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**PROVERBS VISA AVIS GENDER STEREOTYPE AMONG THE
KUMAM SPEAKING PEOPLE**

BY

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DECLARATION

This study entitled "Proverbs Visa Avis Gender Stereotype Among The Kumam Speaking People" is my work and has never been presented before in any other university and/or any other institutions of higher learning for the award of any academic pursuits or for any other purpose, save for the citations and references made to enrich this study.

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APPROVAL

This dissertation has been submitted with my approval as the supervisor for this study.

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my very beloved father Mr. Michael Eyobu, My dearest mother Melinda Nabwire, and our family. May God continue loving us.

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This research goes to my friends Lucas Wentworth, Mr. Bill Bolan, Noelle&Caleb Richter and Thomas. I am so moved for their love for African literature.

I also dedicate this to all feminists, human rights activists and lovers of justice in all capacities.

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CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction to the Study.

This study seeks to investigate the perpetuation of gender inequities and inequalities by proverbs in the Kumam society of Eastern Uganda.

The study also aims at documenting and interrogating gendered proverbs and how they can be used to alter the status quo to promote gender equality.

1.1 Background to the Study

Among the Kumam, men are viewed as strong, intelligent, and possessing leadership traits and competencies to provide basic needs for their families. As is typical of patriarchal societies, men are the heads of the family and are thus expected to play dominant and leading roles. They are expected to exert authority. This provides members of the community with “a shared understanding of what it means to be a man: what one looks like, how one should behave and so forth”. Proverbs are used to entrench most of this information and as well stereotype aspects that may go against interests. The function of proverbs in some African societies is so fundamental that no negotiations can take place without them (Knappert 6). Therefore, the gender stereotypes in proverbs bias any judgement before any form of justice is realized in a patriarchal society. (Durkheim 170) defines the proverb as “a condensed statement of a collective idea or sentiment relative to a determined category of objects”. This is because proverbs represent the collective set of wisdom embedded in a particular society. This wisdom is thus used to suit various interests of particulars in that society. For example, chauvinists and their quest for power at the expense of women.

Proverbial stereotype affects gender socialization to an extent that women often embrace their counterparts as superior. This argument may not be valid in circumstances in which women do not marry the father of children. These women tend to work hard and cater to all their bills and livelihood. Linguistic traditional resources express unique sacred information. (Ado-Fening) In such an argument, therefore, such resources require total conformity rather than interrogation. The Kumam society thus spiritualizes the gender stereotypes by crafting them in proverbs and creating a notion that the message in these proverbs is holy and gospel truth. According to (Ssetuba 5). A proverb is a noble genre of African oral literature that enjoys the prestige of

people's wisdom and philosophy of life. The gender conceptions in proverbs form a system of gender hegemony that supports masculine superiority and feminine subordination (Anderson 10). Proverbs in the Kumam culture demonstrate a deeply entrenched patriarchal gender stereotype and the subordination of women in the Kumam social organization. The glorification of men in these proverbs keeps women's efforts low and unrecognized however great and enormous. Therefore, women work behind the faces of the men and all credits go to the men. Society through proverbs depicts women as objects but not subjects. Through some proverbial objectifications, proverbs depict women as sex objects meant to only certify men.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Gender stereotypes are the root cause of the growing cases of domestic violence in Kumam society. Given the nature of proverbs in African settings as supreme truths, changing people's mindsets towards them is a very big contest. People accept these proverbs by their attitude. Thus, it is unseemly to call into question the proverb and its tenets. To do so would appear to amount to challenging of the wise ancestors, an act not only in arrogance but also in itself a sacrilege. (Awedoba 34).

Therefore, calling off this would take much more than contesting people's attitudes but also their traditional doctrines.

One of the main focuses of the research is stimulating gender equality to solve the challenges of domestic violence, sex-based social segregation caused by gender stereotyping in proverbs of the Kumam.

1.2 Research Questions

- 1) What are the different gender stereotypes in the Kumam Society?
- 2) How are men stereotyped in the Kumam society?
- 3) How do proverbs affect the position of women in the Kumam Society?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General objectives of the study

This study seeks to investigate the perpetuation of gender inequities and inequalities by proverbs in Kumam society of Eastern Uganda.

Specific Objectives

This study seeks to investigate the various stereotypes on women.

The study also seeks to investigate the effect of proverbs gender social stratification.

1.4 Significance

Through the comprehensive study on proverbs visa avis of gender stereotype among the Kumam speaking people, aspects of gender inequality, domestic violence, and sexual bigotry in proverbs will be unraveled, scrutinized, and accorded solutions. The gender inequalities embedded in the gender-stereotyped proverbs of the Kumam are grossly accountable for the sex-based disparities that have rendered women mere properties of the men and considering them lesser members of society or the weaker sex, yet if given chance, they excel in societal duties than their counterparts.

This research intends to increase public understanding of gender stereotypes in proverbs and how they stimulate disharmony between sexes. The research will dissuade people from believing the misconception embedded in the gender-stereotyped proverbs that deem women inferior.

The research will give women the impetus to exploit their potential in changing and impacting society by learning their true selves without male bigotry.

This research would benefit feminists on how best they would dislodge patriarchy and male chauvinism that has bred domestic violence and segregation of women in sectors of society.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Literature Review

This section reviews some of the work done by various researchers in relation to proverbs vis a vis gender stereotypes through numerous publications.

One of the major tenets of the concept of hegemonic masculinity is legitimizing “the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (Schippers 94). The wisdom in proverbs as understood in them is beyond incarnate discourse and often deemed holy. (Chinwe 96) argues that the abstract nature of proverbs makes them special art for sages as there is usually no one-to-one correspondence between form and meaning. A person is adjudged wise or foolish by the aptness of the proverbs he/she uses.

(Wang150) believes that proverbs are small pieces of human wisdom that have been handed down from generation to generation. In order not to transfer this unequal and biased wisdom to the future generations, the society has to undergo a revolution of reforming the language. Persian is not except and should be reformed to improve its inequality and bias against women

(Orwenjo and Ocheng 125) agree that the community easily accepts the truth, values in proverbs, appreciates them and identifies with them. Women thus suffer the stereotype with the assumption that their fate is unchallengeable. The gender stereotypes in these proverbs easily adopted and widely accepted even among those that are stereotyped especially the women. In the sense you find some women convinced with the proverbial stereotypes and also use such proverbs in their social life.

The proverbs encoding allocation of social power and privilege seem to assign to men more power and more rationality as against women, who are placed in powerless positions, and seen as foolish, more emotional, and more talkative. (Chinwe 115) A woman despite perceived weakness is supposed to be very hard working. Her role as a farmhand is crucial in the sustenance of the husband and family but this is never recognized in the language of proverbs.

(Ssetuba, 8) The stereotypes against women are a mere cover-up of their hard work. In the Kumam society, women do most of the hard work, digging, fetching water, and childbearing. In

most cases, men wake up to the drinking places as women and children head to the farm. (Spender, 1980) Men define the language, rendering women incapable of influencing the linguistic process as men use it to perpetuate their authority and interests, thus denying women power. The power that men possess over women is none physical but exists in various stereotypes of literature. This power wielded by men is neither “an agency nor a structure” (Foucault 63).

Yet in an actual sense, the women do most of the work as the men take the credit upon themselves. women’s efforts are all overridden by men. This is not much different from the Kumam because of the shared notion and stereotypes embedded in proverbs depicting them as less intelligent and imprudent. (Chinwe 98) These stereotypes polarize female-male attributes along subordinate-dominant binaries. In as much as this work sees such binary stereotypic definitions of male-female attributes, the ones identified are not so much associated with speech styles of the sexes as with linguistic representations relating to the use of proverbs in African culture and how these proverbs tend to set limits to gender performance.

(Salami 27) says patriarchy or male superiority complex has played a major role in the formulation of many African proverbs. They are commonly used in Africa to construct feminine identities, perpetuating the subordination of women to men. Phallogocentric undertones are evident in these proverbs and they also attempt to position women as lower than men. The African belief that men are superior to women influences the construction of these proverbs. (Salami 37) Proverbs enunciates a very pathetic aspect of the women or wives in a harem. The husband is metaphorically referred to as the home leopard. When he rejects or divorces a wife, as a mark of respect, no other citizen will dare marry or have an affair with the woman.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Research Methodology

This focused on all the age groups and genders to get relevant and diverse opinions. Specifically, emphasis was put on proverbs that glorified gender stereotyping and for these, we asked for individual perceptions towards them. Otherwise, there are so many proverbs of the Kumam but some were ignored due to the focus of this paper. For example, in some of the proverbs, the message embedded was not a gender-related stereotype but a profiling of poor and disabled persons.

With the majority of elderly in this area being illiterate and unable to write, I find interviewing a better mode of data collection that would not expose them to writing as this may deny me feedback. The participants in this research were selected by **Non-Probability Sampling** as a format that would give me convenience by random selection in a way that allows me to collect data easily.

3.1.0 Data Sources

Data sources of this research have grouped into primary and secondary.

A Primary Data Source; some of the data is collected from the original data source which involved field research of itinerant and interaction with Kumam speaking communities and once in a while reached through technological gadgets like phones for interviews and attending local meetings for observation.

Secondary Data Source in this in this research refers to the existing data sources that were used to compile the data used in this research. sources of secondary data used in this research include; various published books and research websites.

3.1.1 Problems Encountered

Data collection was a very expensive stage of this research, this involved cost of transport to the field of research which. This was not done on a single day thus making the research financially expensive. Focus groups demanded attendance allowances and transport refunds which was financially burdening.

There was a possibility of imaginary data from respondents which at times was abstract and irrelevant to my research and thus ended up wasting a lot of time most especially from the elders that took pride in the stereotyping the female sex.

While in the field, I faced a problem of language barrier and to overcome this I hired a translator to hire one of the locals as my translator.

3.1.2 Methods of Data Collection

Interview; This was carried out by interviewing focus groups regardless of sex and individuals from diverse age groups are to participate. These ages are a priority because they give a diverse opinion on various topics. The proverbs were gathered in the indigenous Kumam Language but translated to English. In this research, we often reached out to the various selected groups like the married and unmarried women and men of various ages to get their views on the proverbs as they also helped us list some of the proverbs that are gender stereotyped and could help us in this research.

Telephones; In gathering the data used in this research, we also used telephones to reach out to particular individuals who would provide crucial information for the success of this research.

Observation; Observation in this research was employed during the field study, this involved attending of public gatherings in the Kumam region in order to critically observe the use of proverbs and how they are a stereotype.

Use of existing data sources basing on already works of various authors helped this research a milestone. Published books, articles on various websites by various scholars have so much enriched this research.

Below are some of these websites;

- Google Scholar
- Research Gate
- Lycos
- Yahoo
- Jstor.org

3.1.3 Methods of Data Analysis

There are majorly two forms of data analysis used in this research. In this research the **Qualitative method** of data analysis was to analyze the data gathered in the field during this research.

Inferential Analysis is a form of data analysis that was used to analyze data in this research. I compared the differences between the data collected and the known facts. For example, according to numerous Kumam proverbs, the women are projected as lazy, weak, and imprudent. But the known facts speak otherwise since the women do all the hard labor and work day in and out.

3.4 Data Analysis

Proverbs are used to entrench most of this information and as well stereotype aspects that may go against interests. (Orwenjo and Ocheng 125) agrees that the community easily accepts the truth, values in proverbs, appreciates them and identifies with them. A Kumam proverb, ***“Icuwo anyap Dako”*** which literally means a *‘lazy man is a woman.’* is one of the proverbs commonly used to entrench the thought that women are lazy and no one should emulate them. This is practically false. Women work day in out while men work less or not. Men craft language and stereotype in defense of their lesser role while preserving a soft base for their malice. These stereotyped proverbs have kept the society of the Kumam highly patriarchal and kept sexes at conflict yielding domestic violence.

The second proverb in our data records is *“Dako lya Chamo kede Ichuwo”*. This means that Women don't eat with men. Like any other patriarchal society, men feel exceptional at home. Having a meal together as a family is a symbol of love and unity. The gendered stereotypes in marriage seem only to interest in sexual tension.

The Kumam treasure patriarchy in sense that their language will entirely point at glorifying male chauvinism. No credit is attributed to the woman even when her deeds are done in broad day light. Analytically the man is the laziest member of the family who wakes up to disguise with a few duties but later leave them to the woman. The woman does the horse's work and does that all day as the man retreats to drinking place. Since a woman's position at home is always business, she finds less time for discussion as men do around drinking places giving them in

upper arm in the concoction of proverbs that are used in day today conversations. It is these conversations in which men create proverbs that are highly patriarchal and segregate women roles in society. In the Kumam public gatherings, it is observed that some women that attain a chance to speak amidst men, are led into using gendered proverbs that are a stereotype against themselves. This drives us to the angle that these genders look at the world. (Mohammed 2) says that Women often think in terms of closeness and support, and struggle to preserve intimacy while Men are concerned with status and tend to focus more on independence. Therefore, language and proverbs are a simpler way that men can win this struggle and have highly exploited the avenues to their best to an extend that women have taken time to think otherwise. These are coaxed into the certainty that one must be a man in order to be powerful or hardworking. The patriarchal dominance of language through proverbs is superlative of this society.

APPENDIX

A Table of Some Gender Stereotyped Proverbs and their Translations to English;

ENGLISH	KUMAM
1. A lazy man is a woman	Icuwo anyap Dako
2. Women don't eat with men	Dako lya Chamo kede Ichuwo
3. Rich women are men	Dako obaro obedo chuwo
4. Work like a man	Tiyi bala ichuwo
5. A woman is like a bird; we use sorghum to lure her	Dako tye bala winyo; osupe kede bel.
6. A woman's beauty doesn't build a home.	Chilo me deko lya gero pakyo
7. A man's shabbiness replicates his wife	Dako ena chilo ikyuwo.
8. A man is like a sorghum grain, he will grow wherever he falls	Ichuwo tyebala nyige me bel, etuyi ka me 'poto.
9. A woman's no is a yes.	Ame dako odagi, ebedo di eyeyi
10 Whatever is sweet for a woman brings cry.	Dako kok igiyamit
11 A woman thinks like a Child	Dako paro bala atin

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