



Language as a tool for the oppression of women in marriages in the Shona society: A critical discourse analysis approach

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research is a Critical Discourse Analysis of the ways in which language is used by people in the Shona society when giving women marital advices. It specifically identifies harmful Shona phrases used when advising women on marital issues, examines how the phrases reinforce the oppression of women in the Shona society and the repercussions of using such phrases on women. Results of the research indicate that the phrases used when giving women marital advice reinforce the oppression of women as they limit women's access to education and economic opportunities, perpetuate gender stereotyping, victim blaming, emotional blackmail, sexism and misogyny, male dominance and gendered expectations. Findings reflect that using these phrases on women make them give up on their educational goals, tolerate and normalise abusive behaviours and hang in abusive marriages which is detrimental to their physical and emotional health. Results help raise awareness among policy makers about the sources of gender oppression and inequality as gender equality is a topical issue within Zimbabwe and the world over. Results also raise awareness among people about how the language they use when advising each other on marital issues can reinforce systems of oppression, patriarchal beliefs, gender inequality and intolerance.



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INTRODUCTION

Language is an extremely powerful factor in our culture and society. It is a tool of communication, a key to our community and can be a sacred tool of oppression. Language can also be one of the means through which patriarchal values are both maintained and resisted (Subaşı, 2020). Language can also be used to reinforce and naturalise dominant ideologies, marginalise and exclude subordinate groups, shape public opinion and influence social policy (Fairclough, 2013). In the context of marriage, language can also be a powerful tool of oppression; it can be used to perpetuate patriarchal norms and reinforce gender-based inequality. The language used can reinforce systems of oppression, patriarchal beliefs, gender inequality and intolerance Lakoff (1975). Words are very powerful to an extent that they can impact people's emotions, promote hope, drive decision-making, create a certain mind-set and reinforce beliefs. The Shona society places more emphasis on marriage and according to it, every woman should be married (Kamwendo & Kaya, 2016). If marriage fails, the blame is put on the woman so the woman is expected to endure all marital challenges (Dickson & Mbosowo, 2014). To avoid divorce or sustain their marriages, women seek marital advices from their peers and some advices might instruct the woman to endure challenges and stay in the marriage even if it is abusive. The words and phrases used may drive decision-making, reinforce beliefs and create a certain mind-set.

Language plays a significant role in maintaining patriarchal values by perpetuating gender stereotypes and reinforcing power dynamics (McConnell-Ginet & Eckert, 2003). In the African society, there is a growing trend whereby people use gender terminology when advising women, for example, they might use words such as 'homemaker' for women and 'breadwinner' for men, both of which reinforces gender stereotypes. Moreover, people might also use language of dominance, for example, using phrases like, 'head of the household', in which the phrase reinforces men's dominance

over women. People might also use restrictive language that is, using language that restricts women's autonomy, freedom and decision-making in marriage. Words possess immense power to impact people's emotions, thoughts and behaviours. They have significant impact in shaping people's thoughts and beliefs. This means that words or language can influence people's opinions, that is, they can shape opinions, attitudes, and beliefs, influencing their perspectives on various issues including involvement in education. Women learners would feel restricted in their educational choices due to societal stereotypes. Language can also motivate and persuade people to take action, adopt new habits or pursue their goals. It can also reinforce cultural values, social norms, and personal principles. Hence language has a significant impact in human lives.

In many African societies including Zimbabwe, marriage is highly valued and considered an important institution (Baloyi, 2022). In the African culture, marriage is viewed as a traditional value which is essential for a woman's identity, dignity, respectability and social status. Hence women face community pressure whereby they are forced by their families, communities and social networks to get married or endure marital challenges even if the marriage is very toxic and abusive (Dickson & Mbosowo, 2014). According to Baloyi (2022), the emphasis that is put on marriage in African societies can perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes and power imbalances. This power imbalance has also detrimental effects in education where women are denied equal opportunities to further their education in the pretext of marriage and submission. Women face marital inequality where they endure unequal power dynamics within marriage thereby compromising their rights and well-being. In such scenarios where women face marital challenges and inequality, women seek marital advices from their peers, counsellors and social networks and the language used in advising them might drive their decision-making, create a certain mind-set, reinforce patriarchal beliefs and oppress them. The same happens to new brides during kitchen parties and bridal showers where they are given advices on how to keep their marriages. The language used when advising such women about how to keep their marriages might shape thought patterns, influence their mind-sets and worldview. The question then becomes; 'how does the language used when giving women marital advices reinforce the oppression of Shona women and what are the aftermaths of using such language on women? It is against this background that this paper seeks to use Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to scrutinise how the language used when advising married women can perpetuate existing patriarchal belief systems thereby shaping women's worldview.

This research is guided by the following research objectives; 1.) Identify harmful Shona phrases used by people when advising women on issues that concerns marriage; 2.) Examine how the phrases reinforce the oppression of women in the Shona society; 3.) Examine the repercussions of using such phrases on African women in education and society in general.

Critical Discourse Analysis

This paper utilises Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as theoretical lenses governing the analysis of data. CDA is a qualitative research tool that examines the relationship between language, power and social structures. It aims to unravel how language is used to exercise power and reinforce ideology, particularly in relation to social inequality and domination (Van Dijk, 1993). Ideology in CDA is viewed as a set of beliefs, values and attitudes that underlie a particular discourse (Wodak and Meyer, 2009). This paper specifically utilises Fairclough's 2013 three-dimensional approach to CDA. Fairclough (2013) defines CDA as "a method of analysis which seeks to systematically explore the relationship between language and power". His approach emphasizes a focus on the ways in which language is used to exercise power and control over individuals or groups. He argues that language is not simply a neutral medium of communication but rather a social practice that is shaped by and reflects the social and cultural contexts in which it is used. This means that language is often used to exercise power and control over individuals and groups and it plays an important role in shaping social relationships and institutions (Van Dijk, 1993). Fairclough's 2013 three-dimensional approach emphasises three concepts which are, the text itself, the discourse practice and the sociocultural context in which the discourse is produced and consumed (Fairclough, 2013). Text analysis in this context entails examining linguistic features of the text, for example, vocabulary, grammar and syntax. Discourse practice analysis entails examining the social and cultural context in which the text

is produced and consumed, including the relationships between the participants and the institutions involved. Sociocultural analysis entails examining the broader social and cultural structures that shape the discourse practice. According to this approach, at the core is the idea of power in which he argues that language is often used to exercise power and control over others (Fairclough, 2013). This means that language can be used to reinforce and naturalise dominant ideologies and to marginalise and exclude subordinate groups. More so, the idea of ideology is also core in this approach in which he argues that language is used to reinforce and naturalise dominant ideologies. This therefore means that language can be used to shape public opinion and influence social policy. Fairclough's approach to CDA is a valuable tool in this paper because of its stated commitment to uncover how language is used to reinforce and naturalise dominant or already existing ideologies and shape public opinion, in this case, Shona women's worldview. This approach is also suitable as it adopts a critical perspective in analysing the Shona phrases aiming to challenge dominant discourses and power structures and promote social justice and equality.

RESEARCH METHODS

This paper employs a qualitative research design (Creswell, 2010) therefore it utilised observations and focus group discussions as its methods of data collection. The researchers collected data from its natural settings by observing conversations from two groups where women sought marital advices on social media platforms, specifically one Facebook and one WhatsApp groups. Data was also collected from focus group discussions. The focus group comprised of 6 women who discussed about their experiences in marriages, the advices they were given when they encountered challenges in marriages as well as how the advices affected them. Besides being used as a data collection method, focus group discussions were used to validate findings from the observations where women confirmed that at one point, they were also given the same advices. The discussion helped to gain a deeper understanding of women's experiences as well as how the advices affect them. Many groups are found on Facebook and WhatsApp. Some groups are for general talk while some are meant for marital issues. Therefore, this study used purposive sampling in selecting one Facebook and one WhatsApp group. Purposive sampling is defined by Jones (2004) as the selection of participants with the common characteristic of a population and for a specific purpose of the study. The researchers selected groups that had data required for this study, that is, the researchers decided on whether the group is meant for marital discussions or not, in order to select the group for this study. Purposive sampling was also used in selecting the phrases for this study. Only harmful phrases were selected out of all the advices that were shared in the groups. Using these methods, twenty phrases were collected from the two selected social media groups as well as the focus group. Besides being time efficient (Silverman, 2021), purposive sampling allowed researchers to select only knowledge that was relevant to the research question (Patton, 2002) and provided a contextual understanding as researchers gained a deeper understanding of the research phenomenon (gender-based oppression) within marital contexts (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Data is presented thematically in which researchers identified, coded and categorized themes within data and analysed using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). According to Braun & Clarke (2006), in thematic analysis, researchers look for patterns, relationships and meanings within the coded data and interpret the themes in relation to the research question and context.

The researchers are quite aware of the connotations of the study concerning ethics. Although these advices are given in public social media groups and meant for public consumption, they are only meant for helping victims and so, they are not open for anyone to analyse. Therefore, the researchers assure that these harmful phrases are used for academic research purposes only and that the study is not meant for any malicious or other personal attacks. Consent to participate in the research was sought from the women who participated in the focus group discussion. Furthermore, for privacy reasons, the researchers considered data anonymization; hence they removed any identifiable information from Facebook and WhatsApp conversations to protect the advisors' privacy and pseudonyms are used with regards to the women who participated in the focus group discussions. Only harmful phrases were collected and the researchers excluded the names of those who uttered them.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the harmful Shona phrases used when giving women marital advices in the Shona society.

Table 1. The Phrases Collected

Harmful Shona phrases	English translation
1. Varume vana vacheche, ukasavabikira vanokwata.	Men are like babies, if you do not cook for them, they will eat food from others.
2. Chero achiziva nzira yekumba.	As long as he knows the road that leads him home.
3. Ukasatevedzera murume wako, imba inoparara	If you don't obey your husband, you will ruin your marriage.
4. Shinga, ndizvo zvinoita dzimba.	Be strong, that's how marriages are.
5. Kunzi mukadzi kushinga.	A woman is defined by endurance
6. Mukadzi akangwara anofukidzira imba yake.	A clever woman protects her marriage.
7. Kwese-kwese kunongonaya.	It rains everywhere.
8. Gara mumba mako, anodzoka.	Remain married, he will come back for you.
9. Varume ndizvo zvavari	Men are always like that.
10. Gomera uripo, chiremerera chako chiri muwanano.	Endure the marital challenges because your dignity lies in your marriage.
11. Mutambire, ndisamusha uye baba vevana vako.	Welcome him back home because he is the head of the family and father of your children.
12. Nyarara ushandise mabvi	Keep quiet and pray.
13. Musha mukadzi	A wife makes up the home.
14. Mukadzi chaiye haafukure hapwa, fukidzira murume wako.	A real wife does not divulge information about her marriage, she covers up for her husband.
15. Mwana haana mhosva.	A child is innocent.
16. Iwe pachako hauchinje munhu, mudzosere kuna Mwari.	You do not change a person, give him back to God.
17. Chengetedza imba yako nekuti inyasha kuva nemurume.	Protect your marriage because you are lucky to have a husband.
18. Mukadzi akanaka anotevedzera zvinoda murume wake	A good wife always follows what her husband wants
19. Ukanyanya kudzidza unozovitonga	Education will make you too independent
20. Ibaso remurume wako kukuchengeta	It is the duty of your husband to take care of you

DISCUSSION

This section analyses how the above harmful Shona phrases reinforce the oppression of women and the repercussions of using such phrases on Shona women in education and society in general.

Victim blaming

In light of the harmful Shona phrases listed in the previous section, there is ample evidence to the effect that, several phrases shift responsibility from perpetrators to victims. Such phrases infer that the victim (woman) is accountable for the harm or abuse she has experienced. For example, in cases where the husband has betrothed in an extra-marital affair, his wife is told that, "*Varume vana vacheche, ukasavabikira vanokwata*" (Men are like babies, if you do not cook for them, they will eat food from others) which metaphorically means that if the wife does not satisfy her husband sexually, he is justified to have extra-marital affairs. To this end, the implication is that, wives are responsible for their spouses' actions. This is crystal clear evidence that the liability is always put on women yet they are the wounded in such cases. From an African perspective, if a marriage fails the blame is placed on the woman (Dickson & Mbosowo, 2014). Consistently, Bograd (1988) and Dunbar (1996)

concur that, some utterances made by people on issues of wife abuse shift the focus from the perpetrator's behaviour to the victim, implying that she is responsible for the problem.

One of the participants, woman A, in the focus group discussion expressed that when she sought marital intelligence from her relatives, she was given two unexpected responses. The first one was that, "*mukadzi chaiye haafukure hapwa, fukidzira murume wako*" (A real wife does not divulge information about her marriage, she covers up for her husband). Lastly, they said, "*Mukadzi akangwara anofukidzira imba yake*" (A clever woman protects her marriage). In response to these utterances, she felt stupid for reporting abuse by her husband which made her experience a double jeopardy as she then suffered physically and emotionally leading her vow never to seek such marital advice again.

An analysis of the above responses given by matrimonial advisors connote that, the woman who has sought advice was foolish to do so as she should have kept silent and covered up for her offensive husband. This is in tandem with Stern's (2018) argument that language can be used to manipulate women's perceptions of reality, making them doubt their own sanity or memory. Similarly, Fairclough (2013) argues that language can be used as a tool to shape public opinion. Hence, the victim might be forced to naturalise abuse and visualize it as culturally acceptable. Furthermore, such phrases suggest that reporting marital abuse is a taboo hence women should suffer in silence. This reinforces the patriarchal ideology that men are superior to women hence they should enjoy whilst women suffer. Against this background, such phrases are not only detrimental to marriage life but are discouraging and heart-breaking as they contribute to the oppression of women both psychologically and emotionally. In light of the above, language is thus often used to exercise power and control over others (Fairclough, 2013) thereby reinforcing and naturalising dominant ideologies.

Unwarranted pieces of advice on marital issues of this magnitude have a ripple effect even on educational access and achievement. When such happens, educational advancement and room for quality performance are adversely affected due to the trauma and emotions that culminate from them. Woman A further narrated her ordeal and mentioned vividly and categorically clear that, she was put-off by the cultural advice rendered. The advices at her disposal made her regret to an extent that she then refrained from sharing her marital glitches as she resultantly attained lower grades at school. Hill & Lynch (1983) opine that, high level of anxiety and stress can negatively impact on performance leading to decreased grades and attainment. Thus, restrictions that are levelled against women on disclosure ultimately render them reserved and retain all stressing interactions to themselves.

Limiting women's access to education and economic opportunities

Several findings surfaced against some advices given to women with a bearing on women's access to education and economic opportunities. These include amongst others that women are discouraged from pursuing education. There is also a reinforcement of harmful stereotypes about women's abilities in addition to perpetuating gender inequality thereby limiting women's access to education and economic opportunities. Woman B from the focus group confirmed that when she wanted to pursue her Masters degree, she was told that, "*ukanyanya kudzidza unozovitonga*" (education will make you too independent). Such an advice discouraged her to the bone-marrow as she could not pursue her post-graduate degree. The phrase suggests that women's independence is a threat to marriage, thus they should not be too educated or have better educational qualifications than those of their spouses. The said limit to education attainable by women is can be attributed to the fact that in an African society, women's roles are limited to domestic and reproductive responsibilities (Okeke-Ihejirika, 2004), hence the lower emphasis on their education.

Such phrases have the potential to limit women's contributions to the academia (Spender, 1980) in cases where the woman fails to resist or challenge the status quo. Similarly, the phrase, "*mukadzi akanaka anotevedzera zvinoda murume wake*" (a good wife always follows what her husband wants) which is usually used when a women seeks advice on issues that concerns her decisions in marriage including pursuing education have a profoundly negative impact on women as it undermines not only the women's autonomy and agency but also their freedom and human dignity.

Such phrases reinforce the idea that women's needs are secondary to men's thereby promoting self-sacrifice and martyrdom (Bartky, 1990) as they also undermine women's authority (Lakoff, 1975).

Similarly, the phrase, "*ibasa remurume wako kukuchengeta*" (it is your husband's duty to take care of you), perpetuates the idea that women should be dependent on men. In the African society, husbands are expected to provide financial support, protection and emotional care for their wives (Mbiti, 1990; Okereke, 2008) hence the phrase reinforces this dominant ideology (Fairclough, 2013). The phrase makes women feel like they are incapable of looking after themselves thereby discouraging them from pursuing careers and promotions as they are made to believe that, they should rely on their husbands. Such belief systems are a transgression of not only human rights, but also a contradiction to national policies. The gender equality as well as Zimbabwe's vision 2030 goals of transforming Zimbabwe into an upper middle-income economy will be hindered since only men will be contributing to the country's economic success. Ultimately, women may feel pressured to surrender their decision-making power and independence. Thus, all the above phrases as discussed, lead to limited social mobility where women are discouraged from pursuing education, careers and personal goals.

The aforementioned phrases also deject women from chasing promotions thereby eroding their confidence and self-worth. These phrases derail women from attaining financial independence hence they will have to solely rely on their husbands for financial support. Dependence in itself is recipe for oppression. Summarily, using these phrases on women confines their contributions to the society, reinforces patriarchal attitudes, perpetuates a culture of male dominance and undermines gender equality. Repeated exposure to these harmful phrases culminates into internalised oppression where women begin to believe in their own inferiority. Hence, it is of no doubt that language is not simply a neutral medium of communication but rather a social practice that is shaped by and reflects the social and cultural contexts in which it is used (Fairclough, 2013). This shows that language is a power instrument of controlling and changing individuals and groups.

Gendered expectations

Some phrases reinforce the already existing patriarchal norms thereby reinforcing the oppression of women. Such phrases reinforce societal expectations based on gender. Fairclough (2013) strongly argues that language can be used to reinforce and naturalise dominant ideologies and to marginalise and exclude subordinate groups. In the African society, women are expected to have strength to face marital challenges because they are considered to be homemakers. They are expected to withstand marital challenges even if the husband is oppressive. This argument is supported by Dickson & Mbosowo (2014) who assert that, if the marriage fails, the blame is put on the woman and she is seen as the culprit and so, she is looked down upon by the whole society. Hence there is societal pressure on the African woman to hang in the marriage and make it work. All women who participated in the focus group testified that, throughout their marriage journey, phrases such as, "*kunzi mukadzi kushinga*" (a woman is defined by endurance), "*shinga ndizvo zvinoita dzimba*" (be strong, that's how marriages are), "*kwese kwese kunongonaya*" (it rains everywhere) were common. Such phrases suggest that women should be strong and able to endure all marital challenges. The phrases put pressure on the victims to hang in the abusive marriages which might be detrimental to their mental and physical health. Similarly, the phrase, "*gomera uripo, chiremerera chako chiri muwanano*" (endure the marital challenges because your dignity lies in your marriage) reduces women's worth to their marital status and forces her to endure marital challenges. This phrase reinforces the African ideology that a woman's value lies in her marital status as the society expects every woman to be married. If marriage fails then all the blame is put on the woman and she is even given a sarcastic name, for example, in Shona, that woman is named "*mvana*" (single mother), in which case there is no equivalent name for a single father (Chitauro-Mawema, 2005). Woman C in the focus group clearly explained that she has hanged in an abusive marriage because of fear of being given derogatory names such as 'returned soldier' in which the name suggests that she has failed to fight for her marriage. This evidences that language has power to influence people's decisions and actions. However, it is important to note that in some cases, women may challenge the status quo despite being given such advices. Woman D stated that she has managed to divorce her husband

despite being given such advices by her pastor. She stated, “*despite being told that my dignity lies in my marriage, I divorced my toxic husband because I believe that my dignity lies in my personal achievements. After all, I am now married to a kind man so it doesn't rain everywhere*”. This shows that women do not always adhere to the harmful advices they are given but may also resist and fight for their own rights.

Similarly, the phrase “*musha mukadzi*” (a wife makes up the home) suggests that African women’s activities are related to domestic life (Alesina et al., 2013) and not non-domestic life where they get education and employment. As mentioned earlier, women are viewed as homemakers. According to Ejim (2017), women in Africa are expected to do chores such as cleaning the home, cooking for the family, washing and working in the fields, to mention but a few. Hence, when women seek marital advice they are told that “*musha mukadzi*” because of that societal expectation. Chigidi & Tembo (2013) argue that, this famous Shona phrase gives, at face value, the impression of a woman with power yet in actual fact, when people say ‘*musha mukadzi*’ they mean that a mother must sacrifice herself so that the home survives: she must bear children, cook, sweep, wash for everyone, go to the fields, fetch firewood, fetch water, entertain visitors and husband’s relatives. In short, the woman must sacrifice herself in the interest of others, without complaining. But this woman has no ‘power’; she has been reduced to a beast of labour, a slave (Chigidi & Tembo, 2013). This phrase limits women’s access to education and economic opportunities as their activities are limited to domestic life. Moreover, the phrases, “*nyarara ushandise mabvi*” (keep quiet and pray) and “*iwe pachako hauchinje munhu, mudzosere kuna Mwari*” (you do not change a person, give him back to God) suggest that women should suffer in silence rather than speaking out against injustice. Such phrases reinforce societal expectations on women as they are expected to be more religious than men. They are expected to get answers from God rather than reporting abuse. All these phrases reinforce the already existing societal expectations on women thereby perpetuating the oppression of women. Hence Fairclough’s (2013) argument that language reinforces dominant ideologies and can shape people’s opinions. Saying these phrases to the victims, in this case women, makes them accept or tolerate abuse and normalise the unjust treatment they get in marriages. This is true as Woman E articulates that, “*zvechokwadi musha mukadzi nokuti ukasashinga unoparara*” (it is true that a wife makes a home homely because if you lack courage, the home will collapse). This statement shows that the woman has accepted and normalised unjust treatment in marriage. This may lead to school dropouts as women sacrifice themselves for the survival of their marriages and strive to become ‘real women’ expected by the society.

Male dominance

Other phrases used when giving women marital advice perpetuate male superiority thereby oppressing women. Such phrases strengthen Lakoff’s (1975) argument that language is used to reinforce patriarchal norms and stereotypes. Cuklanz (2000) notes that men should be powerful and dominant in society. This African ideology still persists hence when a man is engaged in extra marital affairs, his wife is told, “*chero achiziva nzira yekumba*” (as long as he knows the road that leads him home) or “*varume ndizvo zvavari*” (men are always like that). These phrases normalise the behaviour of men and suggest that women’s feelings are not important which is not fair to women. More so, the phrases downplay the severity of the harm or abuse to the woman and imply that the victim is too sensitive and dramatic. Hence Fairclough (2013) argues that language can be used to marginalise subordinate groups and can shape public opinion as these phrases can change the victim’s mind-set and make her normalise the promiscuous behaviour of her husband. Moreover, the phrases, “*gara mumba mako, anodzoka*” (remain married, he will come back for you) and “*mutambire, ndisamusha uye baba vevana vako*” (welcome him back home because he is the head of the family and father of your children) forces the woman to accept and tolerate the unjust behaviour of her husband. These phrases are usually uttered in cases where the husband has left the marriage for another woman for so many years then eventually come back to his first wife. The woman is then told to accept the husband since he is viewed as the ‘head of the family’. These harmful phrases perpetuate the notion that women are inferior to men (Dobash & Dobash, 1979) and makes women suffer whilst men enjoy. This reinforces Mesthrie’s (2002) argument that language is used to assert dominance and maintain social hierarchies. Hence Fairclough’s (2013) argument that power over others is exercised through

language. This is evidence that language reinforces and reflects power dynamics in the African society. Forcing women to normalise the unjust behaviour of men exposes them to Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STIs) as they hang in the abusive marriages. The inferiority complex makes women to believe they are second to men in all issues including education. Performance as a result of low self-esteem is lowered with even low expectations. The submission tendencies would also culminate into even agreeing to drop out of school even if their performance is better than the male counterparts. Male dominance in most cultures leads to prioritising boys/men's education over girls/women limiting their access to education. Furthermore this male dominance results in biased resource allocation, curriculum and teaching material limiting women's educational experiences.

Perpetuating sexism and misogyny

Some phrases used perpetuate sexism and misogyny. Keller (2016) states that misogynistic language promotes hatred or violence against women and perpetuates patriarchy. The phrase, "*gomera uripo, chimerera chako chiri muwanano*" (endure the marital challenges because your dignity lies in your marriage) implies that women's value is in their marital status. This means that if a woman is not married, she is valueless. This phrase reinforces the already existing gender ideology in the African society that every woman should be married (Kamwendo & Kaya, 2016). In the Shona society, if a woman is not married, she is derogatorily termed "*tsikombi*" (an unmarried lady) or if marriage fails, she is derogatorily termed, "*mvana*" (single mother). This is the reason why women are told to endure the marital challenges as their dignity lies in their marriages in which the phrase depicts some kind of misogyny. This concretises Fairclough's (2013) argument that language reinforces dominant ideologies and marginalises subordinate groups. Similarly, the phrase "*chengetedza imba yako, inyasha kuva nemurume*" (protect your marriage because you are lucky to have a husband) implies that the woman is inferior and fortunate to have a husband so she should be grateful for male partnership. This again perpetuates misogyny as a woman's worth is associated with her marital status. These phrases create a mind-set of self-hate within women and instil fear of devaluing themselves if they challenge their husbands' unjust behaviours. The phrases perpetuate gender inequality as they imply that women are not equal to men. Gender inequality spills into the educational sector where women are denied access to further their educational aspirations. This is also supported by Ladson-Billings (1995) who advanced that women face varied systemic barriers including sexism that impact on emotional and educational experiences. This outward resilience will affect the women psychologically thereby affecting their concentration hence poor performance. Women can eventually drop out of educational institutions leading to low literacy levels from women. Repeated exposure to such advices makes women believe that their value lies only in their marital statuses rather than in their education and economic achievements.

Emotional blackmail

It was also found that other Shona phrases used when giving women marital advices make them feel guilty, anxious or obliged to conform to societal expectations hence Fairclough's argument that language functions as a tool of power and control over individuals or groups (Van Dijk, 1993). Such phrases are used to manipulate women's emotions so as to control their behaviour (Hare-Mustin, 1994). The phrase, "*varume vana vacheche, ukasavabikira vanokwata*" (Men are like babies, if you do not cook for them, they will eat food from others) which metaphorically means that if the wife does not satisfy her husband sexually, he is justified to have extra-marital affairs makes the woman blame herself for her husband's actions. The phrase makes her feel guilty, thinking that she has failed to satisfy her husband sexually yet it is not true. Woman E stated that she was told, "*mwana haana mhosva*" (a child is innocent) when her husband had a child out of wedlock and he wanted her to take care of that baby. The woman testified that this phrase made her feel guilty for refusing to take care of the child. The phrase forces women in such situations to conform to what the husband wants yet they are the victims. The woman ends up taking care of the children born out of wedlock even if she is not comfortable with doing so. Furthermore, the phrase, "*ukasatevedzera murume wako, imba inoparara*" (if you do not obey your husband, you will ruin your marriage) uses fear and guilt to control women's behaviour. This phrase can hinder women from pursuing their educational goals, taking promotions and fulfilling their dreams in fear of divorce. This limits women's potential in

participating in economic development of the country and also contribute to the academia. Such phrases undermine women's agency and autonomy (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Talbot Mary, 1998). These phrases drive decision-making which might compromise women's rights and well-being. Such phrases also lead to loss of women's autonomy and agency and they might feel trapped or stuck in the marriages. Emotional blackmail can create guilt and self-doubt to women where women can question and doubt their abilities. This leads to restricted decision making and feelings of powerlessness and decreased motivation. When one lacks motivation, then performance is affected. However, some women have the courage to fight for themselves and challenge societal expectations. Woman F stated that *"I am proud of my decision because I have managed to attain my degree even though people told me to obey my husband who discouraged me from going to school"*. This utterance shows that it is not always the case that women adhere to the advices they are given. Some women can challenge unjust societal expectations and fight for their rights including the right to education.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that words are very powerful to an extent that they can impact people's emotions, drive decision-making, create a mind-set and reinforce patriarchal beliefs. The study has also showed that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a powerful tool for unravelling how language is used to exercise power and reinforce ideology, particularly in relation to social inequality and domination. It was shown that the harmful phrases that are used when giving women marital advices can perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes, reinforce patriarchal norms and contribute to the continued oppression of women in the Shona society and Africa at large. It was also observed that use of these words has far reaching effects on educational attainment for women. Hence there is need for education and awareness on how language is a powerful tool in maintaining and reinforcing patriarchal values. It is recommended that people avoid language that discourages women from pursuing their educational goals, blames or blackmails the victims, perpetuate sexism, misogyny and male dominance. It is also recommended that people promote healthy marital advice that respect women's autonomy and challenge patriarchal attitudes. By acknowledging and addressing the ways in which language contributes to the oppression of women, the Shona society can work towards a more inclusive and gender equitable society. To achieve this, there is need for feminist activists, human rights organisations, linguists, women's rights organisations, educators, media professionals and community leaders to engage in language activism where they organise campaigns that challenge the use of oppressive and harmful language in societies. There is also need for language professionals, academic organisations and researchers to support research and scholarship in feminist linguistics so as to have a concrete evidence of how language reinforces gender ideologies and offer adequate solutions to the problem. Moreover, the general public and the stakeholders mentioned above should support policy changes that challenge patriarchal ideologies as it can contribute to a more inclusive and equitable society. This can be done through raising awareness about the importance of healthy marital advice through social media and other channels. Overall, there should be a collective effort from all people to use language to empower women by promoting their positive representations. The researchers believe that, since language has proved to be a tool for the oppression of women, it can also be a powerful tool for women empowerment in African societies if it is used to challenge patriarchal ideologies.

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