names for Assertive Women

Name calling for women who are more assertive, adventurous, independent, and strong has been central in Ghanaian discourses. If and when a woman is called these names, probably, she is essentially an assertive, independent, and strong woman who participates in activities traditionally ascribed to men. For instance, outspoken women within the political environment of Ghana are seen as men in a woman's body, witches, and non-marriageable women.

In recent times, Ghana has seen a considerable number of women who have excelled economically, educationally, and socially. These women have been active in all spheres of development in the country. These women in this patriarchal and male-dominated society, despite the progress they have made, continue to face traditional stereotypes and name calling. These traditional stereotypes demonstrate how most Ghanaians continue to view women and their successes from the point of view of men and the endemic gender bias within traditional Ghanaian society. The oral traditions of Ghana among others are the foundation of these stereotypes and name calling. Some of the Akan proverbs that highlight some of the names giving to women include:

1. A woman who is worth seven women.
2. A muscular woman.
3. A strong woman, but without an arrow.
4. A strong-willed woman whose penis was taken from her on her way to the earth.
5. A red-eyed woman.

A semantic interpretation of concepts such as *red-eyed*, *without an arrow*, and *muscular*, among others, in some of the proverbs illustrates the perceptions of woman who have made significant progress in activities traditionally ascribed to men. For instance, among the Akans of Ghana, “red” as a color is often used for people who are rough, overpowering, and heavy-handed. The concept “red-eyed” also means jealousy, wild, begrudging, and resentful. These clearly highlight the perceptions of most Ghanaians about independent, assertive, and strong women.

11. Positive Ideas about Women

Notwithstanding the assumed ‘deficiency’ of women as portrayed in some Akan proverbs, they are ideally expected to be hardworking. There are other proverbs that create a positive impression about women’s roles and emphasize how fundamental they are in the family. For instance, the Akan proverb “ɔbaa yɛ kwadu dua ɛna ɔbarima yɛ aburo dua” (‘A woman is like a banana tree while a man is like a cornstalk’) depicts the importance of women in the family and community at large. It symbolically demonstrates the importance of women through the banana tree, which multiplies itself and has several uses in traditional Ghanaian communities. However, this proverb overstates the reproductive roles of women and overlooks their productive roles in the family and community. Proverbs with similar meaning include ‘ɔbaa mmɔdemmmɔfoɔ/ɔbaasima na ne ba hyɛ n’akyiri a, ɔsoa nnoɔma’. (An ideal woman is the one who backs her child and carries a load at the same time), “ɔbaa pa na ntɛtia nam n’apakyie aseɛ” (Small red ants crawl over the back of the gourd of an ideal woman) and “ɔbaa ahoɔden wɔ n’atofo mu” (A woman’s strength is in her bustle) (Appiah et al. 2001). The portrayal of women in these proverbs relate to what they ought to be rather than what they are. This shows the socially constructed, engrained, and imposed labels that influence society’s expectations of woman as well as how women perceive themselves (Ssetuba 2002).

12. Implications for Social Work Practice

There is an inherent barrier to the effective or total participation of women in all spheres of the Ghanaian society. This has formed and been institutionalized over time as a result of existing gender discourses that continue to be passed on from generation to generation. These gender discourses make it incumbent on social workers to put measures into place, advocate for women, and practice in ways that work toward disrupting such discourses. The practice models and strategies adopted by social workers can help in addressing the gender-insensitive ideas and ideologies held by their clients in order to ensure that women’s concerns are addressed and their well-being is enhanced.

As social workers, there is the need to recognize the uniqueness of every community due to contextual issues that inform the members’ thoughts about and the relationships that exist between men and women. Many may ignore the contextual forces and approach their practice from the Western feminist perspective. Transnational feminists argue that the universality of women’s experiences as

espoused by Western feminists is fallacious and masks their complicity with hegemonic colonizing systems that disannul the contexts and unique experiences of women in the global south (Mohanty 1991; Harding 1991). That is, Western feminist ideologies are imbued with racist ideas that ignore the history of non-Western societies. In practice, gender should not be isolated from colonialism, and social workers must recognize the fact that the experiences of women in the global south are shaped by society and its history (Harcourt 2009). The strict adherence to Western feminist ideals constitutes a continuation of the colonial agenda that hurts rather than helps the clients. Therefore, there is the need for social workers to show more commitment toward contextualizing their practice in order to be more effective within a colonized environment such as Ghana. The adoption of transnational feminist ideals that interrogate gender discourses within these contexts will be very effective.

Again, the individual social worker's social location and thoughts about women have to be investigated through self-reflection and reflexivity to ensure that the social worker's personal values that conflict with their professional values do not affect their practice. It should be noted that gender discourses have not only crept into our way of living but also our social work practice. Just as these discourses have shaped how people of all ages relate in traditional Ghanaian communities, it has an influence on social work practitioners. Core elements of the practice are likely to be affected, such as for instance their boundaries, therapeutic relationship, and ethical decision making. The discourses and their influence on practice may be entrenched; thus, they may go unnoticed. It may be quite challenging for the practitioners to control and address their personal values that are grounded in these discourses. Therefore, social workers need to be reflexive in order to be able to recognize and address their actions and beliefs. Critical analysis of the personal and professional approaches and attitudes of social workers toward women and a grasp of how the existing discourses influence their attitudes and ethical decision making are very important. These will help social workers develop high levels of self-reflexive skills and understanding of gender discourses that impact their context of practice. Embracing a critical self-reflexive transnational feminist perspective, the social workers will be better equipped to be more gender sensitive. That is, they will be sensitive to patriarchal norms and bolster their ability to address them through their practice.

In addition, social workers within these contexts need the best possible training and support to incorporate gender-sensitive ideas in their work. Working with families, children, or any other vulnerable group, social workers must have the right skills, knowledge, and experience to help them through often complex and intersectional situations. Social workers can embrace gender-sensitive ideas and practice models to ensure that they can work effectively, question, and disrupt the existing gender discourses. The opportunities of training will enable more experienced social workers to adopt more gender-sensitive practice.

Furthermore, social workers are exclusively inspired, skilled, and positioned to counter and disrupt negative perceptions about vulnerable groups such as women. Social workers must:

1. Educate the public about the extent to which these discourses and proverbs victimize women, and
2. Disrupt views that attribute the causes of the plight of women to individual behaviors and focus instead on the consequences of gender discourses and social exclusion.

Thus, social workers should work toward shifting public perceptions away from crude stereotypes and those that effectively blame women for the causes and consequences of their problems.

Finally, the elders and traditional authorities in societies such as Ghana who are the custodians of the culture of the people work to promote its continuation from generation to generation. Social workers have the responsibility to lobby and educate them on the implications of the proverbs and wise sayings on women. A superior grasp and awareness of the implications of such wise sayings and proverbs, together with a focus on social change, has the potential of making them support the revolutionization of these discourses to enhance the well-being of women. To be able to educate and lobby them, social workers must be knowledgeable about these discriminatory cultural practices, values, and discourses.

13. Limitations of the Study

This article focuses on proverbs' roles in "traditional" Ghanaian societies, which excludes urban areas and educated Ghanaians in general. Therefore, the findings from this article cannot be generalized to all Akan communities in Ghana. Again, the article portrays the representation of women in selected Akan proverbs as a reflection of the realities of traditional Akan women in Ghana. This argument and paper serve as foundation for an empirical study to determine the relationship between Akan proverbs and gender biases in traditional Ghanaian communities.

14. Conclusions

The way Ghanaians think about the world and behave and relate to one another are governed by discourses. Proverbs and popular sayings play a great role in mediating this. Women as portrayed in the selected Akan proverbs have institutionalized the identity, roles, and position of women in traditional Akan communities in Ghana. This is complex; hence, there is no magic bullet for addressing gender inequality and biases in traditional Ghanaian communities. However, in social workers' efforts to address gender inequality, revolutionizing these linguistic resources needs to be one of the main focuses, because that is one of the key elements that shape relationships and behavior and identifies the people as true Ghanaians. The revolutionization of these linguistic resources eventually would help in the deinstitutionalization of the patriarchal discourse in Ghana. It should be noted that as we seek to radically transform these discourses and challenge the establishment, there is the need to expect resistance.

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