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Digital Echoes of Tradition: How Social Media Reinforces Gender Ideologies in Akan Proverbs



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Digital Echoes of Tradition: How Social Media Reinforces Gender Ideologies in Akan Proverbs

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Abstract

Purpose: This study investigates the ideological portrayal of women in Akan proverbs and Ghanaian social media commentary, with a specific focus on how both domains reflect and reproduce patriarchal values. It seeks to understand the extent to which traditional proverbs portraying women as dependent, subservient, and lacking agency are reinforced in contemporary digital discourse.

Methodology: Guided by Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA), the study critically analyzes selected Akan proverbs alongside social media comments about prominent Ghanaian women, including parliamentarians, deputy directors, and the female vice president. The FCDA framework enables an in-depth examination of how gendered power relations and ideologies are encoded and perpetuated through language.

Findings: The analysis reveals that the patriarchal ideologies embedded in traditional proverbs continue to manifest in social media discourse. Comments frequently question women's capabilities, moral authority, and legitimacy in public leadership roles, reinforcing long-standing stereotypes. Social media thus operates not only as a communicative platform but also as a digital space that replicates oral traditional gender biases.

Unique Contribution to Theory and Practice: This study fills a gap in current literature by linking oral cultural narratives with digital commentary, offering a nuanced understanding of gender representation in both traditional and modern contexts. It contributes to feminist discourse analysis by demonstrating how ideological continuity across communicative modes can inform efforts toward gender equity and social transformation in Ghanaian society.

Keywords: *Akan proverbs, Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, gender representation, patriarchy in Ghanaian society, social media discourse*

1. Introduction

Proverbs in Akan culture function as essential communicative tools, often employed to convey wisdom, reinforce societal values, and subtly instruct individuals on acceptable behaviour. They are widely used across everyday interactions and are particularly common in familial and communal settings. Elders frequently use proverbs to advise or correct younger members of the family in a culturally respectful manner, embedding moral lessons within metaphorical language. Proverbs are also prominent in storytelling, traditional ceremonies, public speeches, and dispute resolution processes, where they serve to affirm communal consensus and authority. Their rhetorical power lies in their cultural embeddedness, drawing on shared knowledge and experience to convey complex social norms succinctly. Children typically acquire these proverbs informally through socialization in family and community life, rather than formal instruction. From a young age, they are exposed to proverbs during conversations with elders, participation in communal storytelling, and observation of social interactions. While Ghanaian schools may reference proverbs in literature or language classes, the depth of knowledge surrounding their meaning and use is usually cultivated outside the classroom. This organic transmission ensures that proverbs remain a living aspect of Akan oral tradition, shaping not only language but also intergenerational understandings of gender, respect and power.

In Ghanaian society, Akan proverbs serve as repositories of cultural knowledge, shaping perceptions and expectations of gender roles (Diabah & Amfo, 2018; Mariwah et al., 2023). While some proverbs depict women positively, these representations often reinforce traditional gender roles, luring women into accepting subservient positions, thus supporting hegemonic masculinity and femininity. These proverbs often portray women in ways that emphasize submission, domesticity and dependence, while men are depicted as strong, authoritative and independent (Diabah & Amfo, 2015). In this regard, some of these Akan proverbs focus on traditional views of women's roles in society. Often, these proverbs are used as tools to limit women's participation in social and economic spheres, portraying them as dependents on men and reinforcing their roles as homemakers. Diabah and Amfo (2015, p. 17) argue that linguistic strategies like similes (*ɔbaa te se akoko; yede aburoo na esone no* "a woman is like a chicken; we use corn to lure her") and metaphors (*ɔbaa ye turo mu nhwiren, ne kunu ye ne ho ban* "a woman is a flower in the garden; her husband is the fence/shed") in Akan proverbs reinforce these gendered discourses, contributing to the cultural truisms about women's roles.

As oral traditions deeply embedded in Ghanaian rhetoric, Akan proverbs influence how gender relations are constructed and maintained (Mariwah et al., 2023). However, with the rise of digital communication, social media platforms have become contemporary spaces where these traditional ideologies are either challenged or reinforced. Since social media commentary on news items often shapes how the public understand women in leadership, politics, and social activism, this study examines the relationship between those ancient proverbs and contemporary perspectives on gender. Digital discourse, therefore, provides a lens into how contemporary

Ghanaians interpret, uphold, or resist traditional gender ideologies. By examining social media commentary as an extension of these proverbial expressions, this study aims to explore how language continues to shape gender representations in Ghanaian society through Akan proverbs. Specifically, the study seeks to investigate how social media serves as a space where gender ideologies in Akan proverbs are reinforced. In other words, the study focuses on how users of social media platforms perpetuate and normalize the patriarchal values inherent in some Akan proverbial expressions, highlighting the continuity of cultural ideologies in digital contexts.

2. Rhetoric about women in Ghanaian context

The extant literature shows that the rhetoric surrounding women in the Ghanaian context is multifaceted, reflecting both traditional gender norms and emerging feminist perspectives (Sarfo-Kantankah et al., 2024; Watson-Nortey et al., 2024; Odoom et al., 2022; Donkor, 2016). This discourse is evident across various domains, including media representation, political participation, and community development (Odoom et al., 2022). The portrayal of women in Ghana often oscillates between reinforcing traditional roles and challenging them through feminist rhetoric. This dynamic is influenced by historical, cultural and socio-political factors that shape the narrative around women's roles and rights in Ghanaian society. For instance, Watson-Nortey et al. (2024) in in *"Representation of women in selected Ghanaian television commercials: a rhetorical-feminist literary approach"* report that Ghanaian television commercials often depict women in gendered roles that reinforce patriarchal ideologies, portraying them as subservient and dependent on men (p. 719).

In the context of politics, Donkor's (2016) *"Mediating gendered politics: Ghanaian politicians and news discourse"* highlights that women candidates in Ghanaian politics are often portrayed through negative and gendered frames, focusing on their personal attributes, familial relationships and sexualised portrayals rather than their professional qualifications. This media coverage contributes to the barriers faced by women in political aspirations, as it tends to stereotype and diminish their authority and agency compared to male candidates (Odoom, 2022). The extant literature, therefore, indicates that Ghanaian women political candidates experience a more prejudicial representation, which aligns with broader trends observed in global contexts.

Also, Diabah and Agyepong (2022) examine gendered discourses in Ghana's 2020 elections, highlighting how women, particularly the female running mate of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), were represented. They observe that while some representations challenged traditional gender stereotypes, the predominant portrayal was stereotypical, reflecting broader global trends. Sarfo-Kantankah et al. (2024) in *"The discursive construction of solidarity by Ghanaian female parliamentarians"* examine women's rhetoric in the Ghanaian context through the lens of female parliamentarians who construct solidarity by positioning themselves as representatives of Ghanaian women. The study reports that the women parliamentarians utilize inclusive language such as "we" and "our/us" to foster empowerment, champion women's causes,

and celebrate achievements. Also, the same pronouns are employed in resisting discriminatory discourses, highlighting the importance of centring marginalized voices in discourse analysis.

In a similar study, Ansah and Dzregah (2020), examine women's rhetoric in the Ghanaian context by investigating how female sexual behaviour is discursively constructed across various social and discourse spaces. They highlight the role of ethos, shaped by identity formations and language use, in establishing moral authority. Through proverbs and social media, the study reveals contemporary discourses that govern normative female sexual behaviour, reflecting the multiethnic, multilingual, and religious diversity of Ghanaian society, and how these discourses influence perceptions of women's rhetoric.

It is observable that while the existing studies have explored the role of media in reinforcing patriarchal norms (Watson-Nortey et al., 2024), gendered political rhetoric (Donkor, 2016; Diabah & Agyepong, 2022), and the broader discursive construction of womanhood in Ghana (Ansah & Dzregah, 2020), these studies primarily focus on institutional discourse and media representations, often overlooking the intertextual connection between oral traditions and digital commentary. Even though some of these studies have examined how ethos and discourse shape perceptions of women, they do not explicitly engage with the intersection of traditional proverbs and social media rhetoric. Given the increasing role of digital platforms in shaping public discourse, there is a need to explore how social media users adopt, challenge, or transform the gendered ideologies embedded in Akan proverbs when discussing issues pertaining to women in contemporary Ghanaian society. This paper, therefore, fills the gap partially by exploring the extent to which social media platforms provide a space for reinforcing the gender ideologies embedded in Akan proverbs. Hopefully, the other themes like how social media serve as a space for challenging gendered ideologies in Akan proverbs will be covered in my next paper.

3. Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) offers a powerful and context-sensitive methodological framework for examining how language constructs and sustains gendered power relations. This study adopts FCDA not only as a theoretical tool but as a deliberate and necessary lens through which to interrogate the ideological reproduction of patriarchal values embedded in both traditional Akan proverbs and contemporary social media commentary. FCDA is especially appropriate for this analysis because it centres on the interplay between gender, discourse, and power—an intersection crucial to understanding how deeply rooted gender ideologies persist across communicative forms. As Mallinos (2019, p. 25) notes, FCDA foregrounds how media and texts construct narratives around issues affecting women, while also exposing the covert linguistic strategies that normalize gender-based inequalities.

The relevance of FCDA to this study is further grounded in the sociocultural context of Ghana, where patriarchal ideologies are often naturalized and perpetuated through both oral and digital discourse (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Van Dijk, 1993). Ghanaian proverbs, with their metaphorical and didactic character, play a significant role in maintaining societal norms, often

portraying women as submissive, voiceless, and lacking agency (Diabah, 2022). Lazar (2005, p. 141) observes that in such discourses, the workings of power are frequently subtle and ideologically embedded, rendering FCDA a necessary approach for uncovering these concealed dynamics. Thus, FCDA is not simply suitable—it is indispensable to this study’s aim of revealing the linguistic mechanisms through which traditional and digital narratives converge to reinforce gender hierarchies.

The necessity of FCDA in this context is also supported by contemporary feminist media critiques. Shahzadi et al. (2023), for instance, demonstrate how Pakistani primetime dramas limit women’s roles and voices, shaping societal attitudes toward gender identity. Similarly, Patowary (2016) argues that media representations of women often cater to the male gaze, perpetuating stereotypes and diminishing female agency. Bachmann et al. (2018) extend this critique to global media, highlighting the need for intersectional and transdisciplinary frameworks to counteract marginalization and objectification. These studies collectively affirm FCDA’s utility in exposing and resisting the discursive reproduction of gender inequalities, reinforcing its appropriateness for the analysis of both traditional proverbs and social media commentary in the Ghanaian context.

The current study uses FCDA to interrogate how social media commentary reproduces the same patriarchal values historically articulated in Akan proverbs. The framework’s strength lies in its ability to decode implicit messages and challenge normalized discursive practices that sustain male dominance and female subordination (Lazar, 2007, p. 2). By making visible the hidden structures of linguistic power (Van Dijk, 1993), this approach facilitates a critical examination of how contemporary digital platforms act as echo chambers for age-old patriarchal ideologies.

4. Findings

The findings of this study reveal a consistent ideological thread linking traditional Akan proverbs and contemporary social media discourse in the portrayal of women. Proverbs depict women as inherently dependent on men for success, guidance, and social value, framing them as subservient and lacking agency. This gendered ideology is echoed in social media commentary on prominent Ghanaian women in politics and public service, where their competence, authority, and autonomy are routinely questioned or undermined. Through the lens of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, the study demonstrates that both oral traditions and digital commentary serve as sites for the reproduction of patriarchal norms, reinforcing structural gender inequalities in Ghanaian society.

4.1 Akan proverbs that portray women as homemakers

- a. *ɔbaatan na onim deɛ ne ba bedie* ‘It is a mother who knows what her child will eat.’
- b. *ɔbaa na onim ne kunu yam kɔm* ‘it is a woman who knows when her husband is hungry (lit. her husband’s stomach hunger)’
- c. *Akokɔ a ɔben oni na odi abebe sere* ‘It is the chicken that is close to its mother that eats the thigh of a grasshopper.’

From a Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, the Akan proverbs “*ɔbaatan na onim deɛ ne ba beɛdie*” (‘It is a mother who knows what her child will eat’), “*ɔbaa na ɔnim ne kunu yam kɔm*” (‘A woman knows when her husband is hungry’), and “*Akokɔ a ɔben oni na odi abeɛɛ sere*” (‘It is the chicken that is close to its mother that eats the thigh of a grasshopper’) work collectively to construct and normalize a discourse that confines women primarily to domestic and caregiving roles. The first two proverbs specifically highlight women’s duties toward family sustenance, portraying women as naturally and singularly responsible for nurturing and meeting the needs of other household members. By framing caregiving as an inherent female attribute, these proverbs invisibly naturalize women’s labour within the home, making it seem unremarkable and obligatory rather than socially constructed and unequally distributed (Diabah, 2022). The third proverb, although less direct, metaphorically emphasizes proximity to maternal figures as a route to sustenance, subtly reinforcing the notion that women/mothers are the exclusive providers of care and resources within the private sphere. Through their figurative and opaque language, these proverbs obscure the ideological work they perform: they reproduce and legitimize patriarchal gender arrangements by scripting women into roles of service, emotional labour, and invisibility in public or leadership spaces.

There are notable social media comments that instantiate the ideology that women are home makers, reinforcing the ideas in in the proverbs. For instance, on a TikTok post about the current vice president of Ghana who has been reported sick, the following comments were made.

“Grandma, come home. We need you at home more than in politics”

“Grandma, please resign from the post, you should be taking care of your grandchildren,”

“this work is more than you, grandma, you should be home thinking about your family”

“get well soon, Ma; you have taken a job that is more than you”

These comments reflect and perpetuates deeply entrenched gender ideologies rooted in traditional Akan proverbs that work in concert with other to portray women as homemakers. Through a Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis lens, these comments exemplify how contemporary discourse continues to reassert the normative expectation that a woman’s rightful place is within the domestic sphere rather than the public or political arena. Referring to the Ghana vice president, Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang, as “Grandma” some social media commentators infantilize and domesticate her, framing her primarily through familial and nurturing roles rather than political competence. The demand for her resignation suggests that political leadership is incompatible with her gender and presumed responsibilities at home. In line with the ideological work of the proverbs, the comment naturalizes the belief that women’s value lies in caregiving, not governance. The comments reinforce patriarchal structures by attempting to police the boundaries of acceptable female behaviour, excluding women from public power and limiting them to private, subordinate roles (Diabah, 2022). In this regard, FCDA reveals how such everyday comments on social media,

though seemingly casual or affectionate, are powerful sites of ideological reproduction, ensuring the continuity of gendered power hierarchies under the guise of cultural respect and tradition.

4.2 Proverbs that portray women as dependents

- a. *ɔbaa tɔ ɔdwan a, ɔbarima na ɔyɛn no.*
"If a woman buys a sheep, it is a man who rears it."
- b. *ɔbaa bɛyɛ yie a, na ɛfiri ɔbarima.*
"If a woman will be wealthy/successful, it is due to a man."
- c. *ɔbaa wɔ mpempem a, ɔbarima na ɔhwɛ no soɔ.*
"No matter how rich a woman is (lit. if a woman has thousands and thousands), it is a man who looks after her."
- d. *ɔbaa ho yɛ fɛ a, na ɛfiri ɔbarima.*
"If a woman is beautiful, it is because of a man."

These Akan proverbs "*ɔbaa tɔ ɔdwan a, ɔbarima na ɔyɛn no*" ('If a woman buys a sheep, it is a man who rears it'), "*ɔbaa bɛyɛ yie a, na ɛfiri ɔbarima*" ('If a woman will be wealthy/successful, it is due to a man'), "*ɔbaa wɔ mpempem a, ɔbarima na ɔhwɛ no soɔ*" ('No matter how rich a woman is, it is a man who looks after her'), and "*ɔbaa ho yɛ fɛ a, na ɛfiri ɔbarima*" ('If a woman is beautiful, it is because of a man') encapsulate a recurring ideological framework that positions women as fundamentally dependent on men for their success, survival, and value. Feminist scholarship has long argued that such cultural artifacts are not mere reflections of social attitudes but are active instruments in the reproduction of patriarchal power structures (Lazar, 2005; hooks, 1989). Through the lens of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA), these proverbs exemplify what Lazar (2005, p. 141) calls the "normalization of asymmetrical gender relations," wherein women's achievements, wealth, and even physical attributes are discursively tethered to male agency. Asante and Akyea (2011) observe that traditional proverbs often reflect and perpetuate a worldview where women's identities and successes are contingent on their relationships to men, thus undermining women's autonomy and self-sufficiency (30). With bell hooks' (1989) conceptualization of women agency as the capacity to make decision, assume leadership roles and take actions, the characterization of women in the socio-cultural practice of Ghana does not promote women empowerment and agency.

The proverb "*ɔbaa tɔ ɔdwan a, ɔbarima na ɔyɛn no*" suggests that even when a woman acquires property, she needs male oversight to manage it effectively, aligning with arguments by scholars like Diabah and Amfo (2018, p.18) who assert that in many Ghanaian contexts, women's achievements are culturally redefined to affirm male superiority. Similarly, the assertion that a woman's success ('*ɔbaa bɛyɛ yie a*') or wealth ('*ɔbaa wɔ mpempem a*'), is always due to how a man denies women independent economic agency and reflects entrenched notions of male economic guardianship over women. The proverb "*ɔbaa ho yɛ fɛ a, na ɛfiri ɔbarima*" ['if a woman is beautiful, then is the making of a man'] goes even further by suggesting that a woman's physical attractiveness is also a product of male influence, resonating with the global feminist critique that

women's bodies are often seen and valued primarily through the male gaze (Kyiileyang & Acheampong, 2022, p. 56). This intersection of dependency and objectification has a cumulative effect: it discursively inscribes women's existence as secondary, derivative, and incomplete without male validation. Collectively, these proverbs contribute to a cultural environment where women's agencies are systematically minimized. As indicated by Fairclough (1992) and van Dijk (1993), argue, discursive practices such as proverbial expressions are powerful precisely because of their "common sense" nature — they present gendered hierarchies as natural, inevitable, and thus beyond contestation.

In contemporary Ghanaian society, even as women achieve remarkable strides in education, politics, and business, the ideological weight of such proverbial discourses continues to challenge efforts toward genuine gender equality, subtly reinforcing the patriarchal status quo (Diabah & Amfo, 2018, p. 3). The social media comments extracted from TikTok and Facebook about Gertrude Araba Torkornoo, the Chief Justice and Attorney General of Ghana and Gifty Oware-Mensah, former deputy director for National Service Authority, instantiate and reaffirm the ideological underpinnings of the Akan proverbs that depict women as fundamentally dependent on men for action, decision-making, and authority. Appointed in June 2023 by former president, by Nana Akufo-Addo, as Ghana's 15th Chief Justice and the third woman to hold this esteemed position, Gertrude Torkornoo's tenure has been marred by controversy. On April 22, 2025, President John Mahama suspended her following the receipt of three petitions alleging misconduct. On the other hand, Gifty Oware-Mensah, who served as the Deputy Executive Director of the National Service Scheme (NSS) from 2017 until January 2025, is currently under scrutiny due to a significant payroll fraud scandal. In February 2025, investigations revealed the presence of approximately 81,885 "ghost names" on the NSS payroll, resulting in an estimated financial loss of GHC50 million per month to the state. Oware-Mensah was responsible for administration and finance during her tenure. Both the Gertrude Araba Esaaba Torkornoo and Gifty Oware-Mensah are prominent figures in Ghana's public discourse, each embroiled in significant controversies that have garnered widespread attention on social media platforms.

It is observable that the Akan proverbs "*ɔbaa tɔ ɔdwan a, ɔbarima na ɔyɛn no*" ('If a woman buys a sheep, it is a man who rears it') and "*ɔbaa bɛyɛ yie a, na efiri ɔbarima*" ('If a woman will be wealthy, it is due to a man') propagate the notion that women's successes or failures are orchestrated or controlled by men. The comments reinforce this by suggesting that women in positions of power are either manipulated or incapable of independent action. In the comment — "*She, Gertrude Araba Torkornoo, wasn't the right person for the Chief Justice job; the president, Nana Akufo-Addo, appointed her so that he can be pushing her to do what he likes*" — the speaker undermines the Chief Justice's professional competence and autonomy, attributing her appointment not to merit but to male political maneuvering. This echoes the ideological disposition that even when women appear successful, their achievements are a function of male control, thereby denying them full subjectivity and agency. Similarly, the comments about Gifty Oware — "*The woman cannot be the one who masterminded the corrupt practice. Arrest the men rather.*"

They just used her” — and *“No, get the men behind her; she was just pushed to do it”* — reinforce the notion that women are passive instruments, incapable of independently orchestrating significant actions (whether positive or negative). Here, women’s actions are framed not as results of their volition but as effects of male manipulation, closely paralleling the proverb “*ɔbaa wo mpempem a, ɔbarima na ɔhwe no soɔ*” (‘Even if a woman has thousands, it is a man who looks after her’).

These discourses reveal a pervasive assumption among some participants of digital discourse that women, by nature or social construction, are inherently dependent on men for guidance, authority, and legitimacy. This view not only delegitimizes women’s accomplishments, but also excuses them from accountability, implying that they lack the full rational agency attributed to men. As Lazar (2007) argues, such ideological constructions operate subtly yet powerfully in discourse, sustaining a patriarchal social order by naturalizing gendered hierarchies under the guise of “common sense” narratives (2). Through these social media comments, the patriarchal assumptions encoded in traditional Akan proverbs are “digitally echoed,” showing how age-old gender ideologies are continually reinscribed in new communicative spaces. FCDA thus helps to uncover how ostensibly benign or sympathetic narratives — protecting women from blame, for instance — are in fact complicit in perpetuating systemic views of women as less capable, less independent, and ultimately less powerful.

4.3 Proverbs that portray women as subservient or subordinate

There are Akan proverbs that carry the ideology that women are subordinates to men. these proverbs highlight a pervasive ideology of women’s subordination and secondary status within Akan society. This ideological structure mirrors the broader cultural narratives that Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis critiques —how discourse (including traditional sayings) sustains and legitimizes gender hierarchies. The proverb “*Akokɔ bere nso nim adekyee, nso ɔhwe onini ano*” (‘The hen also knows daybreak, yet she waits for the rooster’s crow’) suggests that even when a woman possesses knowledge, awareness, or competence, she must defer to male authority. This mirrors the discourse described by scholars like Lazar (2005), who argue that patriarchal societies symbolically and practically diminish women’s autonomy by conditioning them to yield their voices to men, thus institutionalizing silence and passivity as feminine virtues.

Similarly, “*ɔbaa a ɔpe ne kunu, ɔse: ‘Mehwe wo ara’*” (‘A woman who loves her husband says: ‘I look up to you’) explicitly links a woman’s loyalty and love to her readiness to submit to her husband’s authority. Such framing naturalizes subservience, portraying it not merely as a social expectation but as an expression of genuine affection and virtue. This aligns with the observation that dominant gender ideologies often present women’s subordination as voluntary and natural rather than socially imposed. The proverb “*ɔbaa da ɔbarima akyi*” (‘A woman lies behind a man’) succinctly captures the broader sociocultural norm that a woman’s proper place is behind a man — symbolically indicating lower status, dependence, and invisibility. The literature on gender roles (e.g., Kyiileyang & cheampong, 2022; Asante & Akyea, 2011; Shahzadi et al., 2023) often notes

how traditional discourses spatially and hierarchically position women as subordinate, thereby entrenching male dominance as the societal norm.

The sayings “*ɔbaa to tuo a, etwere ɔbarima dan mu*” (‘If a woman buys a gun, she keeps it in a man’s room’) and “*baa tɔn nyaadewa na ɔntɔn atuduro*” (‘A woman sells garden eggs, but doesn’t sell gunpowder’) similarly portray women as incapable or unauthorized to control power (symbolized here by weapons). This restricts women’s activities to the domestic and non-threatening sphere, framing power, aggression, and even public agency as exclusively masculine traits (Asante & Akyea, 2011, p. 30). As noted by Litosseliti (2006), such discourses legitimize gendered divisions of labor and authority while rendering male control over violence and power- “common sense.”

Finally, “*ɔbaa di ɔbaa adeɛ, na ɔbarima di ɔbarima adeɛ*” (‘A woman inherits a woman’s things and a man inherits a man’s things’) reflects a deeper ideological commitment to gender segregation and hierarchy. Inheritance — a key avenue for economic agency — is strictly divided along gender lines, systematically limiting women’s access to broader resources and reinforcing male dominance across generations (Van Dijk, 1993).

In examining contemporary social media discourse about prominent Ghanaian women in leadership, it becomes clear that deep-seated patriarchal ideologies, long reflected in Akan proverbial expressions, continue to shape public perceptions of female authority (Kyiileyang & Acheampong, 2022, 56). The comments analyzed reveal persistent gendered assumptions that women lack autonomy, must remain subordinate to men, and are unfit to exercise control in political or economic spaces—ideologies deeply rooted in traditional Akan proverbs such as “*ɔbaa da ɔbarima akyi*” (A woman lies behind a man) and “*akokɔ bere nso nim adekyee, nso ɔhwɛ onini ano*” (The hen knows daybreak, yet waits for the rooster’s crow). Echoing this ideology embedded in these proverbs is a comment about a female member of parliament who was challenging an argument raised by the Minority Leader, Alexander Afenyo-Markin, in Ghana’s parliament house. The disagreement stemmed from the Minority Leader, criticizing appointments made by President John Mahama for not having enough representation from the Ga-Adangbe people. Honourable Doyoe Cudjoe-Ghansah, the MP for Ada, responded to Afenyo-Markin’s criticism, seemingly defending the appointments made. Her response was characterized by the phrase “*Di wo fie asem*”, which translates to ‘mind your own business’ or ‘attend to matters in your own house’. This suggests she felt Afenyo-Markin’s comments were not relevant to him or his position. In essence, the disagreement was a political back-and-forth. In the short video that captured the moment of the back-and-forth exchange, some viewers wrote comments that question the female parliamentarian’s marital status. One commentator wrote: “*I wonder if this woman has a husband; how can you be talking to a man like this?*” I observed that many of the viewers of the video used emojis and thumb symbol to demonstrate their support or express their like for the comment made. This illustrates the assumption that a woman’s proper behavior is tied to her relational identity to a man, specifically through marriage. Speaking assertively to a man is viewed as deviant, thus

reinforcing the proverb that a woman's place is behind a man, both literally and metaphorically. This reflects the societal expectation that women must demonstrate deference to men in public and private spheres, with marriage functioning as a mechanism to regulate female behavior (Owu-Ewie, 2019, p. 25).

Similarly, the reaction to Gifty Oware's alleged involvement in corruption—*"Is she the one who provides for the home? Is she now the provider for the family?"*—reveals a discomfort with women occupying roles associated with economic control. The incredulity that a woman could be the originator of financial schemes underscores the belief that women are inherently dependent and not primary agents of wealth or economic initiative, echoing proverbs like *"ɔbaa beye yie a, na efiri ɔbarima"* ('If a woman becomes successful, it is because of a man') and *"ɔbaa tɔ dwan a, ɔbarima na ɔyen no"* ('If a woman buys a sheep, it is the man who rears it'). Women are positioned as economic dependents, not as independent actors capable of influencing financial outcomes. This ideology makes the commentator wonder what the female deputy director would want to use that huge sum of money for. This ideological disposition also buttresses the perspective of some of the commentators that it wasn't her idea to engage in the corrupt practice, but she carried out the act by the influence of the male director.

Lastly, the skepticism expressed toward the female vice president's ability to manage the economy—*"Even a man, Dr. Bawumia, couldn't manage the economy well. How much more a woman?"*—reinforces the entrenched notion that leadership and competence in complex, high-stakes domains are inherently male attributes. The assertion that she is merely occupying a position while actual governance will be carried out by the president starkly echoes the ideology that women, even in positions of formal authority, are symbolic figures without real power—a digital reenactment of the proverbial idea that women, no matter how capable, must defer control to men, a situation that does not conform to the feminist scholars (eg, hooks, 1989; Bone et al., 2008; Foss & Griffin, 1995) who believe in equity, inclusivity and woman empowerment and agency. These social media narratives demonstrate that despite modernization and digitalization, traditional patriarchal ideologies encoded in Akan proverbs continue to structure perceptions of women's roles in society. Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis highlights how language practices—even in seemingly casual online commentary—subtly but powerfully sustain gendered power relations, normalizing women's subordination and casting suspicion on female agency in public life. Thus, the digital public sphere becomes another arena where old ideologies are rearticulated, reinforcing gender inequalities under the guise of cultural norms. Taken together, these proverbs and their instantiation in the social media commentary reveal how Akan proverbial discourse acts as a subtle but powerful mechanism for reproducing a patriarchal social order, echoing Lazar's insight that modern gender inequalities are often maintained through opaque, culturally embedded discourses. Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA), therefore, offers a crucial tool for making visible these hidden structures, exposing the ways in which seemingly benign traditional wisdom reinforces systemic gender subordination. FCDA's task, then, is to make visible how such

“traditional” cultural artifacts continue to circulate, even in modern spaces like social media, thus sustaining structures of gender inequality under the guise of cultural continuity.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study explores how Akan proverbs and social media commentary together reinforce patriarchal ideologies that depict women as subordinate, dependent, and lacking agency in Ghanaian society. Using Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, the research reveals that traditional proverbs like “ɔbaa da ɔbarima akyi” and “akokɔ bere nso nim adekyee, nso ɔhwɛ onini ano” continue to shape public perceptions by suggesting women’s inferiority and economic reliance on men. These ideologies are echoed and revitalized in digital discourse, where women leaders are often undermined and framed as incapable without male support. Such representations conflict with invitational rhetoric, which values equality and self-determination. The findings support existing scholarship showing that Ghanaian media and political spaces often reinforce gendered stereotypes despite emerging feminist counter-discourses. This study contributes by showing how oral traditions like proverbs are rearticulated in online spaces, sustaining patriarchal narratives. Ultimately, it highlights how digital commentary continues to resist the deconstruction of structural power, marginalizing women who enter male-dominated fields.

While this paper focused on how social media reinforces traditional gender ideologies, future research could further explore how digital platforms simultaneously offer opportunities for resisting and challenging these patriarchal norms. A more comprehensive examination of counter-discourses would provide a nuanced understanding of how contemporary Ghanaian society negotiates and transforms gendered ideologies amidst the tensions between tradition and modernity.

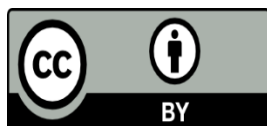
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