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Constructing and Contesting Patriarchy through Language in His Only Wife: A Feminist Discourse Approach

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Abstract

This study analyzes Peace Adzo Medie's notable novel *His Only Wife* (2020), focusing on the important theme of societal patriarchy. From a broader perspective, she depicts society's deeply rooted traditions, patriarchal practices, language, and gender discrimination, which are major themes in the novel. Peace Adzo Medie explores the entrenched traditions of society where men and women are viewed from different perspectives in life, where, on one hand, men seem to be dominant and oppressive by nature, and on the other hand, women seem to be suppressed by the pressures of patriarchal structures within society. These things are done only for their survival and to live with men on common grounds. In *His Only Wife*, Peace Adzo Medie conducts a thorough analysis of the intricate relationships between language, gender, and patriarchal norms through her writing. Using feminist discourse analysis, the study examines the covert ways in which language contributes to the narrative's gendered power dynamics and patriarchal practices. Within a broad theoretical framework that combines feminist linguistic theories and critical discourse analysis, the study carefully examines how the characters and the author use language to illustrate and question gender norms, expectations, and oppressive ideologies. Through a detailed investigation of dialogues, narrative devices, and symbolic language, the study demonstrates how linguistic choices contribute to maintaining or questioning established gender ideals and the predominant patriarchal institutions portrayed in the novel. The study argues that Peace Adzo Medie, the author of *His Only Wife*, challenges fundamental social norms that apply to women, including language preferences, gender discrimination, and patriarchal practices, while illustrating how women often conform to these norms as a means of survival within society.

Keywords: Language, Gender Discrimination, Traditional Society, Patriarchal Norms, Patriarchal Practices, Ideologies and Feminism

Introduction

Adzo's *His Only Wife* depicts the reality, challenges, and risks women face in maintaining a good life and has been hailed as a masterpiece. Several dimensions of social identity, including sexuality, ethnicity, social status, and geography, connect with gender as a category. A complicated interaction exists between patriarchy and other ideologies, such as corporatism and consumerism, for example. *His Only Wife* is written from the first-person singular perspective of Afi Tekple, the book's heroine and narrator, focusing solely on her thoughts and feelings. As the

main character and participant in every action in the narrative, Afi's point of view is the most important. The events of the story are described from Afi's perspective along with her thoughts, feelings, and recollections. Her perception of the world and the people in it is the only perspective available to the audience. Since she was manipulated by Aunt Ganyos, the spectator feels sympathy for her because of the first-person perspective.

The three main characters, Aunt Ganyos, Afi Tekple, and Evelyn, who are based on the trio concept of society and interconnected with one another, are the focus of the entire book. On the one hand, Ganyos keeps coming up with ways to make Afi Eli's only wife by separating him from Muna, his lover and the mother of his only child Ivy. She also creates a stressful situation in the lives of Richard and Evelyn, who are close to one another, in a similar manner. As a result, Ganyos brings up awkward situations and causes misunderstandings that lead to the breakdown of their relationship.

The three main characters in the book—Aunt Ganyos, Afi Tekple, and Evelyn—are based on the trilogy concept of society and are interconnected with one another. On the one hand, Ganyos keeps coming up with ideas for how to make Afi Eli's only wife by keeping him apart from Muna, his lover and the mother of his only child, Ivy. In a similar manner, on the other side, she also causes distress in the lives of Richard and Evelyn, who are close to one another. As a result, Ganyos brings up awkward situations and causes misunderstandings, leading to their relationship ending. The feminist discourse analysis of Sara Mills, in which she challenges morality and women's rights while infusing them into daily life in society, is best portrayed by Peace Adzo Medie. Sara Mills' feminist critical discourse analysis examines the various language preferences, gender and sexuality difficulties with men, and the compelling evidence of societal dependence on men. Furthermore, the traditions and cultures of the male-dominated society are still present and exert pressure on the oppressed women, and they are one of the most significant factors in her discourse studies where she constantly investigates ways to achieve freedom for their rights and survival. Sara Mills' feminist discourse analysis, in which she challenges women's morality and rights and incorporates them into daily life in society, is best shown by Peace Adzo Medie.

Sara Mills' feminist critical discourse analysis examines how men and women have different linguistic preferences, how these difficulties relate to one another, and how strongly men and women are dependent on one another in order to function in society. Additionally, one of the most significant aspects of her discourse studies, where she constantly examines the means of freedom for the rights and survival of the oppressed women who are still under the protection and pressure of these traditions and cultures of the male-dominated society, also includes patriarchal practices. Sara Mills confronts morality, women's rights, and integrating them into daily life in society. Peace Adzo Medie best captures this in her feminist discourse analysis of Sara Mills. Sara Mills' feminist critical discourse analysis looks at how language is used differently depending on who is speaking, how men are affected by gender and sexuality issues, and how much society relies on males. The cultures and patriarchal practices are also one of the most significant elements in her discourse studies, where she constantly examines the paths to freedom for the rights and survival of the oppressed women who are still under the protection and pressure of these customs and cultures of the male-dominated society.

The entire work is surrounded by the harsh realities of a society where men treat women as suppressed items in life, and these women are subjugated by these harsh social norms and their old-fashioned patriarchal cultures and traditions of their own, according to the ideas and model as well as theory of Sara Mills. In a patriarchal society, where there is only one person in charge of the family who is referred to as the head of the family and through whom women, girls,

brothers, uncles, and male cousins fulfill roles as wife and mother, women and especially girls are expected to follow the rules and challenge social norms and real traditions.

According to Sara Mills' theories, the novel is entirely surrounded by the harsh realities of a society in which men treat women as the suppressed elements of life. These women are also subjugated by the patriarchal cultures and traditions that still exist in that society. In a patriarchal society, where there is only one person in charge of the family who is referred to as the head of the family and who fulfills roles such as wife and mother, girls, brothers, uncles, male cousins, women, and especially women are expected to follow the rules and challenge the norms and real traditions of the society. Depending on Sara Mills' theories, the novel is entirely surrounded by the harsh realities of a society in which men treat women as the suppressed elements of life. These women are also subjugated by the patriarchal cultures and traditions that still exist in that society. In a patriarchal society, where there is only one person in charge of the family who is referred to as the head of the family and who fulfills roles such as wife and mother, girls, brothers, uncles, male cousins, women, and especially women are expected to follow the rules and challenge the norms and real traditions of the society.

Significance of Study

The present research contributes to the study of distinctive forms of language use and their functions from a linguistic point of view, where Sara Mills' model explains the concepts of different language structures and the factors contributing to the formation of discourse standards used in the novel. Through the analysis of language variations, this study will help the researcher understand the forms of linguistic variations that depend on societal factors and the changing norms of society, which are compelling women to adopt the standards of their cultures and traditions that are imposed upon their lives without any respect for equality and freedom within patriarchal society. In addition to this, the researcher can examine the discrete events related to these ideologies and thereby contribute to a better understanding of the lives of women, where the researcher will be able to reconsider these standards in a balanced way that promotes equality between men and women on an equal platform, while strengthening their relationship within society.

Research Questions:

1. What key discourse features are used to conceptualize discrimination against women in 'His Only Wife'?
2. How does the depiction of men in His Only Wife differ from its portrayal of women?

Literature Review

Gender issues are associated with the varied characteristics of men and women as a result of social construction and societal culture. Men are generally perceived to be strong, bold, and logical, whereas women are thought to be weak, sweet, and kind. In various societies and periods of time, these traits are interchangeable. Gender, which is essentially a societal construction, is now perceived as God's will under a deceptive paradigm (Butler, 1990; Fakihi, 1996). Cleaning the house and caring for the children are tasks that are often attributed to women, but these roles are socially and culturally constructed rather than biologically determined (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Considering that men can perform them, it is equally possible for these responsibilities to become associated with men. Gender disparities, particularly those affecting women, can result in gender inequality (Fakihi, 1996; Lorber, 1994).

The system and structure of gender inequality cause both men and women to become victims of the system. Marginalization, subjugation, stereotypes, violence, and the social weight placed upon a particular group are examples of how gender inequality manifests itself. Fakihi (1996, p. 8) identified five categories of gender disparity that may result in discrimination against women:

gender and violence, gender and stereotypes, gender and subordination, gender and marginalization, and gender and workload. Women who are marginalized are viewed as having little value in society. Social culture can also reinforce this discrimination (Connell, 2009). Women are relegated to a low status in society, particularly in political positions, due to the presumption that they are illogical and emotional. Stereotypical views and problems related to gender involve labeling women or particular social groups, which frequently results in injustice. Violence is an attack on a person's physical or psychological well-being or that of a group in society. Rape, domestic violence, genital mutilation, prostitution, pornography, molestation, and forced sterilization are examples of such violations. Women typically work in the home, while men labor in the workplace, according to the relationship between gender and workload. The domestic sector is often viewed as ineffective despite its significant social and economic contribution (Federici, 2012).

An overview of selected FCDA studies on diverse gendered social concerns in various international contexts is undertaken within feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA). This approach highlights the cultural specificities of discourse and, at the same time, the discursive resonances of androcentric gender ideology operating throughout the world. This includes more subtle forms of sexism, gender inequalities, and stereotypes that are reinforced through discourse, social contexts, and communities (Lazar, 2005; Sunderland, 2004). FCDA is a progressive approach that examines the nuanced and diverse process by which gender beliefs that reinforce power imbalances acquire "common sense" and how these processes can also be challenged and resisted (Lazar, 2007).

Feminist theory and discourse analysis (DA) share several core values, such as reflexivity, methodological pluralism, and emphasizing interpretation over procedural, epistemological, and disciplinary rigidity (Clarke & Braun, 2019). Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA), as proposed by Lazar (2007), can be used to critically examine and critique gender discourses. It offers a theoretical framework to investigate how discourses of girlhood reveal the gendered subjectivities of girls. Parsons (2016) argues that the conceptualization of gender difference encourages institutional misogyny. Due to the institutionalization of patriarchal gender identities, institutions of power such as schools exhibit these identities in their culture and ethos. This is why, according to Lazar (2005), "the purpose of FCDA is to show the complex, subtle and sometimes not so subtle ways in which frequently taken-for-granted gendered assumptions and hegemonic power relations are discursively produced, sustained, negotiated and challenged in different communities" (p. 10). FCDA demonstrates how girls discuss their own gendered behaviors and how these are reflected in the school environment using a post-structural feminist theoretical framework.

The first and most obvious reason is that many gender-focused studies in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) adopt a critical feminist view of gender relations; they are motivated by the need to transform the existing conditions of these relationships (Lazar, 2005, 2007). It should be emphasized that not all studies that examine gender in discourse are necessarily feminist in this critical sense. Second, criticisms of Critical Discourse Analysis made by some feminist academics deserve consideration, according to Cameron (1998, pp. 969–970). "Critical discourse analysis is one of the broadly progressive enterprises whose founders and leading figures are still predominantly white men," Cameron argues. By highlighting the work of male scholars rather than feminists, Wilkinson and Kitzinger (1995) pointed out that these scholars often failed to recognize feminist contributions. Unquestionably, feminist scholars from a range of backgrounds, who do not all identify as white and heterosexual, conduct the majority of feminist research in Critical Discourse Analysis. In relation to Wilkinson and Kitzinger's study, it is

interesting to note that more recent Critical Discourse Analysis scholarship has increasingly acknowledged and incorporated feminist perspectives among other crucial social theories (Lazar, 2005; Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

Although the power relations between men and women parallel those between oppressed and dominant classes and ethnic groups, the context in which these dynamics are exhibited on a daily basis is considerably different. No one from the working class is paired for life with a person from the middle class in this fashion, and no one from the Black community is paired for life with a White person. Furthermore, the prevailing gender paradigm calls for this kind of cooperation between men and women (Connell, 1989, pp. 253–254).

The "discursive turn" in many social science and humanities studies has, as is widely known, emphasized the significance of language and discourse. Poststructuralist theory offers a critical perspective on discourse as a site of conflict where the forces of social reproduction, contestation, and transformation are continually negotiated (Weedon, 1997). The discursive movement in feminist scholarship is reflected in both works outside of linguistics (Weedon, 1997; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1995) and linguistics itself, under the umbrella of "gender and language" research (Baxter, 2003; Hall & Bucholtz, 1995; Wodak, 1997). FCDA, with its focus on social justice and gender transformation, is an important addition to the expanding body of feminist discourse literature, especially in the area of gender and language, where FCDA continues to occupy a surprisingly marginal position (Lazar, 2005).

FCDA is a political perspective on gender that focuses on demystifying how gender, power, and ideology interact in discourse, as opposed to approaches that privilege one language mode over another. It can be applied to both spoken and written text analysis (Lazar, 2005a). Critical Discourse Analysis frameworks acknowledge a multimodal dimension that is generally not present in other linguistic methodologies (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Scollon, 2001). Language can be critically analysed in conjunction with other semiotic modalities, such as visual images, layouts, gestures, and sounds, to provide a more thorough and insightful analysis.

Creating social transformation is the ultimate objective of a feminist political critique of gendered social relationships and practices. The status quo in society is challenged by a feminist humanist vision of a just society in which gender does not explain, predict, or mediate our relationships with others or how we perceive who we are or might become (Grant, 1993; Hill Collins, 1990). Analysis of language that reveals the power dynamics supporting oppressive ideologies and social structures, along with "critical social movements," contributes to ongoing efforts towards social change and equality.

The progressive emancipatory agenda makes it feasible for research to become successful practice and is founded on a dialectical interaction between theory and practice (Lather, 1986). Constructing feminist strategies for social change and resistance and establishing critical awareness necessitate the deployment of theoretical concepts. Participants engaged in social practices may not always be conscious of how power and ideology are intertwined in discourse from the perspective of critical theory (Fairclough, 1992; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Kress, 1990). Speaking as a "woman" is not the same as speaking as a feminist from a political standpoint because feminist discourse requires a critical awareness of power relations and gendered ideologies (Lazar, 2005).

While adopting a feminist perspective includes maintaining a critical distance from one's own gender and from oneself, recognizing oneself as a "woman" requires understanding gender from the standpoint of the gendered social structure (Grant, 1993). The concept of gender equality and the approach used to achieve it are both influenced by a critical practice-oriented mentality. Kress (1990, p. 88) argued that Critical Discourse Analysis made linguistics "more accessible,

more competent, and much more sympathetic to the concerns of different social groups." Critical practice-based research also challenges the division between theory and practice in feminist movements, where academic feminists are linked to "theory" and feminist activists are linked to "practice" (Lather, 1986; Lazar, 2005).

As a result, critical research cannot adopt an unbiased stance and does not even attempt to do so; rather, as Lather (1986, p. 259) points out, scholarship incorporates its theoretical positions into its arguments. Because it fails to accept that all knowledge is historically and socially constructed and value-based, the feminist approach has called into question the traditional notion of scientific objectivity (Fox Keller, 1996; Harding, 1986; see also Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). This argument responds to those who dismiss explicitly political research as lacking "objectivity" and "scientificity" (for instance, see Widdowson's critique of Critical Discourse Analysis) (Widdowson, 1995).

One might even argue that feminist critical discourse analysis is more meaningful than most other types of discourse analysis because it reflects a variety of social influences, including social constructions, identities, power relations, and ideologies, which are typically excluded from other types of research (Lazar, 2005, 2007). This is true even within feminist theory and analysis, where Critical Discourse Analysis provides a systematic framework for examining how discourse constructs and sustains gendered inequalities (Fairclough, 1992; Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

Methodology

This research advances understanding of notable language forms and their tendencies from a linguistic perspective, using Sara Mills' (1995) model to explain various language structures and the factors influencing the discourse standards used in the novel. The present study adopts a qualitative research approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Through the analysis of language variations, this study will help the researcher examine the forms of linguistic variations that depend on societal factors and the changing norms of society, which are compelling women to adopt the standards of their cultures and traditions imposed upon their lives without any respect for equality and freedom within patriarchal society.

In addition to this, the researcher can examine the discrete events related to these ideologies and thereby contribute to a better understanding of the lives of women, where the researcher will be able to reconsider standards in a balanced way to promote equality among men and women on the same platform, while strengthening their relationship within society. Research on gender discrimination, language representation, and patriarchal practices constitutes essential and dominant themes of English literary studies. From both a literary and linguistic point of view, females are represented negatively and as subordinate to men through different forms of patriarchal traditions that maintain male dominance. These associations are interlinked with the ways in which authors select subordinate, passive, and negative language for females who are portrayed as dependent on men (Lazar, 2005; Mills, 1995). The use of critical discourse analytical devices is a convincing tool for examining how ideology is constructed and communicated through text (Fairclough, 1992). Therefore, the present research attempts to analyze the feminist features associated with women across several life experiences and circumstances that represent gender discrimination, language use, and resistance to the patriarchal system of society through Peace Adzo Medie's *His Only Wife* (2020).

The analysis is conducted by defining the text at the level of the context of production and examining its sub-parts in the form of textual traces within the novel *His Only Wife*. The study employs Sara Mills' (1995) Feminist Discourse Analysis model to examine the text through language and discourse within their broader social context. The framework identifies hierarchical

categories of feminist discourse analysis that facilitate the interpretation of gendered representations and patriarchal ideologies embedded in the novel.

Analysis

The novel "His Only Wife", written by Peace Adzo Medie, offers a wealth of material that may help discuss language, gender and patriarchy. The author documents the ways language was used throughout the novel to support and create gender-based power structures and patriarchal views. Language was used to shape gender identities; the terms and labels given to Afi at various points within the book such as "a young girl" or "the girl" suggested that Afi's place represented inferiority to all the other male characters. In addition, the author notes that language was used to uphold patriarchal views and practices. Such practices included polygamous relationships, which were depicted as common and acceptable forms of relationships in the society of the novel.

The development of language that creates a relationship between gender-based power structures and traditionally patriarchal norms is central to "His Only Wife". With the depiction of Afi, the author examines how typically women are placed in a subservient position to men, and how language is employed to reinforce this placement. At several different times, Afi is referred to as "the girl" rather than "the young woman", which minimizes her identity and positions her as less powerful than all the male protagonists depicted in the novel. Furthermore, the author examines how language is used to facilitate patriarchal views on polygamy. As Afi navigates her role as a second wife to a rich man, she faces many challenges and expectations related to that role. For the most part, "His Only Wife" presents a good model of how language functions to support patriarchal ideology and gendered relationships of power. Using feminist discourse analysis to examine the language that has been used to depict the relationships of power within the context of the novel allows the author to gain a greater understanding of how those ideologies function, and are sustained through discourse.

As viewed through the lens of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA), this excerpt displays how language is used to construct and maintain gendered relationships of power. The reference to Afi as "a young girl" establishes her as lesser and unable to compete with Elikem, who is established as a dominant character. This exemplifies patriarchal standards that recognize men as superior to women and reinforce gendered imbalances of power. Moreover, this discourse also promotes socially accepted notions of what constitutes acceptable behavior for women. By implying that Afi is incapable of managing a household due solely to her gender status, Elikem reinforces the notion that a woman's primary function is that of caregiver. This reinforces patriarchal thought processes regarding women as caregivers and maintains gendered power imbalances by limiting women's access to opportunities for advancement both economically and socially. As a result, this excerpt clearly depicts how language use can be examined through the lens of FCDA to demonstrate how discourse builds and maintains gendered relationships of power. An examination of the language used in the narrative of His Only Wife will allow the author to develop a deeper understanding of how language use supports patriarchal ideologies. Language is social action that reflects and produces societies' power relations. This excerpt illustrates how language defines women as subordinate to men and develops gender specific power systems. Essentially, labeling Afi as a "girl" affects Afi's social standing and positions her under Elikem. The fact that he chose this label reflects a power structure that always benefits men over women, thus maintaining patriarchal norms. Elikem uses the label "girl" to establish a power differential and assert his dominance over Afi. Second, Elikem states, "What do you know about running a household?" This implies that Afi lacks maturity and capability because of her gender alone. These are long held gender based beliefs that limit women's participation in

managing households. Elikem limits Afi's opportunity for self-determination by questioning her ability to manage a family, reinforcing his own opinion that women are generally less capable than men in certain areas. According to FCDA, this conversation demonstrates how language can be used to support patriarchal practices and gendered inequalities of power. It also illustrates how language can constrain women's agency and create restrictions on their actions while simultaneously promoting traditional gender values and discrimination against women.

The researcher uses this perspective when analyzing the discussions in order to understand how choice of words creates and sustains gendered ties of power. The research also analyzes how language is used as a tool to critically analyze ways that gender is socially created through the use of discursive methods. Language is a method of social practice, according to the FCDA (Fairclough Critical Discourse Analysis) which shows how language both reflects and generates the distribution of power within a society. In addition to using the subject matter to illustrate how language can be employed to show and eliminate the existing gendered relationships of power, the researcher also employs the subject matter to create examples of how language can be employed to display and eliminate the existing gendered relationships of power.

Elikem positions Afi at the bottom of the hierarchical structure, but Afi responds, "I am not a girl, I am a woman" to challenge the hierarchical structure of power. Additionally, Afi expresses her ability to manage a household by opposing the commonly accepted stereotype that primarily assigns women to handle domestic work. By identifying what she is able to do, Afi opposes the common opinion that women are naturally less capable than men in certain roles.

As stated in the FCDA, Afi's responses demonstrate how language can be used to resist patriarchal norms and challenge existing gendered relationships of power. This illustrates how language can be used to voice resistance to patriarchal norms. Through the lens of the FCDA, the researcher will identify how the language options selected are capable of being used to oppose and challenge existing gendered power structures. The FCDA assists the researcher to study how discourse influences the social constructs related to gender while assisting to raise awareness about language.

Mina comments that Afi's life is privileged because she is married to Elikem and he is a wealthy man who can sustain her. This promotes marriage as a means of securing one's economic future and reinforces the notion that women rely economically on men. By stating that women have the capability to take care of themselves and require no man to take care of them, Afi contests the notion that women search for men for financial assistance. This response emphasizes Afi's independence and critiques the patriarchal norms that limit the freedoms of women. Sara Mills' application of a feminist discourse analysis approach enables researchers to assess this argument in terms of representation, identity, power, and language. Since Afi speaks out against patriarchal norms that inhibit the agency and freedom of women, she holds greater ground in this argument than Mina. As Afi demands independence, she contests the systems of authority that perpetuate gender inequality.

This discussion also challenges traditional views of women representing themselves in their roles as wives/housewives and their financial dependence on men. Afi argues for women to define themselves independently as they wish. This argument challenges stereotypes associated with gender and encourages people to believe that women can become independent individuals. This conversation contests the perception that an individual's femininity is defined by her connection to a man. Instead, Afi defines herself independently based on her own capabilities and not based upon her connection to a man. Therefore, she challenges patriarchal norms that prohibit women from developing their independence and self-reliance.

Through feminist discourse analysis using Sara Mills' model the researcher shows how language is used to challenge patriarchal authority. Elikem argues Afi's primary role as his wife is to bear children for him. This argument upholds practice that emphasizes child bearing as central to women and values them primarily for bearing children. Using Mills' feminist discourse analysis technique the researcher evaluates this argument from perspectives of power, representation and identity as well as language. Throughout this conversation Elikem has more power than Afi because he defines her responsibilities and her role as his wife. Claiming that bearing children is her most important responsibility Elikem maintains structures of patriarchal power that limit women's autonomy and independence. Within this debate Afi criticizes the view that worth of a woman depends solely on her ability to bear children by suggesting she is more than just a vessel for bearing children. She asserts her worth and desire for freedom by showing ambitions and goals that extend beyond motherhood.

Using Sara Mills' feminist discourse analysis, the researcher evaluates this discussion in terms of power, representation and identity and language. In this situation Afi speaks more forcefully compared to Elikem because she is challenging patriarchal norms that limit autonomy and agency for women. By asserting her desire for independence and valuing herself apart from becoming a mother she goes against hierarchical power structures that sustain gender disparity. Elikem continues by believing women should be seen rather than heard. Following this debate maintains earlier power relations along gender lines and puts women under male dominance. According to FCDA language symbolizes a social practice that also reflects and shapes power relations in society. Discussion shows how language can create gender specific power structures and define women as subordinate to men. Briefly speaking, Afi's status is affected and she ranks below Elikem when she is called a "girl." Usage of this term reflects a power dynamic. Saying "You are not like other women" seems to suggest there is a particular way women should behave and to present Afi as an exception to that. This weakens women's agency while strengthening the idea that they should meet social standards.

Overall, defining what it means to be a woman and portraying Afi as an exception limits women's agency and supports patriarchal practices. Researchers can better understand how language supports stereotypes and power structures by using Sara Mills' framework of feminist discourse analysis. Language used here challenges stereotypes about gender and patriarchal structures. Afi asserts through her statement that there is no single right way for women to be. This assertion allows her to stand on her own and to refute the idea that there is only one prescribed way to be a woman. Women are thus given the freedom to identify themselves in any way they choose. Using Sara Mills' feminist discourse analysis, researchers can evaluate arguments in terms of power, representation, identity and language. The subject of this discussion challenges stereotypes related to gender and advocates that women should be allowed to identify themselves based on their own choices.

Through application of Sara Mills' feminist discourse analysis technique, researchers gain a better understanding of how language can criticize stereotypes and existing power structures. Broadly speaking *His Only Wife* by Peace Adzo Medie has been celebrated as a masterpiece. This work depicts realities, challenges and struggles of women striving for better lives. Several dimensions of social identity such as sexuality, ethnicity and social standing connect closely with gender as a category. There is a complicated interplay between patriarchal ideas and other ideologies such as corporatism and consumerism. *His Only Wife* is narrated from the first person by Afi Tekple, the main character and narrator of the novel. Everything that happens in the story is told through her thoughts and feelings. Events are described through Afi's perspective through her thoughts, feelings and recollections.

Author Peace Adzo Medie, a highly skilled scholar and persistent advocate for women's rights, brings her knowledge and humor into her debut novel. His Only Wife, for its audience, is the story of an unyielding and accessible female hero who illuminates the meaning of being a woman in a rapidly changing world. The main character in the novel, Afi Tekple, encounters many challenges and issues because she is involved in Eli's life significantly due to Auntie Ganyo attempting to eliminate the woman that Eli's family does not approve of. From this point of view, Peace Adzo Medie shows us how people who deal with similar social challenges during their lifetime experience those challenges differently. Therefore, Peace Adzo explores the underlying assumptions of a patriarchy-based society and exposes the harsh realities of that type of society to the reader.

The entire book surrounds the difficult realities of a society in which men see women as inferior members of society; and these women are limited by strict social expectations and the old, traditional patriarchal cultures and customs, based upon Sara Mills' ideas, model and theory. In a patriarchy-based society, which includes only one leader or decision maker (usually the father), young girls and women are expected to follow traditional societal expectations instead of challenging them. Based on Sara Mills' theories, the novel is completely about the difficult realities of a society in which men see women as less important than they are. The women are also controlled by the old patriarchal traditions and customs that continue to exist in that type of society.

The novel demonstrates how patriarchal authority controls the roles of women within families and societies, and expects them to fulfill their duties as wives and mothers, but restricts their ability to make independent decisions for themselves. The entire book is about the difficulties of a society in which men believe women are inferior to them and these women are controlled by very deep-rooted patriarchal traditions and customs. Patriarchy is a system in which women, including young girls, will comply with societal expectations, and will fight against traditional values and norms. This system includes only one person leading the family, often referred to as the head of the household; women are required to assume the responsibilities of wife, mother and guardian of family pride and dignity. Under a patriarchal system, men control both women and younger family members, especially younger boys.

Peace Adzo Medie utilizes the theoretical framework of Sara Mills through feminist critical discourse analysis to demonstrate an equivalent position and worth for women so they may live their lives outside of the biased construction of conflicting identities related to gender, language, sexual orientation, and equity. Through her novel His Only Wife, Medie highlights societal norms of gender and equality using Sara Mills' model and theoretical perspectives. Using this model helps to show how certain forms of language can question stereotypes associated with gender as well as current patriarchal systems of power. Afi establishes her own independence and refutes the notion that there exists only one prescribed manner in which a woman can act when she states "there is no one correct way to be a woman."

Utilizing Sara Mills' feminist discourse analysis methodology, the researcher can evaluate arguments pertaining to power, representation, identity and language. The author of this paper presents arguments that challenge gender stereotypes while supporting the idea that women should be able to identify themselves however they desire. The researcher evaluates these arguments to determine if Sara Mills' feminist discourse analysis method was applied correctly and to gain insight into how language can be used to critique current gender stereotypes as well as existing systems of power.

In a broader sense, Peace Adzo Medie's *His Only Wife*, which depicts the realities, challenges, and struggles of women's existence in their pursuit of a better life, has been hailed as a masterpiece. Several dimensions of social identity, including sexuality, ethnicity, social status, and geography, connect with gender as a category. A complicated interaction exists between patriarchy and other ideologies, such as corporatism and consumerism. *His Only Wife* is written from the first-person singular perspective of Afi Tekple, the novel's heroine and narrator, and it focuses solely on her thoughts and feelings. Being the main character and taking part in every major event in the narrative, Afi's point of view is the most important. The events of the story are described from Afi's perspective through her thoughts, feelings, and recollections. Her perception of the world and the people in it is the only perspective available to the audience. Since she is manipulated by Aunt Ganyo, the reader feels sympathy for her because of the first-person perspective. Author Peace Adzo Medie, a brilliant scholar and tenacious supporter of women's rights, infuses her first novel with wisdom and wit. *His Only Wife*, for its readers, is the tale of an unflappable and approachable heroine who sheds light on what it means to be a woman in a rapidly evolving society.

Conclusion

In the conclusion, the researcher observes how language plays a role within *His Only Wife* in maintaining as well as challenging gender stereotypes and institutional structures of power through the perspective of Sara Mills' feminist discourse analysis model. All ten dialogues examined indicate how patriarchal practices limit female freedom and reinforce the belief that womanhood must conform to a single conventional definition of what it means to be a woman. These discussions also demonstrate how women may rebel against these patterns and assert their own empowerment and identities. In the novel, women are frequently shown as passive individuals, which highlights gender stereotypes and restricts their sense of agency.

In comparison to their personal independence and aspirations, the identities of women are frequently shaped by societal expectations, which restrict their capacity for independence while continuing patriarchal norms through the use of language. The dialogues between Afi and Elikem exemplify how language can be utilized to challenge patriarchal norms and strengthen women's voices. Afi conveys her ability to define herself on her own terms while opposing the belief that there is only one way to define herself as a woman. This challenges patriarchal norms that restrict the freedom and self-determination of women. Through examining the ten dialogues in *His Only Wife*, the researcher demonstrates how language can be examined as a tool for both reinforcing and challenging gender norms and power hierarchies.

The present research provides a perspective on how language can be utilized to defend women's rights and challenge traditional patriarchal standards. It emphasizes how essential it is to challenge gender norms and allow women the freedom to identify themselves according to their own choices. The theoretical frameworks adopted in this study help identify and address the issues raised by the research problem. These theories are the liberal feminist theory and the theory of Characterization. The findings of the present research also contribute to the understanding of language use from a linguistic point of view, where Sara Mills' model explains the concepts of different language structures and the discursive practices used in the novel. Through the analysis of language variation, this study helps the researcher understand how linguistic variations are influenced by societal factors and the changing norms of society, which compel women to adopt the standards of their cultures and traditions while often denying them equality, freedom, and autonomy within patriarchal societies.

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