

Research Article

Chauvinism in Ghanaian Paremiology and Communication: A Reconstructive Review of Ewe, Twi, Fante, and Kasena Proverbial Expressions

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Abstract

Every culture has its own unique proverbs or proverbial expressions that express perceived truths based on common sense or the daily and historical experiences of its folks. Although the wisdom that traditional sayings convey is not necessarily an entire representation of the cultural values of a specific culture, they do, to a large extent, reflect the values upheld by those cultures. If a true link between cultural values and proverbs is acknowledged, old proverbs might illustrate past values, while a new repertoire of proverbs would probably reflect the morals and values of modern times. Over the years, Ghanaians have employed proverbs to keep women in perpetual subjugation and subservience to men, relegating them to the background and paying little attention to the enormous contribution of women to the development of society. Has this cultural portrait changed over time? How are these denigrating portrayals effected? Can anything be done to reverse the narrative? In answering these questions adequately, the study would present and analyse Ghanaian proverbs that embody chauvinist sentiments, sourced from across a number of languages: Ewe, Twi, Fante, and Kasena. The analysis of these sayings allows for an assessment, discussion, deconstruction, and reconstruction of the image of the female in the Ghanaian society of the 21st century.

Keywords

Paremiology, Proverbs, Ghanaian, Sexist, Chauvinism, Communication, Reconstruction

1. Introduction

Every community and tribe relies on language as an essential means of communication, leading to the development of language codes. These codes reflect the community's values and are conveyed through various means such as myths, anecdotes, stories,

and proverbs. Proverbs hold a significant place in communication as they have enriched meanings and serve as valuable tools for cultural interaction. They can be used to communicate values, morals, etiquettes, wisdom, and also to

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convey oppression or abuse. Proverbs have been created by people and passed down from generation to generation, acting as a reflection of a people's ideological culture and ethnic emotions. They serve as a prism, reflecting the thoughts and culture of humanity or the places where they are used. The Ewe language is spoken by the Ewe people. It belongs to the family of the Kwa languages of the Niger-Congo valley. In modern times, native Ewe speakers are in Nigeria, specifically Gbadagri, and also in Benin, Togo, and Ghana. The language has a lot of dialects, including Anlo, Fon, Wedome, and others. Those involved in this study are the Ewes of Ghana, specifically in the Volta Region, which is on the southeastern borders of Ghana, spanning the Volta River to Aflao, and to the north eastern parts from Ho, Hohoe, Kpando, and others. Ewes are known travellers, artisans, and love education- a reason, arguably most Ghanaian teachers are Ewes. Aside the native habitations stated, Ewes have migrated to other regions across the country hence the various Anlo towns in Kumasi, Koforidua, Takoradi and the rest.

In *African Anthroponymy* Obeng agrees that the Akans constitute nearly half of Ghana's population and occupy the southern forest and coastal regions extending into parts of Ivory Coast [1]. They are noted for their well-organised social and political systems rooted in matrilineal inheritance, traditional authority, and communal values. The Akan are not a homogenous group but comprise several subgroups, including the Asante, Fante, Akuapem, Akyem, Bono, Wassa, Sefwi, Agona, and Ahanta. Linguistically, they are divided into Twi and Fante clusters, which serve as major communication tools across Ghana. The Akan chieftaincy institution reflects a blend of hereditary leadership and participatory governance, with councils of elders ensuring justice and social order. These structures existed long before colonial influence and highlight the political sophistication of Akan society.

Culturally, the Akans' matrilineal system shapes inheritance, leadership succession, and social identity. Their customs, festivals, and oral traditions reinforce communal unity and moral integrity, values that remain central to Ghanaian life. The Akans should not be viewed as a single cultural entity, as their internal diversity reflects varied historical experiences and regional distinctions [2]. This chimes with the decision to analyze both Fante and Twi proverbs separately though both languages belong to the Akan fraternity. By the 1960s, the Akans were the majority in Ghana. Their adaptability and cultural influence continue to shape Ghana's social, political, and moral fabric. For the purpose of this paper, the Twi and Fante languages have been separated to aid the analysis and data collection for a fair representation though both languages are spoken by the members of the Akan ethnic group.

1.1. Rationale and Objectives of the Study

Basis and objectives

This research is justified because the researchers are natives

of the population setting and have first-hand experience and exposure to the present chauvinism in these cultures but would want to justify the assertion by examining the presence of these chauvinist sentiments in their proverbs with the hope of contributing to the reconstruction of gender discrimination against women, and interrogating how patriarchal dominance is reflected in the Ghanaian community of proverbs and proverbial expressions, captured as paremiology.

1.2. Purpose

This paper has the purpose of reconstructing the plague of chauvinism in the Ghanaian community. It aims at examining the nature of chauvinism in the cited linguistic cultures as reflected in their proverbial expressions.

1.3. Significance

This study will contribute immensely to the effort of the United Nations and other organisations at ameliorating the prevalence of gender discrimination and chauvinism, especially in Africa, and will also strengthen scholarship on the examination of oral tradition of the target languages.

1.4. Theoretical Framework

Verbal art as performance [3] and Speech Art theories [4] formed the theoretical basis for the work. To fully grasp the gender ideology embedded in proverbs, it is crucial to view it within the Dell Hymes Speech Act theory as it recognizes language and communication not just as in form but context. Hymes opines that there is no communication without context [5]. Both theories agree that language is both reflective and constitutive of power dynamics in our social, economic, racial, and sexual lives [6]. In a gendered society like the patriarchal Ghanaian community, language is employed to dictate group behaviors and relationships within the external world and among individuals. Once a relationship of dominance and subordination is established, distinct meanings are assigned to different social groups through various forms of signification [7]. Language allows for the construction of stereotypes about oneself and others. Dominant groups leverage language to oppress and perpetuate aggression or prejudice against those they subjugate [8, 9].

2. Review of Related Literature

Proverbs are a crucial aspect of indigenous African and Ghanaian languages for that matter constituting an essential part of sociolinguistic studies. Many other researches have been carried out and published on the ethnographic properties of proverbs. It is therefore relevant to review some of these publications to enhance or discussion of chauvinism in the selected Ghanaian proverbs.

2.1. African Oral Tradition

African oral tradition serves as an invaluable source for understanding the rich cultural heritage and historical narratives of the continent. Oral traditions are the forms of culture passed on to generations by word of mouth [10]. It adheres to certain principles of anonymity, persistence, and variation. It is rather a sad realisation that at a time in the history of mankind when written forms are even migrating to digital literacy and all nations and peoples make concerted effort to advance in knowledge gathering and preservation, many Africans still rely on oral tradition in storing their history and cultural elements, forgetting that oral tradition is not entirely reliable as there may be distortions and personal biases, and to a large extent, human limitations of forgetfulness, and omission in the reenactment of oral forms. However, when these forms are collated and written in a researched paper like this one, it gets the opportunity to go through the hands of other scholars who review and make corrections before they are finally published. Hence, more and more of these research papers need to be encouraged in order to promote a more authentic account of our oral traditions.

Okpewho presents a comprehensive overview of the significance of oral tradition in African societies [11]. He argues that oral tradition is not merely a means of passing on stories and legends, but a cultural compass that shapes African identity, history, and knowledge transmission. Drawing on examples from different African communities, he highlights the oral tradition's role in preserving historical events, cultural values, and social structures that otherwise might be lost in written records. The paper delves into the close relationship between oral tradition and community building, emphasizing its role in fostering a sense of collective memory and unity.

African oral literature has undergone significant evolution, adapting to modern contexts while coexisting with written literature and digital media [12]. Its dynamic nature is evident in the continued use of traditional storytelling to engage contemporary socio-political issues, as well as in the changing modes and platforms through which oral narratives are transmitted. Drawing on vivid descriptions from paternal Anlo-based oralities, this work also reflects on the impact of technology on the preservation and dissemination of oral traditions [12]. *African oral tradition reveals complex gender dynamics, functioning as a mechanism for both the reinforcement and subversion of gender biases and power relations across many African societies [13].* In the analysis of various proverbs, folktales, and songs, the complex interplay between traditional gender norms and the part women themselves play in perpetuating these gender inequalities [13]. The paper underscores the importance of recognizing and understanding these dynamics as a means of challenging gender inequality and promoting gender equity in African communities.

Scholarly discussions of African oral tradition warn that by the next century, up to 90% of the world's languages and linguistic forms may disappear [14]. Within this context, the

transformative effects of globalization pose significant challenges to African oral traditions, making their preservation and promotion crucial to safeguarding cultural identity. As African communities increasingly engage oral tradition to resist cultural imperialism and reclaim identity in a rapidly changing world, the need for systematic documentation of traditional oral forms for reconstruction purposes becomes especially urgent [13].

In Ewe societies for instance, proverbs play a significant role in conveying gender ideology and chauvinism [12]. Proverbs serve as widely used forms of oral artistry in many cultures, although their specific origins or creators may remain unknown. However, their sources are considered authoritative figures. In oral cultures like those of the Akan, Ewe, and other African ethnic groups, proverbs serve as repositories of social and cultural wisdom [10]. For example, the Ewe proverb "*Wometsɔa miasi fia ame de o*". This means One should not use the left hand to point at one's place of birth. Among the Ewes, using the left hand is a non-verbal way of showing disrespect or looking down on a person, place, or thing. Therefore, this proverb shows the cultural wisdom of the people, admonishing kinsmen not to disrespect one's heritage. "*Dadi be, avu nɔtɔe do efe mo di ye wokplɛ yi agble*." According to this proverb, the cat says it is the dog himself that sat silently to be taken on a hunting expedition. This presupposes that it is how one conducts himself that determines the kind of treatment he gets. Another Ewe proverb, "*Ameɔa xoxo fe agblemee wokpɔna ekpe lena tɔ zina nefui*," means "It is from the farm of an elder that we get the right rock to crack a nut." However, the meaning of a proverb is contextual and can evolve depending on the situation in which it is used. New shades of meaning may emerge, and a proverb's literal meaning can become metaphorical, applicable to different circumstances. The Akan proverb "wo suro a, wonni" to wit, if you fear, you will not win encourages the daring nature of the men and women of Akan origin. They have been taught by their forebears to take risks in life. Of course, life itself is an entire risk on its own, taking risks is risky, and not taking risks is also risky.

The literature review revealed a deeper understanding of African oral tradition, its significance in preserving history, adaptability to modern times, its role in shaping gender dynamics, its power in preserving cultural identity, and the timeless wisdom embedded in African proverbs.

2.2. Importance of Paremiology

Paremiology, the study of proverbs, sayings, axioms and other proverbial expressions holds a significant place in both linguistics and folklore studies. Throughout the years, numerous scholars have delved into this rich field, examining its cultural, linguistic, and sociological implications. In this essay, we will review five influential papers published by renowned authors, shedding light on the importance of paremiology in various contexts.

In “Proverbs are never out of season: Popular wisdom in the Modern Age” [16], the significance of proverbs in different cultural contexts, and explores how proverbs encapsulate cultural values, beliefs, and traditions, serving as repositories of collective wisdom. This paper highlights the cognitive processes involved in the comprehension and interpretation of proverbs, emphasizing their integral role in communication, community building, and the transmission of cultural heritage. Here, the importance of paremiology is reinforced and reemphasised.

Proverbs are not random expressions but highly organized linguistic units, as demonstrated through analyses of their formal and semantic structures [17]. Such structural examination reveals the underlying patterns and mechanisms governing these concise statements, enabling a deeper understanding of proverbs and uncovering their layered meanings and universality.

The collection and analysis of proverbs are fundamental to paremiology, with proverb collections serving as valuable cultural artifacts that reveal societal shifts, historical change, and cross-cultural influences [18]. This perspective underscores the importance of meticulous documentation, classification, and comparative analysis in examining the ever-expanding universe of proverbs.

Paremiology plays a critical role in translation studies, particularly in addressing the complexities involved in translating proverbs, which often present challenges due to cultural nuance, idiomatic expression, and linguistic specificity. Such studies offer valuable insights into rendering proverbs in ways that preserve their cultural richness and communicative impact for target audiences.

The sociolinguistic dimensions of proverbs reveal their function as markers of identity, social status, and linguistic variation within different communities. Such analyses illuminate the socio-cultural implications of proverbs, demonstrating their role in reflecting and reinforcing social norms, cultural values, and intergroup dynamics.

These works emphasize the importance of paremiology across various disciplines, including cultural studies, linguistics, folklore, and translation [17-20]. Through the study of proverbs, researchers gain valuable insights into the beliefs, values, and worldviews of diverse cultures, as proverbs function as vessels of collective wisdom and vehicles for the intergenerational transmission of cultural heritage. Furthermore, the analysis and translation of proverbs require nuanced understandings of language, culture, and social dynamics. Collectively, the works reviewed here contribute significantly to contemporary understandings of paremiology, while also opening avenues for further scholarly exploration of this field [17-20].

2.3. Paremiologists

Paremiologists are academic experts specialised in the study of proverbs, and other proverbial expressions. This

study offers valuable insights into the wisdom and cultural heritage of diverse societies. Over the years, numerous scholars have dedicated their research efforts to unlock the meanings and applications of proverbs across different periods and cultures. Here, we will explore the works of some distinguished paremiologists, delving into their remarkable contributions the field.

Wolfgang Mieder, a prominent scholar in paremiology, has significantly influenced the field through his extensive research and publications. Throughout his career, Mieder has focused on various aspects of proverbs, including their origins, meanings, and cross-cultural implications. Some of his notable works include “Proverbs Speak Louder Than Words: Folk Wisdom in Art, Culture, Folklore, History, Literature, and Mass Media” [15, 21] and “Wise Words: Essays on the Proverb” [22]. Mieder’s research has shed light on the multifaceted nature of proverbs and their impact on different societies.

Similarly, Paczolay has made notable contributions to paremiological studies through his examination of cross-cultural variations and similarities in proverbial expressions. His research demonstrates how proverbs reflect societal values, beliefs, and social norms, while also offering insights into cultural domains such as history, religion, and folklore. Paczolay further emphasizes that the comparative study of proverbs enhances intercultural communication and mutual understanding [23].

Paczolay’s research methodology involves the collection of proverbs from diverse cultures and the use of comparative analysis. He categorizes proverbs according to thematic patterns and examines their linguistic and cultural relevance, an approach that enables the identification of shared expressions and motifs across cultures while also recognizing the unique characteristics of individual proverbs. By situating proverbs within their cultural contexts, Paczolay demonstrates their deep-rooted influence on language and society, emphasizing their role as concise vessels of wisdom that encapsulate cultural values and transmit them across generations [23]. His work not only highlights the richness of proverbial expressions but also encourages further exploration within paremiological studies.

Paczolay explores the dynamic nature of proverbs and their transformation over time. He argues that proverbs are not static entities but continually adapt to societal changes, reflecting shifting cultural needs and perspectives. His research shows that proverbial forms are influenced by historical events, technological developments, and the introduction of new linguistic elements. By tracing the origins and transformations of selected proverbs across different historical periods, Paczolay illustrates how proverbial expressions mirror changes in societal values, ideologies, and belief systems. This analysis underscores the close interrelationship between proverbs and their cultural environments.

Furthermore, Paczolay highlights the impact of globalization on the circulation and adaptation of proverbs. Increased

intercultural contact has enabled proverbs to move across linguistic and cultural boundaries, enhancing their role in international communication and facilitating cross-cultural exchange. This process contributes to the continuous evolution of proverbs and promotes what may be described as cross-cultural fertilization.

Overall, Paczolay presents a comprehensive account of the significance and evolution of proverbs, demonstrating that they function as cultural mirrors reflecting collective wisdom and shared social experience. By emphasizing the adaptability of proverbs, his work encourages scholars to consider the broader social, historical, and cultural forces that shape proverbial expression.

The implications of Paczolay's research extend beyond the academic sphere. Proverbs remain an integral part of everyday human communication, enriching both oral and written discourse. An informed understanding of their linguistic and cultural meanings can foster intercultural harmony and more effective cross-cultural communication. In this regard, Paczolay's scholarship contributes to bridging cultural divides and promoting greater appreciation of cultural diversity.

Archer Taylor, another revered paremiologist, dedicated his life to the study and analysis of proverbs from different perspectives. His work encompasses the historical, linguistic, and sociocultural aspects of proverbs. Taylor's influential book, "The Proverb and an Index to 'The Proverb'" [25], remains a valuable resource for researchers in paremiology. His meticulous approach to categorizing and analyzing proverbs has significantly contributed to our understanding of their usage and cultural significance.

Wolfgang Mieder and Alan Dundes: The collaboration between Wolfgang Mieder and Alan Dundes resulted in a seminal work titled "The Wisdom of Many: Essays on the Proverb" [26]. Through this book, Mieder and Dundes explore the interdisciplinary nature of paremiology, delving into the social, anthropological, and psychological dimensions of proverbs. Their comprehensive analysis of the proverbs' functions and interpretations reshaped the field by highlighting the dynamic nature of these succinct expressions of wisdom.

Archer Taylor and Bartlett Jere Whiting's collaborative effort, "A Dictionary of American Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases" [27], stands as a cornerstone in American paremiology. This extensive dictionary serves as a comprehensive reference for scholars and enthusiasts alike. Taylor and Whiting's meticulous collection and analysis of American proverbs have significantly contributed to the preservation and understanding of this cultural heritage.

In another equally intriguing collaborative work, Mieder, Kingsbury, and Harder's effort led to the publication of "A Dictionary of American Proverbs" [28]. Through this comprehensive resource, the authors present a broad spectrum of American proverbs, showcasing their linguistic, historical, and cultural significance. Their research provides invaluable insights into the evolution and usage of proverbs in American society.

The research works of these paremiologists have immensely enriched the field of paremiology and to literature at large, shedding light on the cultural, linguistic, and psychological dimensions of proverbs. Wolfgang Mieder's extensive knowledge and influential publications, along with the foundational works of Archer Taylor and the collaborative efforts of Mieder, Dundes, Whiting, Kingsbury, and Harder, have paved the way for further exploration and understanding of proverbs.

3. Methodology

Data Collection Procedure: this research used secondary sources, which implies that the data was not collected on the fields, but data that already exists in collections were analysed to arrive at the conclusion and final findings. In addition, native speaker instincts and searches from online sources including google, and google scholar were employed in garnering the data for the analyses.

The approach is a textual analysis of the sampled secondary data, using qualitative approach in an ethnographic perspective. The sampling is purposive, a parochial study just limited to proverbs that talk of male dominance in the cited cultures. Although Twi and Fante clearly fall under Akan as an ethnic group, for the purpose of geocultures and linguistic differentiation, both languages have been split and their proverbs analysed differently to reflect the expanse of the phenomenon under consideration. The analysis is hypothetical, giving room to contextual applications by further and later researchers.

4. Discussion of Proverbs and Findings

Often used by elderly individuals, they add emphasis and embellishment to wise words and are used to convey moral lessons and advice. Proverbs hold undisputable stylistic and figurative relevance, adding depth to everyday discourse in any society. In African cultures, proverbs are highly regarded and serve as dominant devices for communication, carrying both serious effects and cultural implications. However, some of the proverbs in the cited cultures perpetuate harmful beliefs and stereotypes about women. They imply that women cannot marry on their own, cannot take decisions on their own nor take good care of themselves without the assistance of men, and would be despised if they seek a husband. These proverbs also enforce the idea that giving birth to a girl is seen as a burden, diminishing the value of girls within families. Additionally, they depict women as submissive to their husbands, enforcing strict obedience without delay, and even suggesting that a woman has no worth without bearing a son.

Language is a reflection of society, and proverbs are an essential part of language and oral tradition, hence, the presence of sexism or chauvinist sentiments in the proverbs of the Ghanaian corpus mirrors the existence of chauvinism in the real life of the people the proverbs represent. Throughout history,

women have been subjected to lower status, and traditional gender roles in various societies, and this does not auger well for the building of a progressive community. In order to eliminate sexism from language, we must challenge the biases and prejudices embedded in our ideologies and advocate for gender equity, and equality. By doing so, we can gradually replace sexist content in proverbs with words that reflect respect and admiration for women. As society progresses, it is essential to transform our language to reflect the principles.

4.1. Research Question

How do the proverbs of the cited cultures adequately justify the assertion that the Ghanaian body of Paremiology are sexist and chauvinist?

In answering this question one would want to find out how accurate the claim that these ethnic groups are chauvinist is, and whether they utilize proverbs to marginalize women and position them as inferior within the two patriarchal communities. It is indisputable that Africa is renowned for its wealth of oral arts, with proverbs from various ethnic groups being widely used and studied as part of longstanding oral traditions. While African proverbs have been essential in transmitting knowledge and customs across generations, the role they play in shaping and perpetuating gender dynamics within society is often overlooked. There exists a great volume of African proverbs that are sexist in philosophy, and the cited Ghanaian cultures are no exceptions. A close examination of African proverbs reveals a significant number of sexist proverbs, which can be analyzed through the lens of Bauman's Verbal Art as Performance theory to understand and hence reconstruct the prevalence of chauvinism in the two ethnic groups. Taking such an approach would help uncover the implications of gender stereotypes that lie hidden within language, yet are subtly and negatively impactful nonetheless.

4.2. Ewe Proverbs and Their Patriarchal Insinuations

The Ewe society, like any other human society, constructs phenomenological interpretations of everyday experiences through various discourses, including the use of proverbs. Consider the chauvinism in a proverb like "agbo eve me noa etsi go deka me o" which means two bulls do not drink water from the same pot. Depending on the context of usage, this proverb presupposes a master and subordinate relationship. The same sentiment is further echoed in a similar proverb "Lakle eve menoa dokpo deka me o," which translates to "Two wild animals cannot stay in one cage." This proverb, usually used in marital contexts implies that for a woman to maintain a home, she has to be the 'victim' and always be at the mercy of the man and not have any reason to assert or make any demands. She has to bring herself under the control of the man, and be a domestic animal. Of course the proverb says two wild animals cannot live in one cage hence there was

always the need for the woman to become the domestic animal for the home to survive, as the man is automatically assumed to be the wild animal unapologetically. She must not claim any equality or power sharing if she wants to remain married. And women who fail to comply with this philosophy are vilified and demeaned, shamed, and insulted for being the cause of all the troubles in the home. Why the need to reconstruct this? Being the subordinate at home requires that the woman does every menial work in the house, and serving as a sex tool, and an object of decoration for the man. The man's pride comes from the beauty and 'goodness' of his wife. Therefore the woman is expected to do everything to please her master, her Lord while the man is free to do whatever he likes with his life.

Despite the socioeconomic and political progress within Ewe communities, linguistic resources are systematically employed to maintain gender inequality. The sexist proverbs contribute to the discursive framing of gendered ideology, and almost, if not all the socio-cultural practices tend to disadvantage women. Regardless of how these proverbs may be analyzed, there are evident intertextual and intercultural connections between the ways proverbs depict the roles, statuses, and identities of women in Ewe society. For instance the proverb "Wo medea nyonu koloedola o" (a woman who doses off does not deserve marriage) and "nyonu medbal detsifafatæ o". (A woman should not sleep till her soup goes bad) these two proverbs reveal the deeply rooted chauvinism in Eweland despite the advancement in education and technology. The proverbs refuse to take cognisance of the fact that a woman is human too, and could as a result get fatigued hence dosing off or waking up from bed later than expected. It is quite ridiculous to know that people still use these proverbs deliberately oblivious of the period within which they were coined; when there were no refrigerators to keep food preserved for long hours and days. In these times, men help in the kitchen too, thus if the woman sleeps longer than necessary, nothing stops the man too from ensuring the food is preserved if that were the real concern of the moment.

Undoubtedly, women face oppression worldwide, and Ewe women have not been exceptions. Even in areas where educational and social achievements seem to have bridged racial and gender gaps, true gender equity remains elusive. And this prejudice is constantly amplified and supported by the use of existing proverbs. Complex social, political, and legal factors contribute to the "exploitation, denigration, and exclusion of women" [7] within societies. In gendered cultures [29], religious, legal, political, educational, and material institutions both create and reinforce expectations regarding the behavior and roles of men and women as exemplified in the two proverbs cited above. Often, expectations about how men and women should live and behave in society perpetuate fundamental distinctions rooted in patriarchal culture [30-32]. Considering the power and authority proverbs wield in our culture, these expectations fuelled by the chauvinist proverbs usually lead to conflicts and disappointments as the changing trends

of events in contemporary epochs do not chime with the proverbs.

Also, the proverb: *Agala be, xɔlɔwɔwɔ fūū wɛ be yefe ta tsi golo me*, meaning “The crab says that its unbridled friendship has caused its head to remain in its shell” this proverb springs from the proverbial crab who gives out his head to the lobster to attend an august function but the borrower refuses to bring the head back, hence his current state without head. This proverb is used to tell women to not keep friends. After all, a married woman is supposed to be her husband’s apron strings. He determines whether she goes out or not, and who she even hangs around with. On the other hand this proverb will not be used for a man in a marital advice if his wife were to raise an objection to his numerous friends. That would mean he is being controlled by the woman and the woman would then suffer all verbal vituperations for attempting to control her husband.

“nusi dadi kpɔ demo de adzɔge la avu kpɔe wowom”(what the cat sees and turns his eyes away, the dog sees and begins to bark”. In equal tangent is the proverb “nu lokpoo, mevliã atsu o.” In these contexts, a woman who expresses her concerns and worries in society is seen and metaphorically referred to as dog ‘avu’ or ‘nulokpo’ big mouthed, while the one who endures all the abuse and ill treatment of men is seen as the wise cat, loved by everyone. In Eweland, dogs are not darling pets, they are used for hunting and security purposes, while the cat is called “amekɔmenui” literally meaning what resides in the bosom of man. We adore cats, and use dogs for all the menial works, therefore if a certain woman is metaphorically compared to a dog, that connotes something detestable compared to the cat that is adored.

A cursory look at this proverbial expression: *Koklonɔ nya be enjuka na atɔkuku pe, gake li kpoo koklotsu fe glãnu kpɔm!*” (The hen knows it is morning, but she is looking up to the mouth of the cock to crow). Most of these proverbial expressions portray women as incapable of doing anything sensible or worthwhile. They show women as lazy and unwilling to make changes or cause any serious positive impacts to take place in their families and societies. They are portrayed as a gender that is always at the mercy of the man that without the man, the woman is nothing or can do nothing. For example, the proverbial claim that women lack control over their own body, thoughts, and actions are just a chauvinist society's ideologies and strategies to deliberately narrow women’s spheres of influence and power in the community. This is exemplified in the proverb, *Nyɔnu kpɔ ho medoa agblɔvu o*” (A rich woman does not own a talking drum) implying that no matter how rich a woman becomes in life, she dares not compare herself to a man nor attempt to do what a man should be seen doing. Another with similar philosophy is “*Nyɔnu medɔã avadudɔe o*” (A woman does not urinate [behave] like a man). These proverbs define the role a woman can play and therefore carry a chauvinist tone. If they are not reconstructed, Ewe women will continue to live under the weight of chauvinism. Yes, there are some Ewe proverbs that seem to talk of equality

of gender or seem to lend a little credence to the value of the woman in society but these proverbs could just pass off as mere hypocritical proverbial sayings that those who designed them never really meant the philosophy but possibly to just score a few points or achieve something parochial. A typical example is the Ewe proverb “*Enyee nɔna adũũ hafi wɔdzena tugbe*”(The presence of the gum is also required for one to be beautiful) However, the idea and the tone of the proverb as well as its unpopular presence in gender discussions disannuls any such intentions as making the woman equal to the man or attempting to recognise her contribution to society. A critical look at this proverb “*Nyɔnuã azinogoe, womeklenee kpɔna hafi jlena o*” shows how proverbs have been used to portray women as mere items to be bought and owned or possessed in the patriarchal systems of the Ewe community. The final goal of such proverbial expressions is to present women as subject to the protection of men. Women must therefore as a permanent requirement for qualifying as human, have unflinching acceptance and tolerance, and respect for male power and dominance in the environment if they want to be protected in life and or be happy.

What stands out of this discussion is that, in the Ewe society, gender roles and societal ratings are asymmetrical; women are consciously confined to the domestic sphere, do not have access to the sorts of authority, prestige, and cultural value that are the prerogatives of men. With this chauvinist imbalance in the society, the exercise of power by any woman is often seen as illegitimate, and the prestige and a sense of value of women is shaped and often limited to their association and performance with the domestic world.

4.3. Twi and Fante Proverbs and Their Patriarchal Issues

The case of Twi speakers in Ghana is not different. Although the speakers of the Twi language are predominantly Akan, and by extension are maternal in inheritance, the place of the woman in their social recognition does not differ from those of the strictly paternal ethnic groups like the Ewe and the Ga. Women who appear assertive, commanding, and excessively visionary are regarded as men and ‘unmarriageable’ [33]. The irony lies in the question: if the Akan community is as matriarchal as it is claimed, why do such women still have negative social perceptions when they put out their best and show off what they can do in public? Is the matriarchy only in relation to inheritance, or is it just a façade to deceive the masses as it is put in the proverb “*Agyabi wu a, agyabi tease dee, ye ka di daadaa awisia*”? Is the maternal inheritance mantra just an excuse for the saying that if a father dies, another father lives is just a statement to give the orphan a false hope? A plethora of proverbs exist in the Akan world particularly in Twi, a thorough reading of which would leave readers answering the above questions for themselves. The proverbs are presented in Twi, followed by their English translations, and analyses.

Twi: Obaa tɔ tuo a, ɛtwere barima dan mu. (When a woman buys a gun, it is still kept in a man's room.)

This proverb implies that no matter what power, authority, or resources a woman may acquire, they are ultimately controlled or legitimized through men. It reflects male chauvinism by reducing women's independence and emphasizing male dominance over female possessions and achievements. Proverbs of this nature have been deployed from generations to perpetuate a gender hegemony that allows men to continually dominate the woman and cow her into subordination [34]. This is further reflected in the proverb "*Enye barima ne barima na barima na okotie bese*" which translates, "*It is a man who goes out, hears news, and brings it home*". It pontificates that men are the rightful sources of knowledge, information, and wisdom, thus women are excluded from the public sphere of knowledge gathering. Chauvinism positions men as the sole intellectual and social leaders of society, while women are confined to silence. Considering *Se ɔbaa bi pue fi dan mu na ɔbehim to abɔnten a, se enye sotɔre a, na eye nkwan de*. This means *if a woman steps outside to blow her nose, it is either because her husband has slapped her or because her soup tastes good*. The trivialization of women's movement is evident in this expression, as women are represented as existing solely in relation to their husbands—either as victims of domestic violence or as providers of domestic services. Such framing reinforces chauvinistic ideology by denying women independent agency or motivations for their actions. Consequently, women are reduced to a parasitic position within gender relations, with their identities and actions defined through male authority [31].

Se mpanyimfo to nsa fre ɔbarima bi wɔ ahemfi a, se enye ne nsa a, na eye ne barima. The proverb could be translated thus: *If the elders summon a man to the palace, it is either for his fighting or his womanizing*. Implicatively, women contribute nothing to a man's life apart from headache and troubles. The proverb associates masculinity with aggression and sexual dominance, and the idea of chauvinism is evident in how the proverb normalizes violent and promiscuous behavior as defining features of manhood, while leaving women as objects or causative organisms and catalysts influencing the actions of men, especially relating to when the man is summoned to the King's palace where only serious matters are given attention. Hence, if a man is called to the palace, it is either for something good he has done or a trouble caused by his wife.

ɔbarima na ɔnom aduro a eye nwono. (It is a man who takes the bitter medicine.)

This portrays men as the ones capable of enduring hardship, difficulty, and unpleasant situations. By implication, women are seen as weak or incapable of handling challenges. Chauvinism is reflected in the idea that resilience and toughness are exclusively male traits. Consider the proverb, "*Yɛɛɛ barima a, ye se Aboagye*". There's a total misinterpretation of this proverb making the rounds in our society that degrades the name Aboagye. If not read properly, one is tempted to con-

clude that the proverb says when looking for men, do not mention Aboagye, however, sharply contrasting is the true and proper meaning of the proverb "se" in Twi means to tell, whereas "see" could be the past form of the verb "se". In the proverb, it is not "see" that is used, rather, "se", (tell/report to). Consequently, the proverb says when looking for men, tell Aboagye, report to Aboagye, or call Aboagye. This is because Aboagye is a man, not a woman, and in matters of salvation and deliverance, we call men, not women.

Efie a mmarima nnim no na mmea guare wɔ abɔnten. (When there is no man in a house, the women bathe outside.)

This proverb implies that without men, women lack protection, security, and dignity. It is a house where there are no men that women bath outside. This can extend to who steps in when difficult moments arise, when issues of decision making arise, it is men who are expected to rise to the occasion and save the situation, thus if in such moments, women are allowed to take the lead and make decisions, the men are degraded and the house classified as having no men. Chauvinism is reinforced by the notion that a household's respect and safety depend solely on men, reducing women to vulnerable dependants. When this becomes the case, women do not recognise the heights that they could go as far as they are willing to go further [7].

Se ɔbaa bɔ nkwan pa ma ne kunu a, ɔgye aseda wɔ mpa so. (When a woman cooks good soup for her husband, she gets her reward in bed.)

Here, a woman's domestic labour is only valued in relation to sexual gratification for the man. Chauvinism is highlighted in the reduction of women's work to sexual currency, thereby limiting their worth to service and intimacy. A cursory look at the great exploits of women in modern Ghanaian society where we have a woman as Vice President reveals the deep whole in some of these expressions. The essence should thus be in deconstructing all these myopia in the recognition of women for their valuable contribution to society.

Se ɔbaa woso neto kyere ne kunu a, ɔde atopa na eyi naye. (If a woman shakes her buttocks at her husband, he rewards her with sex.)

This reinforces the objectification of women and their sexuality, portraying their bodies as tools for men's pleasure. Male chauvinism is evident in how women are seen primarily as sexual objects for male desire.

Se wone wo yere reko na wowɔ bansere a, fa to wase, na se wo yere bo wo a, wabɔ wo. (If you are fighting with your wife and you have a talisman, use it; for if she beats you, you are beaten.)

The ridiculing of men who are overpowered by their wives is so pronounced, suggesting that male dominance must be maintained at all costs, even with spiritual aid. Under no circumstances should a man succumb to a woman. Unfortunately proverbs of this calibre have crept unwittingly into our body politics and education resulting in the degrading of women and the denial of their place even in classrooms where it is

taught that a man should never get behind a woman in a contest, and where she beats men, these men suffer all kinds of mockery for being overpowered by a woman. Male chauvinism here emphasizes that.

Eye mmarima na ehwe fie. (It is men who take care of the home.)

Although it may sound positive, this proverb is chauvinistic because it implies that ultimate responsibility and authority over the household belong to men, overshadowing the significant role women play in maintaining the family and home.

Fante speakers have also passed on thousands of proverbs and proverbial expressions to generations and generations in attempts to protect the patriarchal nature of their societies. It is evident that even the maternal inheritance preachers have no regards truly for the woman to talk of idolising her in their proverbs. Some of these proverbs have been analysed below

“Enye obaa na nye obarima, na obarima na nye obaa.” (It is not a woman who becomes a man, but a man who makes a woman.) This proverb sharply contrasts with the famous words of Kwegyir Aggrey, the educator who said, “Educate a man, educate an individual; educate a woman, educate a whole nation.” It appears that Aggrey's statement was an attempt to challenge the proverbial thoughts of the Fante elders, a thought pattern from the very community where he was raised. Thus, the idea is to counter their ideology, in order to establish a new consciousness that promotes the usefulness of the woman, and thus pushing parents to also prioritise the education of their daughters. It is noteworthy however, that this new philosophy has resulted in the promotion of the girl child education to the regression of the male child education and consequently we now see more women in classrooms than men. Should that be the case? Should both male and female children not get the same attention and opportunity at education? These are questions begging for answers till our conclusion.

Basia to tur a otwer banyin ne dan mu (When a woman buys gun, it is stored in a man's room)

This means men are courageous but women are not. Women are admonished to allow their men lead, in marriage, in society, at the palace, and in homes. This concept is taught and hammered, pushed down the throat of women from childhood till they grow, and it becomes the proverbial lion cub that grows to become an unsurmountable lion that devours the whole community. They develop a dependent Mentality, and relegate themselves to mere observers and passive participants of every process. Women who on the other hand attempt to do better and take initiative to rub shoulders with men, are given unsavoury names like Obaaberima (man woman) and are usually regarded as unfit for marriage, hence men avoid them like plagues.

If a man, contrarily acts like a woman, he is called “*Kojo basia*” to wit, *Kojo who is a woman*. Kojo is a name given to only male children born on Monday. Therefore to be called Kojo who is a woman is not only insulting, it is derogatory and degrading, as a man is expected to be above a woman in

all things. Therefore to be compared to a woman as a man, is a great removal of feathers rather than an addition. It is an insult for men who do house chores or show traits considered “soft.” It discourages gender role flexibility.

Obaa ye fie; obarima ye aban. (A woman is for the home; a man is for the state) distinguishes domestic roles for women versus public roles for men. It chimes with the popular belief that the woman is the home maker, thus whatever goes wrong at home is always attributable to the woman.

Obaa ye abɔfra; obarima na nye onipa (A woman is a child; a man is the real person.) This proverb diminishes women's maturity and wisdom compared to men, thereby placing the man above the woman on the social ladder merely on a scale of gender, and never by merit or the content of their character. It syncs with *Obaa ye nyere, nye ohene*. To wit, a woman is a wife, not a chief, suggesting that a woman's destiny is marriage and family, not public leadership. However, as observed earlier many women have done valiantly, thus such proverbs do not deserve a place in our corpus of discourse as important rather as necessary reconstructive targets. *Such proverbs are strongly criticized for their potential to shape judgement and influence the moral and social development of future generations* [32].

4.4. Kasem Proverbs and Sayings That Are Patriarchal in Nature

Kaane ba goe de o gwoni yuu – A woman does not kill a python and cuts off its head.

Literal Meaning: This proverb implies that women are incapable of handling difficult and dangerous tasks such as killing a python and decapitating it. Such an activity is seen as challenging and beyond the capability of a woman.

Cultural Context and Interpretation: This saying reflects the belief that women are not suited for tough decisions or tasks that require significant courage or skill, reinforcing the stereotypical concept that women are less capable.

Implications for Gender and Chauvinism: This proverb perpetuates the idea that women are inherently less decisive and weaker than men, a perception that accounts for the limited roles women play in society. It also highlights the persistent undervaluing of women's capabilities, especially in contexts and situations requiring toughness or high-stakes decision-making.

Kaane ye gaao woŋo mo - A woman is a bush thing or something belonging to the bush.

Literal Meaning: This proverb implies that women are not a part of their biological society. They are not regarded as permanent members of their families.

Cultural Context and Interpretation: In many traditional societies, women were often seen as temporary members of their father's household, as they would eventually marry and move to another family. This saying reflects that perception, suggesting that women are not truly part of their natal family in the long term.

Implications for Gender and Chauvinism: This saying diminishes the value of women by equating them to something unimportant in their own society, reinforcing the idea that women do not have a permanent, valued place in their original families. It highlights the marginalization of women in traditional contexts, showing how their roles were often undervalued and viewed as temporary [33].

Kaane ba tei tega - A woman does not have a share in land ownership.

Literal Meaning: This implies that women are not entitled to inherit land or have ownership rights over land in their family estate.

Cultural Context and Interpretation: In many traditional societies, land is a primary form of wealth and power and in the Kasena traditional society, men are typically the ones who have the right to inherit and control land, while women are excluded from these rights, reflecting a patriarchal system that views women as dependents.

Implications for Gender and Chauvinism: This saying underscores the idea that women are not considered equals in the sphere of wealth and property. It reflects a systemic undervaluation of women's contributions and rights. This saying also highlights how women are systematically excluded from economic empowerment and reinforces gender inequality.

Kaane ba di chworo - A woman does not eat chicken.

Literal Meaning: This saying suggests that a woman is prohibited from eating chicken.

Cultural Context and Interpretation: Because chickens are easy to catch and are commonly found around homes, the belief was that if a woman ate chicken, it would imply she had easy access and could potentially deplete the poultry stock of the family especially when she is left unchecked. Chickens are domestic birds which are usually reared within the compound where the woman does most of her household chores throughout the day.

Kasena society permits women to consume the guinea fowl, a strong, very swift bird difficult to catch. The difficulty in catching guinea fowl made it a reasonable alternative acceptable to Kasena as a source of meat for their women.

Implications for Gender and Chauvinism: The saying reflects a patriarchal mindset that sought to control women's access to resources and reinforce male dominance in the household. This statement though lacking in content as a proverb in the strict sense, highlights a subtle form of gender bias that has lingered through time. Proverbs that are used to perpetuate such inhumanity against women can evolve over time, through the concerted efforts of the elites [24].

Kakwea yuu lwoi - The head of the eldest wife smells.

Literal Meaning: This proverb implies that the eldest wife's status or position is less favorable, akin to something unpleasant.

Cultural Context and Interpretation: In traditional settings, a man's first wife often held a lower status compared to the younger, second wife. This saying reflects the societal norm that the elder wife, despite her seniority, could be treated as

less desirable or less favored by her husband. Certainly, she has lived with the man for a longer time than the second or younger wife and obviously, familiarity breeds contempt.

Implications for Gender and Chauvinism: This saying underscores the patriarchal tendency to devalue and sideline women who are older or have been in a marriage longer. It highlights the societal preference for youth and the marginalization of older women. This proverb serves as a lens into the gender dynamics of the past, illustrating how older women were often overlooked or undervalued.

Kaane de bu ye bedwe mo - A woman and a child are the same

Literal Meaning: This statement implies that a woman's level of wisdom or intelligence is equivalent to that of a child.

Cultural Context and Interpretation: This saying reflects a patriarchal mindset that views women as less capable of rational thought and wisdom, comparing them to children who are often perceived as naive or impressionable. It suggests that women are not to be taken seriously in matters of intellect or important decision-making.

Implications for Gender and Chauvinism: This saying reinforces gender stereotypes that undermine women's intellectual abilities and discourage them from participating in serious or meaningful discussions. This saying highlights the subtle yet pervasive ways in which language can perpetuate gender inequality, treating women as intellectually inferior to men.

Kafena kalo na gabe kakwea to mo gabe kabia - The whip that lashes the senior wife also lashes the junior wife.

Literal Meaning: This proverb suggests that the same punishment or hardship that one woman experiences will eventually befall the other.

Cultural Context and Interpretation: In Kasena traditional polygamous settings, the elder wife often faced certain hardships or disadvantages, and the saying warns the younger wife that she is not exempt from these difficulties. It highlights the idea that no matter the status or the time of joining the marriage, she would eventually experience the hardships and bitter experiences her senior counterpart passed through.

Implications for Gender and Chauvinism: Usually children, in African societies and for that matter, Kasena society are usually disciplined through the use of the whip. To say "the whip that lashes the ...woman" in the first place is an unfortunate debasement of the humanity of womanhood. What can be done to a child can be done to a woman. Since women are considered as men's property, some men tend to beat their wives with whips when they displease them. The saying shows how women whether young or old are considered lesser beings that needed to be "disciplined with a whip". The saying also reflects a system where women, regardless of their position, are subjected to the same struggles and injustices, emphasizing a lack of individual protection or privilege. This proverb serves as a reminder that the challenges faced by one woman in a polygamous marriage are also faced by the others, reinforcing the idea of shared hardship and the devaluing of

the female gender. Must women be useful only when the going gets tough? Why do women have to be left unrecognised even though they give so much to society? Obviously our women are given the most difficult tasks, yet given peanuts in recognition of their efforts [31].

Bukɔ bu ye tampiri mo – An unmarried woman's child is a bastard.

Literal Meaning: This proverb implies that a child born outside wedlock is an embarrassment to the society and a woman who does that is considered as a disgrace to her family. That child is considered illegitimate and is socially stigmatized. Kasena society usually calls him/her a bastard. The same cannot be said of an unmarried man in that society who gets a child with an unmarried woman.

Cultural Context and Interpretation: In traditional Kasena culture, women were often viewed as extensions of their husbands' families, and their children are seen as part of the husband's lineage. If a woman is not married, her child has no official status and is considered illegitimate, regardless of the father's identity.

Implications for Gender and Chauvinism: This saying highlights the double standard in how society treats women and their children. Men who father children outside of marriage are not stigmatized in the same way, and their children are recognized, while women and their children face societal exclusion. This saying exemplifies how deeply gender bias is ingrained in cultural norms, with adherents treating women and their children as lesser than human beings.

Buko na wo choge sɔɔɔ, o bu jwa wo choge sɔɔɔ - If a daughter doesn't destroy a household, her child someday will.

Literal Meaning: This proverb suggests that an unmarried daughter, by virtue of being a woman, is inherently likely to bring some form of destruction or misfortune to her household, either directly or through her offspring.

Cultural Context and Interpretation: This saying reflects a deeply rooted belief that women are somehow a source of trouble or instability within a family. The blame is often placed on women for any potential discord irrespective of the complexities of family dynamics.

Implications for Gender and Chauvinism: This proverb exemplifies how women are unfairly held responsible for any negative outcomes within a household, reinforcing the stereotype that women are a source of instability. This saying underscores the pervasive notion that women are inherently linked to negative outcomes.

Kaane vɔɔ Nabila na yɔ ya siiri kaane ba swa jega – If the leaves at the end of the leafy-tail worn by the woman falls off or drops, she has no sense. (A song)

Literal Meaning: This proverb suggests that if the leaves a woman uses as a covering or an object of modesty and protection fall off, it implies that she has lost her sense or wisdom.

Cultural Context and Interpretation: In the traditional Kasena culture, women are often seen as less intelligent or less capable from the start. The proverb metaphorically suggests that as women grow older, they are perceived to lose whatever

little sense they had, similar to how leaves lose their beauty and quality as they grow, dry up and fall off and wither.

Implications for Gender and Chauvinism: This saying reflects a deeply entrenched belief that women's intellect and worth diminish with age, reinforcing the idea that they are less valued than men. It also shows how cultural attitudes have long undermined women's perceived capabilities. This proverb is a poignant example of how traditional beliefs have perpetuated gender stereotypes, portraying women as lacking wisdom and capability as they age.

Kapwogo diga toe tipwoɔa ne mo - It is in the dry season that the house of the dirty woman falls.

Literal Meaning: This means that a house that is not well-maintained, particularly by the woman in charge of it, is more likely to collapse during the dry season.

Cultural Context and Interpretation: In traditional Kasena culture, the upkeep of the household often fell on the woman. The proverb implies that if a woman is negligent or not diligent in maintaining the home, it will suffer when the dry season comes, which is a time of vulnerability for structures and the environment.

Implications for Gender and Chauvinism: This proverb places the responsibility for the household's stability on the woman, implying that if anything goes wrong, it is her fault. It subtly reinforces the stereotype that women are primarily responsible for the home's welfare and upkeep, and if the home fails, it is because of her negligence. This proverb is another example of how Kasena traditional proverbs reinforces gender imbalance often portraying the woman as the underdog in various spheres of life in the society. *Beyond its unfairness to women, this form of representation exposes a gendered injustice that would not be tolerated were men placed in a similar position* [33].

5. Findings and Conclusions Drawn on the Study

What is noteworthy here is that among Ghanaians are majorly patriarchal in upbringing. Thus principal among the findings of this paper on chauvinism in Ghanaian Paremiology is that the speakers of Kasena, Twi, Fante, and Ewe languages indulge proverbs about women to systematically perpetuate domination, inferiorization, exploitation, pathologization, infantilization, and exclusion of women.

It is heart-breaking the scorns staged against women which has been amplified by these proverbs. What then is the effect of these chauvinist proverbs on the lives of the African woman, and by more specificity, the Ghanaian women? The promotion of chauvinist proverbial expression leads to a continuous decline of women empowerment and access to education which by extension affects children of all gender since the children spend more time with their mothers which also is a repercussive reception of the same chauvinist proverbial expressions.

Chauvinist proverbial expressions have been identified as

contributing to various forms of social and cultural impoverishment within African societies. Every progressive society measures its success by indicative signals, and one of these key indicators is by assessing the progress it makes in empowering its women to be able to own their own bodies and be responsible for their financial livelihood, but chauvinists would have none of that. Chauvinism retrogresses nations in terms of education, law, healthcare, economics, participation in law enforcement, the military and security sectors of nations, and many other key indicators of a nation's progress.

Is there a way forward in the reconstruction of the portrayal of women in negative lights by our proverbial expressions? As much as we have established the relevance and power of proverbs in the African culture, it is also important to recognize that some of these proverbs reinforce oppressive and unequal treatment of women, limiting their potential and perpetuating societal injustices, hence have to be relooked at and discouraged in order to prevent the chauvinist ideologies from being passed on to future generations. It must be of prime interest to all stakeholders to encourage all others to break free from these archaic beliefs and work towards fostering gender equity, equality, respect, and empowerment. Gender equity and equality that is neither male nor female biased.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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