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Discursive Constructions of Power Dynamics in Gendered Proverbs in African Socio-Cultural Context

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Abstract

*This paper examines the discursive constructions of power dynamics in the gendered proverbs of the Ezikegba socio-cultural context, with a focus on role assignments and power negotiations. Using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, the study analyzes the language and power relations embedded in a selected set of proverbs, exploring how gender roles are both reflected and constructed through language. The analysis categorizes and interprets the key themes in these proverbs, offering insights into how linguistic structures reinforce or challenge societal norms. The literature review provides an overview of seminal works on power dynamics in gendered proverbs, specifically within the framework of the **dominance approach** and other gender and language theories. The study critically engages with these perspectives, assessing whether the proverbs align with or dispute the conclusions drawn in prior scholarship on gendered language. The findings suggest that the proverbs reflect traditional gender hierarchies but also highlight instances of subtle resistance and negotiation, where women exercise agency within the confines of their socially prescribed roles. This analysis contributes to the broader discourse on language and gender, offering a nuanced understanding of how proverbs function as discursive tools that both reinforce and contest established gender dynamics.*

Keywords: CDA, Ezikegba Igbo, Gendered proverbs, Power dynamics, Socio-cultural context

Introduction

The relationship between language and power has been a central focus in studies of gender and discourse. Language not only reflects societal norms but also plays a pivotal role in shaping and reinforcing those norms. In the context of gender, proverbs serve as a potent linguistic tool that encodes cultural values, ideologies, and power relations. Proverbs, as a form of everyday language, carry deep-rooted meanings that often reflect the collective wisdom, norms, and expectations of a society. Within patriarchal structures, such as those in many African societies, gendered proverbs reveal underlying power dynamics between men and women, often reinforcing traditional gender roles and hierarchies. This paper seeks to examine how the proverbs of the Ezikegba socio-cultural context in southeast Nigeria are utilized in constructing and negotiating role assignments and gendered power dynamics. By utilising Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, the study explores the linguistic structures and discursive practices embedded in these proverbs, and how they reflect broader socio-cultural values. Fairclough's model emphasises the interconnectedness of language, society, and

power, making it an appropriate framework for analyzing how proverbs both sustain and challenge gender norms.

The purpose of this study is to analyse the discursive construction of power dynamics in Ezikeoba Igbo gendered proverbs, focusing on how these proverbs articulate role assignments and power negotiations between men and women. Through a detailed examination of selected proverbs, this paper (i) identifies and categorizes key themes related to gender and power in the proverbs; (ii) analyses how the proverbs reflect or challenge gender norms and power structures using Fairclough's CDA framework, which includes textual analysis, discursive practices, and socio-cultural context; (iii) assesses the extent to which these proverbs reinforce or challenge the conclusions drawn from the dominance approach and other theories in language and gender scholarship. This study adopts Fairclough's CDA approach, which examines the relationship between language, power, and society at three levels: textual, discursive, and socio-cultural.

Despite the significant body of work on **gendered language and power dynamics**, particularly within African socio-cultural contexts, there remains a notable gap in the specific examination of **gendered proverbs in the Ezikeoba Igbo socio-cultural context** through the lens of **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**. Existing studies on African proverbs have largely focused on the **symbolic representations** of gender roles, often emphasizing how proverbs reflect **patriarchal values** and reinforce **traditional power hierarchies**. However, few studies have employed a **CDA framework**, particularly **Fairclough's model**, to investigate how these proverbs actively construct, negotiate, or challenge gendered power relations at **textual, discursive, and socio-cultural levels**.

The paper is organised into several sections. Following this introduction, a review of relevant literature on gender, power, and proverbs is provided. The subsequent sections present the analysis of selected Ezikeoba proverbs, categorizing the themes and exploring their discursive construction of gendered power relations. The findings are discussed in relation to existing theories of gender and language, particularly the dominance approach. The conclusion summarizes the key insights gained from the study and suggests areas for further research. By providing a critical analysis of gendered proverbs in the Ezikeoba context, this study promises to contribute to the broader understanding of how language reflects, constructs, and negotiates power and gender roles, especially within traditional African settings. Through this lens, we can better understand the interplay of language, culture, and power, and how proverbs function as tools of both social control and subtle resistance.

Overview of Literature

The literature on gendered proverbs reveals profound insights into how societies across the world use language to reflect and enforce gender roles, often reinforcing existing power structures. This overview categorizes these works by regions to highlight the socio-cultural specificities of gender representations, and thereafter identifies the gaps, which the present study seeks to address. Proverbs, as culturally significant linguistic artifacts, play a critical role in transmitting societal norms, values, and expectations. Across various cultures, proverbs have been studied

extensively for their embedded **gendered role assignments** and **power dynamics**, reflecting the social constructions of masculinity and femininity. This overview synthesizes research across global cultures, revealing common patterns and cultural specificities in how gender roles and power relations are articulated through proverbial discourse.

In different socio-cultural contexts of Africa, proverbs often reflect gender inequalities enacted basically by **patriarchal structures**, where men are positioned as dominant figures and women as subordinate. In many African societies, proverbs serve as tools for **socializing gender roles**, especially regarding women's duties in the family, their social expectations, and their interactions with men (cf. Hussein, 2005; Adesida, 2007; Balogun, 2010; Mpungose, 2010; Ncube & Moyo, 2011; Alhassan, 2012; Asimeng-Boahene, 2013; Diabah & Appiah-Amfo, 2015; Nisrane & Tizazu, 2019; Lomotey & Chachu, 2020; Aragbuwa & Adebayo, 2022; Temitope, 2023).

In the Middle East and wider Asian contexts, there exists a rich tradition of using proverbs to reflect cultural values, many of which place men in positions of power and authority over women. Proverbs in Arab societies often emphasise the importance of **family honour** and the **preservation of male authority**. For example, "A woman's honour is like a matchstick, it can only be lit once" reinforces the notion of **female chastity** and the fragility of a woman's reputation, while placing the **burden of honour** entirely on women. These proverbs reflect **traditional gender roles** where men are seen as **protectors** and **decision-makers**, while women's worth is closely tied to their **sexual purity** and **obedience** to male authority. Most often, women are frequently represented as weak or emotionally unstable compared to men. The proverbs reinforce traditional gender roles where men are positioned as leaders and decision-makers, and women are expected to follow. This gendered portrayal reflects broader societal norms that limit women's autonomy in decision-making processes (cf. Ambu-Saidi, 2010; Rasul, 2015; Khan, Sultana, & Naz, 2015; Khan, 2018; Sagheer & Zubair, 2020; Pervaz, Azher, Abbas, & Saeed, 2021; Rubab, Sadia, & Ajmal, 2022; Rubab, Sadia, & Ajmal, 2022; Altohami, 2023).

Across European and American contexts, gendered proverbs serve as potent linguistic tools that reflect and reinforce societal expectations and norms surrounding gender roles. From the English-speaking world to Eastern Europe and Nepal, proverbs historically have played a significant role in shaping the cultural narrative of women's subordination, confining them to the domestic sphere and limiting their autonomy. However, contemporary movements, particularly feminist critiques, have begun to challenge these traditional expressions. Through the use of anti-proverbs, reinterpretations, and proverbial rhetoric, women's rights advocates have sought to reclaim these cultural artifacts, turning them into vehicles for empowerment and gender equality. Several salient points characterize and potentially distinguish the set of proverbs from European, American, and Nepalese contexts from those analysed in earlier sections, including but not limited to the following: reclamation of proverbial language, anti-proverbs as a tool for resistance, proverbs in artistic expression, evolving gender roles in western proverbs, challenging patriarchy with modern discourse, comparative use of proverbs to subordinate women, cross-cultural comparisons of gendered proverbs, and proverbs as ideological weapons (cf. Kerschen, 1998; Kuusi, 1994; Litovkina, 2019;

Wubie, Mekonen, Tegegne, 2022; Prahlad, 2004; Bishwarkarma, 2020). The proverbs are marked out by their evolving nature and involvement in feminist movements that reclaim and resist patriarchal ideology. While many still perpetuate traditional gender roles, feminist activism, the use of anti-proverbs, and integration into feminist art differentiate them from the more rigid and culturally static gender roles often upheld in African and Asian proverbs.

The literature review reveals that while there is substantial global research on the role assignments and power dynamics in gendered proverbs, particularly in African, Asian, European, and Middle Eastern cultures, there is a notable lack of focused scholarly attention on the Ezikeoba Igbo socio-cultural context. The existing studies on African proverbs primarily emphasise patriarchal structures in major ethnic groups like the Akan and Yoruba, but they often generalize gender roles without addressing the nuanced regional variations within smaller communities like the Ezikeoba Igbo. The gap this study seeks to fill is the lack of specific analysis on how gender roles and power negotiations are discursively constructed in the proverbs of the Ezikeoba Igbo people. This research aims to provide a detailed Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of these proverbs, exploring how they reflect gendered power dynamics, with a focus on the intersection of role assignments, discursive practices, and sociocultural expectations. It will also assess whether these proverbs conform to, challenge, or complicate the conclusions of dominance theories and other gender discourse frameworks that have traditionally been applied to African proverbs.

Methodology

The study adopted a **qualitative research design**, focusing on the collection, analysis, and interpretation of gendered proverbs within the Ezikeoba Igbo socio-cultural context. The qualitative approach was ideal for uncovering the clear culturally embedded meanings of proverbs and their impact on power dynamics and gender relations. The approach allowed for an in-depth analysis of the social and cultural meanings of proverbs, particularly in how they convey gendered power relations. This approach enabled the study to focus on the **contextual** and **subjective experiences** of individuals within the Ezikeoba Igbo community. The qualitative design also emphasises the **descriptive** and **interpretative** nature of language, making it ideal for examining proverbs, which are often symbolic and metaphorical. Ethnographic methods—participant observation, structured interviews, and focus group discussions—were employed to gather first-hand data on the **social context** in which proverbs are used and understood. This is crucial because proverbs do not exist in isolation; they are deeply embedded in cultural practices, social norms, and everyday conversations. By engaging directly with the Ezikeoba Igbo community, the study probed into the **oral tradition** of proverb usage to gain insights into how these sayings are applied in social interactions, ceremonies, and gender-based activities.

As an analytic technique, Fairclough's perspective of CDA was adopted. To this effect, Fairclough's CDA framework consists of three interrelated dimensions that will guide the analysis of proverbs in this study: textual analysis – description (lexical choices, metaphorical and syntactic structures); discursive practices –

interpretation (context of use, patterns of usage, intertextuality); social practice – explanation (historical context, cultural ideologies, power structures, social change).

Data Analysis and Discussions

Data

In this subsection, we present an analysis of selected proverbs from the broader corpus of 33 proverbs collected from the Ezikeoba Igbo cultural context. Out of the total proverbs, 24 were identified as reinforcing male dominance, while 9 challenged this norm. For a deeper examination, we have selected a sample of two proverbs from each category, those that support traditional gender hierarchies and those that contest them. By applying Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), we analyse the linguistic features, social practices, and power relations embedded in these proverbs. This approach allows us to unveil the underlying ideologies that inform gender roles within the Ezikeoba Igbo socio-cultural context and understand how these proverbs contribute to the broader discourse on gender equality and power dynamics.

Analysis

In analysing linguistic data, Fairclough's (1989) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework offers a comprehensive approach that emphasises the interplay between language, power, and society. CDA examines how discourse reflects and perpetuates social power structures, focusing on the relationship between language use and social practices. Fairclough's model operates across three dimensions: **textual analysis (micro-level)** – examines the linguistic features of a text, including its syntax, lexis, metaphors, and rhetorical structures to uncover how language choices contribute to the meanings conveyed and how these choices subtly reflect underlying power dynamics; **discursive practices (meso-level)** – focuses on the processes of producing, interpreting, and distributing the text within its specific context, and how the text is shaped by its social function, the actors involved in its creation, and the institutional contexts that guide its interpretation; **social practices (macro-level)** – situates the text within broader societal structures, analyzing how discourse shapes and is shaped by social norms, power relations, and ideologies; explores how language contributes to the perpetuation of hegemony, where dominant ideologies become ingrained and influence societal behaviours and thought processes.

In applying this three-dimensional framework to discourse, this work sets out to explore how texts not only reflect but also challenge social power structures, uncovering the subtle ways in which language reinforces or contests dominant ideologies. Through this lens, the upcoming analysis will examine how specific proverbs function within the cultural context, shedding light on the discursive strategies at play and their broader social implications.

Kẹ ọonye ne-enwu n'agada nẹ ọ nàgà enwu n'ẹkpuru ẹnya. (A woman can afford to have reddish groins; yet, she is incapable of having reddish eyes.)

Using Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model, this analysis examines how this proverb reflects gendered power dynamics in the Ezikeoba Igbo socio-cultural context across the three levels: micro (textual analysis),

meso (discursive practices), and macro (social practices). The micro-level analysis focuses on the linguistic and structural features of the proverb to uncover how power and gender dynamics are constructed. The proverb contrasts two physical characteristics: *reddish groins* (a metaphor for sexual activity or fertility) and *reddish eyes* (which symbolize anger, masculine power of confrontation, or emotional intensity). The proverb asserts that a woman may *afford* to have a reddish groin (suggesting that sexual activity or fertility is a domain where women hold power or agency), but she is *incapable* of having reddish eyes (symbolizing the suppression of her emotional or confrontational power). The use of the words *afford* and *incapable* reveals an imbalance in how women's roles are framed. While a woman's sexual or reproductive role is acknowledged, her emotional agency, especially when it involves anger or confrontation, is negated.

In terms of linguistic features, two stand out—metaphorical language and contradictory expressions. The phrase *reddish groins* is symbolic of a woman's sexual activity or reproductive capacity, while *reddish eyes* metaphorically refers to strong emotions like anger or masculine defiance. The juxtaposition of these two body parts highlights the societal restriction placed on women's emotional expression, despite their acknowledged power in the realm of sexuality or motherhood. The structure of the proverb contrasts *affordability* in one area (sexuality) with *incapability* in another (emotion), revealing a contradiction in how women's power is recognized. The proverb is structured as a contrast between two independent clausal constructions – (i) *A woman can afford to have reddish groins*; (ii) *Yet, she is incapable of having reddish eyes*. The use of the contrasting conjunction *yet* links two opposing ideas: women's acceptable role in one domain (sexuality or fertility) and their inability in another (emotional expression). This syntactic construction reinforces the compartmentalization of women's power. This indicates that while women may have influence within certain traditional domains (like fertility or childbearing), they are denied agency in areas where they might challenge authority or express defiance. At this level, the proverb's linguistic choices and structure reveal how gendered power is compartmentalized, with women's power limited to sexuality and restricted in emotional or confrontational contexts.

At the meso-level, we analyse how this proverb is produced, distributed, and interpreted within social interactions, focusing on its use and the implications for gendered discourse in Igbo society. This is done from the perspective of the context of use and discursive power in context. In terms of **context of use, the proverb reinforces gender norms in private and public spheres, especially during** conversations about appropriate behaviour for women, particularly in contexts where emotional expression, confrontation, or defiance might be viewed as inappropriate for women. It reinforces the idea that while a woman's reproductive role is acceptable and even celebrated, her expression of emotions, especially anger or defiance, should be suppressed. It equally touches on **sexuality and silence**, implying that a woman's body, especially her reproductive functions, is her most significant form of power. However, it also suggests that her voice, her anger, and her emotional reactions are suppressed in favour of silence or submission. This fits into a larger pattern of gendered discourse that confines women's influence to

private or domestic spheres while discouraging them from speaking out or challenging male authority in public.

The proverb's **discursive power in context borders on silencing emotional expression and expressing cultural instruction**. The proverb serves to enforce silence when it comes to women's emotions, particularly anger or confrontation, by suggesting that such expressions are inappropriate or beyond a woman's capacity. This shapes interactions by normalizing the expectation that women should not display emotions that might challenge male authority. Like many proverbs, this one serves as an instructive function, especially in intergenerational communication where elders teach younger women how to behave within the boundaries of societal expectations. Through its use, it becomes part of a larger discursive practice that constrains women's public expressions of anger or frustration while permitting, even valuing, their reproductive or sexual roles. In essence, the proverb at the meso-level functions as a tool for transmitting cultural expectations about gender roles, emphasizing a compartmentalization of women's power. It is allowed in the domain of reproduction, but not in the realm of emotional or verbal confrontation.

The macro-level analysis situates the proverb within the larger socio-cultural, political, and historical contexts of Igbo society, focusing on how the discourse reflects and perpetuates broader social practices regarding gender and power. In this regard, the analysis touches on the **patriarchal structures and hegemony, and ideology. The proverb reflects patriarchal structures that reinforce patriarchy and the gendered division of power. Here**, the proverb reflects a patriarchal worldview where women's roles are primarily defined by their sexuality and reproductive capabilities, while their emotional or confrontational capacities are dismissed. This fits within the broader structure of Igbo (and many African) societies, where men hold the dominant public and decision-making roles, and women's power is constrained to the private sphere. Equally, the proverb reinforces the gendered division of power by limiting women's agency to reproductive roles, while denying them the ability to assert emotional or verbal power. The notion that a woman is *incapable* of expressing strong emotions like anger suggests a broader societal practice of controlling or diminishing women's voices, particularly in public or confrontational situations.

From the standpoint of **hegemony and ideology**, the proverb contributes to the hegemonic maintenance of gender roles by naturalising the idea that women should not express anger or challenge authority. By framing emotional expression as something that women are *incapable* of, the proverb reinforces the ideological belief that women's primary function is reproductive, not emotional or confrontational. This reflects a hegemonic worldview where men dominate both the public and private spheres. It supports a broader social practice of controlling women's emotions and expressions, ensuring that they remain within the culturally accepted boundaries of femininity - silent, passive, and focused on reproductive roles. It contributes to the normalisation of these expectations, making it difficult for women to challenge or subvert them without facing social disapproval. At this level, the proverb is embedded within a patriarchal social order that values women primarily for their reproductive roles and seeks to silence or diminish their emotional expression. It reflects and sustains broader hegemonic practices that restrict

women's power to non-confrontational domains, ensuring that they remain subordinate to male authority.

Agada oonye burā n'obu ji ye, ọnụ ge-ekwugā nẹ uche ne-ekwu. (A woman, who sits astride inside her husband's sitting-room, communicates her inner wishes by that gesture even if she doesn't express them verbally.)

In line with Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model, the analysis focuses on the key themes, lexical choices, syntactic structure, and metaphorical elements to explore how power and gender dynamics are constructed within this proverb. At the micro-level, we analyse the linguistic features of the proverb, including word choices, syntactic structure, and metaphorical language. The phrase *sits astride* carries a connotation of occupying space or asserting presence. Sitting astride can be metaphorical for a woman's attempt to assert agency or control within her domestic sphere (the husband's sitting-room). This spatial metaphor suggests a non-verbal expression of power or intention, albeit confined to the private sphere. The *husband's sitting-room* depicts a symbolic representation of male-dominated spaces within traditional households. It highlights the patriarchal ownership and control of space, where the woman's actions or presence are interpreted within the context of the male's domain. The clausal construction (noun phrase qualified by an adjectival phrase) - *communicates her inner wishes* - draws attention to how women may express themselves non-verbally or subtly in domestic contexts. It acknowledges that even when women are not speaking, their actions can still carry significant meaning. The focus on another phrasal construction - *inner wishes* - implies that women's desires or intentions are often internalized and expressed indirectly, rather than openly communicated. The conditional construction *a woman, who sits astride...* frames the action of the woman within a specific scenario, emphasizing that her power to communicate is contingent on her actions within the husband's space. The use of this conditional structure implies that her ability to express herself is context-dependent and limited by domestic boundaries.

The syntactic structure emphasises the contrast between *verbal* and *non-verbal* expression. The phrase *even if she doesn't express them verbally* highlights that the woman's actions are a form of silent discourse, indirectly expressing what is otherwise unspoken. The act of *sitting astride* functions as a metaphor for asserting control or influence. This physical action within a male-dominated space (the husband's sitting-room) symbolizes the woman's negotiation of power within the constraints of patriarchal norms. The proverb highlights non-verbal gestures as a form of agency. The idea that a woman communicates her *inner wishes* through action rather than words suggests that women in the socio-cultural context often rely on subtle forms of expression due to constraints on their direct verbal power. Another theme is the use of silence or indirect actions as a form of communication. The proverb underscores how women navigate social expectations and communicate their desires without overtly challenging the norms of male-dominated spaces.

At the meso-level, the focus shifts to how the proverb is produced, distributed, and consumed in social contexts, especially as it relates to gender roles and expectations in social interactions. In this regard, the proverb reflects traditional gender roles

where the domestic sphere is divided into male-dominated and female-dominated spaces. The sitting-room represents the husband's domain, while the woman's act of sitting astride within it carries significant meaning. The proverb emerges from social interactions where women's subtle actions are used to communicate within the confines of domestic power dynamics. It reinforces the discursive practice of women using non-verbal cues to express their thoughts or desires. In a context where women's direct verbal expressions might be limited or less valued, non-verbal actions like sitting astride serve as a culturally accepted means of communication. Discursive strategies entail, among other things, **legitimisation of indirect power and naturalisation of domestic hierarchies**. The proverb legitimizes a form of indirect power for women. By emphasising that a woman can express her wishes non-verbally, it acknowledges women's agency, but within a framework that keeps their power contained and less overt. This aligns with a broader discursive strategy where women's roles are defined in terms of subtle influence rather than direct confrontation or verbal assertiveness. Within the **context of interpretation, in this case**, the Ezikeoba Igbo socio-cultural context, the proverb seeks to underpin the **cultural interpretations of women's agency, wherein** the proverb is interpreted as reinforcing the idea that women possess a form of agency, but one that is primarily expressed within the confines of the household. The act of sitting astride would be understood as a culturally appropriate way for women to assert themselves without stepping outside traditional gender norms. The discursive practice emphasised by this proverb is the use of non-verbal expression to navigate gendered power dynamics within the home, with the husband's space acting as a key site of negotiated power.

The macro-level analysis of social practices explores the wider socio-cultural implications of the proverb, particularly how it reflects broader structures of patriarchy and gender relations in Igbo society. The proverb reflects and reinforces a patriarchal ideology that assigns specific roles and spaces to men and women. The husband's sitting-room symbolizes male authority, while the woman's actions within it are subject to interpretation within that male-dominated framework. This spatial hierarchy mirrors broader societal structures where men occupy public and authoritative roles, while women's influence is confined to private, domestic spheres. The proverb helps to normalise the idea that women's power is subtle and non-verbal, fitting within a hegemonic structure where overt expressions of power are reserved for men. The woman's act of sitting astride communicates her inner wishes, but this communication remains contained within the private sphere, reflecting a hegemonic order where women's agency is limited and less visible. **Two themes at this level stand out - gendered power dynamics and social control.** The proverb contributes to the maintenance of gendered power dynamics, where men control the public and private spaces of the household, and women's power is confined to indirect or non-verbal expressions. The theme of social control of women's agency and expression reflects a broader social practice of limiting women's direct expressions of desire or agency, reinforcing a system where their power is contained within male-dominated spaces and expressed through culturally sanctioned gestures. In sum, the proverb sustains a patriarchal social order that values women's reproductive and domestic roles while limiting their ability to assert themselves verbally or directly.

Ogerenyi kaa nka ne ekpuru amu ge ejeko ja-abu iou eru. (When a man grows old, the scrotal sac will turn out to be a heavy burden.)

At the micro-level, we examine the lexical choices, syntactic and metaphorical structures, and the themes. The term *ogerenyi* signifies aging and suggests a temporal aspect of male experience. It evokes notions of wisdom and decline, framing aging as an inevitable phase in a man's life. This implies that manhood carries both privileges and burdens as one ages. The mention of the *scrotal sac* signifies male virility and sexuality, while describing it as a *heavy burden* introduces an element of irony. This juxtaposition presents aging not merely as a physical decline but also as a psychological and emotional weight, reflecting societal expectations around masculinity and fertility. The phrase structure emphasises a cause-and-effect relationship, where aging leads to the heaviness of testicles. This syntactic arrangement underscores the consequences of aging on masculinity, where physical attributes become burdensome as men grow older. The metaphor of a *heavy burden* implies that the very symbols of masculinity and potency become a source of discomfort or encumbrance with age. This metaphoric contrast raises questions about the nature of masculinity and its perceived value throughout a man's life. From the standpoint of **metaphorical structures, the symbolism of testicles** symbolizes traditional masculinity and fertility, representing a man's virility and sexual prowess. However, describing them as a burden reframes these symbols in the context of aging, suggesting that societal expectations surrounding masculinity can lead to discomfort or pain over time. The proverb uses aging as a metaphor for the inevitable decline of masculine attributes. It suggests that as men grow older, they may grapple with feelings of inadequacy or loss of power, challenging the notion of eternal male strength. **Themes identified include masculinity and aging, and power and vulnerability.** The proverb highlights the theme of masculinity in relation to aging, portraying the transition from virility to burden as a significant aspect of male experience. It questions the long-term implications of societal ideals of masculinity. The juxtaposition of male power and vulnerability is central to this proverb. It suggests that while masculinity is often associated with strength, aging complicates this narrative, revealing vulnerabilities that challenge conventional ideals.

The second level of analysis (meso level - discursive practices) x-rays the **production and use in social interaction, discursive strategies**, context of interpretation, patriarchal ideology and aging, hegemonic masculinity, and power relations. The proverb serves as a reflection of societal expectations regarding male identity, emphasizing the pressures men face as they age. It captures the complexity of aging in relation to masculinity, suggesting that societal narratives can frame aging as a loss of power or desirability. The notion of testicles as a burden speaks to the complexities of male identity, where societal ideals impose a certain narrative about aging men. It highlights how men may feel pressured to uphold traditional ideals of masculinity, even as they confront the realities of aging. The contrast between virility (testicles) and burden (heavy burden) serves as a discursive strategy to challenge conventional views of masculinity. It raises questions about the sustainability of male power throughout life, encouraging critical reflection on societal narratives surrounding masculinity. The proverb illustrates the power dynamics inherent in societal expectations for men. By framing the testicles as a

burden in old age, it critiques the rigid norms surrounding masculinity that leave little room for vulnerability or emotional expression. Within the cultural context of the Ezikeoba Igbo, this proverb highlights the challenges faced by aging men. It reflects cultural attitudes toward male aging, suggesting that societal norms can lead to feelings of inadequacy or burden as men navigate this transition. The interplay between gender and power is evident in this proverb, as it critiques the societal expectations placed on men. It emphasises how these expectations shape individual experiences of aging, leading to a sense of burden as men grapple with their identities.

At the macro level, the proverb reinforces patriarchal values that associate masculinity with virility and strength. It highlights how aging complicates these ideals, framing the aging process as a challenge to traditional masculine identity. The notion that testicles turn into a heavy burden as men age encapsulates the broader societal expectations surrounding gender roles. It suggests that men may be expected to maintain their masculine identity even as they confront the realities of aging, leading to internal conflict. The proverb speaks to the subversion of traditional masculinity as men age. The idea of the testicles becoming a burden challenges the notion of unyielding male strength, suggesting that vulnerabilities are inherent to the human experience, regardless of gender. The **theme of vulnerability and power dynamics** illustrates the power dynamics between genders, emphasizing how societal structures dictate male identity and behaviour. The narrative of aging as a burden invites reflection on the societal pressures that influence how men perceive their own worth as they grow older. The proverb reflects the theme of identity crisis in aging men at the macro-level, where traditional masculine ideals clash with the realities of growing older. It suggests that men may struggle to reconcile their identities as they transition from virility to vulnerability. Also, the proverb illustrates the power dynamics at play in gendered narratives surrounding aging. It critiques the cultural narratives that reinforce rigid standards of masculinity, highlighting the need for broader acceptance of vulnerability as part of the male experience.

E jìgà amụ eyi okwunyeka egwu mọọnẹ ọ bụ amụ karā ya. (An old woman is never to be frightened by a penis; after all, a penis is the sole causative agent of her aging process.)

From the textual level of analysis, the term, *okwunyeka* (old woman), denotes a woman who has aged, which carries connotations of wisdom but also societal invisibility. The phrase implies that aging women often occupy a marginalized space in society, with their voices and experiences overlooked. **Penis (amụ)**, an explicit reference to the male organ, signifies power and masculinity. In this context, it suggests a tool of intimidation, often wielded by men to assert dominance over women, especially younger ones. The phrasal structure - causative agent of aging process (**karā ya**) - indicates that the old woman has intimate knowledge of aging and the changes it brings, positioning her as someone who has navigated life and understands its complexities. The proverb uses a compound structure, connecting the idea of fear with the notion of aging. This syntactic choice emphasises the relationship between gender, aging, and power, suggesting that fear tactics are ineffective against those who have experienced life. The use of negation in '**never to**

be frightened' reinforces the strength and resilience of the old woman against intimidation tactics, suggesting that her lived experience renders such threats obsolete. In a metaphorical sense, the penis represents male authority and sexual prowess. By stating that it does not frighten an old woman, the proverb challenges the conventional associations of fear linked to masculinity and sexuality. This is followed by aging as empowerment. The phrase indicates that with age comes wisdom and resilience. The metaphorical association of aging with knowledge suggests that older women possess insights that deflate the effectiveness of male intimidation. Two themes –female resilience and gender and power dynamics - highlight the strength of older women who have accumulated life experience and wisdom, making them less susceptible to intimidation; they critique traditional power dynamics that associate fear with gender, particularly how men might try to exert control over women through threats.

At the meso level, the discursive practices entail cultural commentary on aging, subversion of gender norms, which achieved the strategies of empowerment through knowledge, irony, and humour, all of which find contextual interpretation by contextualising gender dynamics and negotiation of identity. This proverb reflects societal views on aging women, often viewed as less valuable or visible in patriarchal contexts. By acknowledging the strength of older women, the proverb validates their experiences and positions them as knowledgeable figures in society, rather than as marginalized individuals. The CDA analysis of the proverb provides insights into the interplay between aging, gender, and power. Ultimately, this proverb speaks to the complexities of gender dynamics, inviting critical reflection on the resilience and agency of aged women in a society that often overlooks their contributions.

Discussions

As earlier noted, the 33 proverbs elicited for the purpose of this study were categorized into two basic groups – those that reinforce male dominance (patriarchy) and those that challenge this dominance – and how they align with gendered power dynamics, particularly within the Ezikeoba Igbo socio-cultural context. Beyond the narrow confines of the area of study, it would be seen that the extent to which gendered proverbs in the Ezikeoba Igbo socio-cultural context resonates with seminal works on language and gender discourse, such as Robin Lakoff's foundational claims in *Language and Woman's Place*, which explore how language reflects and reinforces gender hierarchies. The analysis of gendered proverbs from the Ezikeoba Igbo socio-cultural context reveals a strong alignment with the Dominance Approach, a theoretical framework put forward by scholars such as Robin Lakoff, Pamela Fishman, and Dale Spender. This approach emphasises how language perpetuates gender inequalities by conditioning women to assume subordinate roles, reinforcing male dominance, and framing women's communicative practices as inferior. The discursive features and themes found in the Ezikeoba gendered proverbs echo these principles, providing a cultural perspective on the ways in which linguistic practices sustain power dynamics between men and women.

The major discursive features and themes that emerged from the analysis include **language as a tool of dominance and patriarchy as the shaper of language**. Lakoff's concept of a 'women's register' speaks directly to how language becomes a tool for social conditioning, confining women to a passive and submissive role. This expectation aligns with Lakoff's claim that women are conditioned to adopt a language style that emphasises deference and servility. The proverbs frame women as the primary agents responsible for emotional labour, positioning them as gatekeepers of the household's well-being while implicitly placing them under scrutiny for any disharmony that arises. Thus, language, through these proverbs, continues to enforce a narrative of female obligation and male dependency. Pamela Fishman's assertion that women work harder in communication due to their lesser certainty of success finds resonance in the Ezikeoba proverbs. Many of the proverbs convey a sense that women must go to great lengths to sustain their marriages, even in the face of challenges and opposition. Dale Spender's view that language is a patriarchal construct designed to maintain male dominance is clearly reflected in the Ezikeoba proverbs. Many of the proverbs emphasise the supremacy of men, even as they acknowledge the influence of women within the domestic sphere.

While the dominance approach provides a useful framework for understanding these proverbs, it is worth considering the critiques brought forward by other theories, such as Deborah Tannen's difference approach or the diversity approach, which view men and women as adopting different but equally valid communication styles. However, in the context of the Ezikeoba proverbs, there is little evidence to suggest an equal balance of power or complementary roles. The proverbs depict women as the bearers of responsibility and men as the ultimate beneficiaries or victims of women's actions, underscoring an imbalance that resonates more with the dominance approach than with any egalitarian perspective. However, this is not to invalidate several proverbs analysed that challenge the patriarchal dominance as would be seen in the set of proverbs listed under Group 2, the details of which are the thrust of the review shortly.

Group 1 of the proverbs (Dominance Approach), as listed in the following order - 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8 -15, 18, 22, 23, 25-30, 32, 33 - in the Appendix, tends to support patriarchal norms by portraying women as subordinate, reinforcing stereotypical notions about their roles, behaviours, and limitations. This fits with Lakoff's *dominance* model, where women's language and roles are depicted as inferior or secondary to men's. From a sample of the proverbs, a number of themes that depict male dominance include, but are not limited to the following: symbolism of restriction, objectification and silence, devaluation of female conflict, confinement to domesticity, and undermining female power. In (1), the theme of the symbolism of restriction on women's power, both physical and metaphorical, is depicted. The contrast between reddish groins (a symbol of female sexuality) and reddish eyes (implying male experience, wisdom, or power) reinforces the notion that women are restricted to specific domains of influence. In the same vein, (2) reflects Lakoff's assertion that women are often silenced or restricted to non-verbal communication. The woman, sitting in her husband's domain, speaks only through gestures, suggesting her power is confined to passive, non-verbal realms, subordinating her active agency. Proverbs 9-11 trivialize women's grievances and intra-squabbles, suggesting that their behaviour is irrational or chaotic when they seek autonomy

(divorce). This reinforces patriarchal control over women's autonomy. In (12), (13), and (15), the themes of domestic confinement and mockery of femininity resonate, reflecting the dominance approach in their exclusion of women from certain spheres (e.g., the Ọmabe cult). Lakoff's work points out how language practices often exclude women from power structures and male-dominated domains, as seen in the initiation rituals in this proverb. (22) diminishes female power, framing women's roles as burdensome and undervalued labour in society, reminiscent of how Lakoff critiques the stereotypical linguistic relegation of women to lower-status activities.

While these proverbs predominantly reinforce male dominance, they also contain subtle hints of women's agency and resilience. The subtle recognition of women's nonverbal communication and their sexual agency complicates the dominance narrative. The dominance approach often focuses on how language upholds male power, but these proverbs also suggest that women possess a form of covert agency, even if it is within the confines of patriarchy. In *Agada oonye burā n'obu ji ye*, the woman's posture "communicates her inner wishes," implying that women have desires and intentions that they express, even if indirectly. This indirect communication is a form of agency that, while constrained by male interpretation, still allows women to convey their needs. It suggests that women are not entirely voiceless but must navigate their expressions in a manner that aligns with social expectations. Similarly, the phrase *reddish groins* in *Kẹẹ oonye ne-enwu n'agada nẹ ọ nāgā enwu n'ẹkpuru ẹnya* implies that women have a recognized role in sexual relationships. This acknowledgement, though limited, indicates that women have value beyond mere domesticity. The fact that a woman can "afford to have reddish groins" acknowledges her active role in sexual relationships, indicating that women have value that is not solely defined by men's needs. This recognition, though embedded within patriarchal norms, hints at the importance of women's roles and experiences beyond passive submission. Nonetheless, these proverbs generally construct a socio-cultural narrative that echoes Lakoff's *deficit* and *dominance* approaches, where women are either framed as deficient compared to men or their language and roles are conditioned by societal male dominance. Many of these proverbs follow a **dominance interpretation**, where women are placed in passive or subservient roles within the socio-cultural context of Ezikeọba Igbo. They represent patriarchal views of women as docile, voiceless, or only influential in trivial, domestic matters, reaffirming Lakoff's view that language is a tool for maintaining male dominance.

Under Group 2, the 9 proverbs (4, 7, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 24, 31) challenge patriarchal norms by crediting women with a measure of agency, resilience, and power within the constraints of their 'traditional' roles. In these cases, the proverbs align with more contemporary analyses of gender discourse, which highlight women's subtle forms of resistance and agency within patriarchal structures. These proverbs provide counterpoints to the dominance approach by granting women a certain level of agency or influence, even if it is subtle or indirect. These proverbs challenge patriarchal norms, recognizing women's capacity for power, decision-making, and influence within societal dynamics. This is evident in such recurrent themes as subtle assertion of female power, equitable conflict, maternal power, agency in shame and resilience, and female sexual knowledge. For instance, (16) credits

women (represented by the "sheep") with the potential to challenge men (represented by the "ram"), thus suggesting that women, despite their assumed weaker status, can assert power and agency in conflict situations. In contrast to the dominant narrative, (17) acknowledges women as essential figures of peace and stability, granting them power over the household dynamics. It presents women as central to social order, which challenges the traditional male-dominant perspective. Also, (19) portrays a woman's strength and resilience during childbirth, acknowledging her capacity to overcome societal expectations (shame) in the face of intense challenges.

In (21), the gendered power dynamic challenges the dominance narrative, asserting a woman's familiarity with male sexuality. It challenges the notion that women should be fearful or submissive in the face of male power and instead positions the older woman as experienced and beyond intimidation. This proverb, while using humour, subtly asserts a form of resistance to male dominance, indicating that with age comes a shift in power dynamics where a woman can no longer be easily subdued by what might have held sway over her in her youth. It disputes the typical dominance approach by suggesting that a woman's experience provides her with a form of resilience, thus complicating the otherwise dominant narrative of perpetual male control. These proverbs demonstrate that women, while positioned within a patriarchal society, can exercise power and influence, challenging the dominance framework. Lakoff's **Difference Approach** would better explain this perspective, as it posits that men and women have different but complementary roles, with women being credited with distinct kinds of strength and authority, especially within domestic or interpersonal domains.

Some proverbs - (24), (25), and (31) - straddle the two major groups. They reflect both dominance and resistance, creating an ambiguous space in the discourse of gender relations, often highlighting the complexity of gendered power dynamics. (24) and (25) represent the interdependence and adaptability in male-female dynamics. While (24) frames women's actions within domestic roles (reinforcing gendered divisions of labour), it also suggests the husband's necessity to adjust and accommodate, thus recognizing women's subtle power in shaping relationships. (25) flips the adoptive response of the wife by reflecting the countervailing act of the husband. (31) presents women as troublesome, but also as a force to be reckoned with, powerful enough to deter action. This duality reflects both dominance and the recognition of women's capacity to affect outcomes, complicating the traditional patriarchal view.

Another striking aspect of power dynamics enacted by gendered proverbs analysed is the subtle balance of power between husband and wife in matrimonial life. (24) and (25) convey a dynamic interaction where the actions of one party influence the response of the other, symbolising a reciprocal balance in power dynamics. (24) reflects a common form of silent resistance or subtle empowerment in traditional patriarchal settings. Although the husband may hold a more dominant role, the wife exercises agency through indirect actions, highlighting a kind of 'power from below,' where the wife controls resources (the food) to influence behaviour without direct conflict. The wife's tactic suggests that while men may hold formal authority, women use their domestic skills to negotiate and maintain their own influence

within the household. The proverb's flip side implicit in (25) complements (24) by showing the husband's adaptive response to the wife's behaviour, thus symbolising his flexibility in coping with the wife's actions, showing that he is not powerless in the situation. He retains his ability to maintain control by adapting to the new reality, rather than being outmaneuvered by his wife's subtle resistance. The dynamic here reflects a mutual, though indirect, negotiation of power.

Deborah Tannen's work on **gender and communication** suggests that men and women often approach conflicts differently, with men tending toward more overt displays of dominance and women adopting indirect strategies. In these proverbs, the husband's initial action (creaming off the soup) represents a more direct and assertive behaviour, typical of the way men may express dominance. On the other hand, the wife's response (preparing watery soup) is an example of indirect resistance, aligning with Tannen's notion that women often manage power relations through subtle, context-dependent communication strategies. Similarly, **Robin Lakoff's** theory of **politeness and power** in language reveals that women often navigate power structures through politeness strategies, including indirect speech or actions that assert influence without appearing confrontational. The wife's preparation of watery soup is a form of indirect communication; she conveys her dissatisfaction and restores balance without openly challenging the husband's authority. The husband's adaptive response also shows a measure of respect for this indirect form of power, choosing to adjust rather than escalate the conflict. **Pierre Bourdieu's** concept of **'symbolic power'** is also relevant here. The control over domestic resources (like food) serves as a symbolic form of power for the wife, which allows her to negotiate her position in the marriage. While the husband may possess formal authority, the wife wields symbolic power through her control of domestic space, subtly influencing the household dynamics. In essence, the complementary proverbs highlight a complex interplay of power between husband and wife in the Ezikeoba Igbo socio-cultural context. While the husband initially appears to dominate, the wife's subtle and strategic responses illustrate that power in marriage is not unidirectional. Both partners engage in a reciprocal adjustment, reflecting a balance in which each maintains agency through adaptive behaviours.

Aging, as a developmental dynamic, presents another significant feature of the proverbs studied. In this regard, (7) and (21) encapsulate contrasting perspectives on the role of aging in the lives of men and women. These differences highlight the distinct cultural attitudes toward aging and its implications for gender roles. The aging process for men is depicted as burdensome, with a focus on physical decline and loss of strength, while for women, it is portrayed as a period of empowerment and freedom from societal expectations tied to youth and sexuality. Men may face fears related to their diminishing strength and societal roles, while women gain confidence and independence as they age. This reflects different cultural narratives surrounding aging, with men's aging being framed in terms of loss, and women's aging being framed as a time for personal growth and resilience. In summary, the two proverbs highlight significant contrasts in the aging experiences of men and women within the Ezikeoba Igbo socio-cultural context.

Conclusions

This study examined the interplay between language and gender roles within the Ezikeɔba Igbo socio-cultural context by analyzing a sample of dataset of 33 proverbs. The aim was to explore how these proverbs either reinforce traditional male dominance or challenge this position by crediting women with agency. Through careful categorization, 24 proverbs were identified as reinforcing patriarchal norms, while 9 proverbs subtly or overtly challenged this gender hierarchy.

By employing Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the study dissected selected proverbs from each category to reveal the embedded ideologies that govern power relations between men and women in matrimonial and social life. The linguistic structures, societal expectations, and the power dynamics they reflect provided valuable insights into how gender roles are both constructed and contested in Igbo society.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to the understanding of how proverbs, as repositories of cultural wisdom, serve as instruments for either perpetuating or challenging gender norms. In traditional African societies like the Ezikeɔba Igbo, proverbs are not mere words of wisdom but powerful rhetorical tools that shape social behaviour, expectations, and perceptions. This study illuminates how these proverbs reflect the complexities of male-female dynamics, especially in terms of power, submission, agency, and resistance. The majority of the proverbs analysed in this study reflect a social order that privileges male authority and dominance, particularly in matrimonial life. On the other hand, the 9 proverbs that challenge male dominance reflect a subtle recognition of female agency and the possibility for resistance within the established power structures.

The study concludes that the preponderance of proverbs in the Ezikeɔba Igbo cultural context reinforces patriarchal structures, with men occupying dominant roles and women being relegated to supportive or subordinate positions. This aligns with existing gender discourse theories, such as those posited by Lakoff and others, which suggest that language often mirrors and sustains male dominance in many traditional societies. Despite the dominance of patriarchal proverbs, the existence of a minority of proverbs that credit women with agency points to a better understanding of gender roles. These proverbs reflect a subtle recognition of female agency. They take cognizance of women's influence and power, particularly within domestic spaces, and suggest that gender relations are not entirely one-sided but involve negotiation and mutual adaptation. The proverbs reveal that while men are often portrayed as dominant, the interactions between husbands and wives in these proverbs reflect a more complex balance of power. Women's contributions, actions, and reactions are shown to have a significant impact on household dynamics, even when outwardly subservient. This new perspective challenges the notion of absolute male dominance and highlights the importance of female resilience and adaptability in maintaining balance in matrimonial life.

This study underscores the importance of language in shaping, maintaining, and sometimes resisting social structures. In the Ezikeɔba Igbo socio-cultural context,

proverbs serve as a lens through which we can observe both the rigidity of traditional gender roles and the subtle, yet significant, ways in which these roles are negotiated and contested. By examining these proverbs, we gain insight into the power dynamics that define male-female relationships and the complex cultural fabric that governs social interactions. Ultimately, this research contributes to the broader discourse on language and gender by highlighting the role of proverbs in both reinforcing and challenging patriarchal norms, and by offering a deeper understanding of how language reflects the evolving realities of gender in Igbo society.

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Appendix

1. Kẹẹ oonye ne-enwu n'agada nẹ ọ nẹgə enwu n'ekpuru ẹnya. (A woman can afford to have a reddish groin; yet, she is incapable of having reddish eyes.)
2. Agada oonye burə n'obu ji ye, ọnu ge-ekwugə nẹ uche ne-ekwu. (A woman, who sits astride inside her husband's sitting-room, communicates her inner.)
3. Agada oonye burə n'obu ji ye, ọnu ge-ekwugə nẹ uche ne-ekwu. (A woman, who sits astride inside her husband's sitting-room, communicates her inner wishes by that gesture even if she doesn't express them verbally.)
4. A maa m ohe m ji-eryi eryl. (I don't know which of the equally appealing meals to choose.)
5. A nẹgə agba oonye ọtọ kəryiide ye. (A woman is not stripped naked only to be gawked at and ogled.)
6. Ọ chọkọ atə fuma, chọrəkoma nkẹ gbarə ẹju. (One desperately looked for a vagina and saw one; yet, turned around to insist on the bearded one)
7. Ọgerenyi kaa nka nẹ ẹkpuru amụ ge ejeko ja-abu ivu ẹrụa. (When a man grows old, the testicles will turn out to be a heavy burden.)
8. O nwegə ihe na-asọ oonye kẹ nwunye ji ye gbalie nẹ be ji. (Nothing pleases a housewife more than the heartwarming prospect of her co-wife suing for divorce.)
9. Oonye keere ọogbali n'ebe ji, ọ ga ne-eme oome kẹẹ o mele. (A woman, who is set for divorce, behaves anyhow.)
10. Oonye chọkọ ọogbali sərə nẹ nwunye ji ye rarə ya ẹnya n'enyasə. (A housewife, who has made up her mind to call it quits with the marriage, complains that her co-wife eyed her in the night.)
11. Oonye chọkọ okwu na-aryiọ nwunye ji manụ kẹ o worə tarə ẹkwu. (It is a troublesome housewife who begs her co-wife for oil with which to eat oil palm nuts.)
12. Oonye mụrụ Ọmabẹ mẹ oonye fuma Ọmabẹ ọ gbaare. (It is a woman who birthed Ọmabẹ masquerade; yet, she takes to her heels on sighting the Ọmabẹ masquerade).
13. Ụmụ Ma na-afu Ma n'oto, mẹ ogbodu na-afu ma mẹ ọ kwayiCHARə Ụkorọ. (The Ọmabẹ masquerade cult members see the Ọmabẹ in its nakedness, but women (or non-initiates) only see Ọmabẹ when it is completely kitted in its full regalia.)
14. Nwa ruhu, ọ laare nẹ ne. (A child who gets spoiled, bags maternal ancestry as a prize.)
15. Oonye marə ma ọ ka ma merə nẹ oonye amagə ma. (The prospects of divulging the secrets of the masquerade when revealed to a woman robbed her of the rights and privileges of initiation into the masquerade cult.)
16. Ishi gbakaa aturu ebule be worə ishi chij, maabu aturu muru ebule. (When the sheep spoils for a fight, the ram will equally charge forward to take up the challenge, notwithstanding the fact that the sheep gave birth to him.)
17. Oonye bu oodo ala. (A woman (housewife) holds the key to peace and harmony of the household.)
18. Atə medome oome ọ wọọ ajokọ. (When the vagina avails man of its favours, it is misconstrued as a sex maniac.)
19. Ime anwuru oonye n'ime afwua, nẹ ihere gejeko ja-agwu ya n'ẹnya. (When the pains of parturition catch up with a pregnant woman in the marketplace, she will automatically lose all sense of shame.)

20. Afwu ejuo nę nwatakyri gejeko ja-ama ne ye. (The moment the marketplace is filled up with people, the child will seek out its mother's stall.)
21. E jigę amu eyi okwunyęka egwu moęę ọ bu karę ya. (Women, the basket that carries the cocoyam without showing any sign of aging. It is their exclusive duty to blow the flute and beat the gong at the same time.)
22. Women, the basket that carries the cocoyam without showing any sign of aging. It is their exclusive duty to blow the flute and beat the gong at the same time.
23. Ọ buęę abere i kọnę ikpe ji jeko ja-alę gę. (It is not a fellow housewife to whom you presented your marital dispute with your husband that will marry you.)
24. Ọnęhę mụta ọgguw ọhoyi, orukpu mụta oote ohoyi munyi, munyi. (When a husband learns to cream off the soup excessively with balls of foo-foo, the wife learns to prepare watery soup.)
25. Orukpe mụta oote ohoyi munyi, munyi, ọnęhę mụta ọgguw ookpo nryi oto. (When a wife learns to prepare watery soup, the husband will equally learn to approach the watery soup with dimpled foo-foo balls for maximum collection.)
26. Ejọ oome orukpo bu nka ọnehe. (The misdemeanours and shenanigans of the housewife mark the beginning of the aging process of the husband.)
27. Oonye bu afwu akpa, ihe i keyekwuter, i vulir fwueleele ọlọ. (Marriage is a bag-denominated business transaction. The wares for purchase are stitched up in bags, completely masking their contents. As a game of chance, one goes home content with whatever manner of wares that one's bag unveils.)
28. Oonye chor ọl oonye vuru ọzọ kpama (zuma) eshi. Oonye nwere njiji ọzọ eshi ja-alukpota oonye. (A man who intends to get married should first rear a pig. A man who can summon enough patience to rear a pig has the requisite elastic patience to sustain a marital life.)
29. Enya na be eji alę oonye. (It takes a man the inconvenience of having one eye to have a successful marriage.)
30. Oonye lakọ be ji ne-ekuchi ngwugwu ofu awuyi n'oba; afa gbar, o keeshe na. (A newly married woman set to start a marital union usually has a set of 20 wrapped knots discreetly concealed in her baggage. At the turn of every year, she will untie one knot to the utter consternation of her husband.)
31. Ọ dę m kę ọ bu m bọr ukwu la n'ose nọne njiomu ọha anęę ekwe ekwe. (I am tempted to cleave the waist of the animal up to the rib region, but for the canterkerousness or troublesomeness of the womenfolk, which is enough deterrence against crossing the red line.)
32. A mụdome nwa nę ọ gabu nke ọha mę nwa ruhu ọ laare nę ne. (A well-born and brought-up child (or highly successful child) becomes a treasured communal property, but a failed or never-do-well child is confined to his maternal ancestry.)
33. Nwa nyuma ihe o vuru otune che ne ye. (A child who defecates turns its anus to the mother for cleansing.)

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