

DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITIES IN GÌKÚYÚ PROVERBS

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ABSTRACT

For a holistic understanding of social, economic, political and historical understanding of issues affecting Africa, the struggles of social equality between both men and women must be addressed. This research focused on the semantics of female subjugation and derogation in Gĩkũyũ proverbs. Proverbs, as forms of figurative communication with didactic functions in studied conversations possess evidence of male attempt at maintaining control over discourse in society. The representations of womanhood in Gĩkũyũ proverbs are mainly negative. The fact that these stereotypes have been encoded in a form of communication usually respected and highly valued in Gĩkũyũ culture suggests the degree to which rhetoric in the society has been masculinised. The aims of this study were to evaluate and analyse the depiction of women in African Oral Literature using Gĩkũyũ proverbs, to determine how socio-cultural and economic factors contribute to the portrayal of women among the Gĩkũyũ community, and to investigate how the image of a woman as exemplified in Gĩkũyũ proverbs affects gender roles and attitudes in the community. The study was informed by a combination of Wodak's (DHA) and Connell's Hegemonic Masculinities theory. The theories benefited the study in terms of perspectives, practical approaches and analytical tools. Further, they were utilized for the purpose of exploring more nuanced, complex understandings of manliness and men's relationships with men, women and social structures. The data consisted of Gĩkũyũ proverbs which were purposefully collected. The researcher interviewed thirty two respondents ranging from age 21-80 of both genders using semi-structured questions. Data was then analyzed descriptively to help the researcher to establish the possible behavior and attitudes of the subjects. The beneficiaries of the study are other researchers since it was inspire future research in the area of gender and language by showing how language planners can inculcate issues of social justice such as gender equality into the curriculum. The study also benefits institutions interested in gender issues and also curriculum developers in their efforts to mainstream gender strategies through the use of language into planning and implementation since language is a crucial tool in the society.