

Hegemonic Masculinity in Song Lyrics of Webuye Jua Kali Band, Kenya

Jackline Khakasa Muchenje*, Dr. Sheila Wandera-Simwa and Prof. James Ogolla Onyango
Laikipia University, Kenya

*Corresponding author: jkhakasa09@gmail.com

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Abstract: This paper investigates hegemonic masculinity in the song lyrics of Jua kali band from Webuye, Kenya. Hegemonic masculinity is made up of attributes that define who real men are. These attributes originate from the cultural background. Songs interpret the life of the musicians and thus an interpretation of musicians' cultural background. The data comprised of two song lyrics, 'mama mzazi' and 'Khalikha'. The two songs were chosen purposively. The researchers chose the songs due to their popularity and also due to their discourses that lead to hegemonic masculinity. The two songs were selected from two different albums each consisting of five songs. The referential, predicational, perspectivation and intensifying and mitigation strategies from Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) were used to analyze data. The strategies analyzed data by answering four questions in each song lyric: How are men referred to linguistically? What traits are attributed to them? From what point of view are the attributes made? Are the utterances articulated overly or mitigated? From the study, it was observed that men justify their status as real men through the subordination of women. Men possess reputable positions and human traits while women are viewed as servants and an embarrassment to the society.

Key words: Discourse, Hegemonic Masculinity, Bukusu, Jua Kali Songs, Lyric, Webuye

1. Introduction

The social construction of human behavior and relationships is usually communicated through language, which is based on cultural background (Khaemba 2015). The African patriarchal system has discriminatory policy, which bestows status on men and which is often portrayed through their oral narratives such as songs (Muleka 2016). In the narratives, majority of men gain fame from subordination of women, thus creating hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is the cultural interpretation of manliness as observed through human participation in the society. It is associated with toughness, competitiveness, determination, self-sufficiency, aggression, success and subordination of women (Mate, 2017). Therefore, hegemonic masculinity is a cultural practice that is generally discriminative and should be exposed for it to be condemned.

This study purposed to discuss the discourse leading to a homogenous masculinity in the selected songs of Webuye Jua kali band. This was an attempt to expose readers to how discriminatory policy of hegemonic

masculinity is expressed in the songs that they loved most so that they can actively condemn any discriminatory utterances. Among the Bukusu of Western Kenya, the significance of men is explained from birth, traditionally only a boy child carries the family lineage. In one of the narratives among the Bukus, *Wanakhatandi* (the protagonist) is termed as bad luck due to giving birth to daughters only. This was against the expectations and traditions of the Bukusu people. The girl child is viewed as frail and weak and therefore denying *Wanakhatandi* opportunity of being a complete man (Muleka 2016). Great importance is placed on the boy child and therefore undermining the potential of the girl child.

Khaemba (2015), observed that creativity is denied among the Ababukusu of western Kenya by the hegemonic discourses which are passed to boys from generation to generation through the cultural rituals. During one of the ritual known as *khulicha* (post circumcision rituals where men are taught on how to be real men), women miss in action. Men teach their fellow men because they believe women are not members of their clan. After the ritual, young men come back expecting to dominate and be served by women. Men are expected to ensure that women don't challenge them. In order to reinforce this, men are

forced to use threats and even physical force in ensuring that they maintain their power over women. Despite some of the ways used to maintain power being harmful, men have been forced to maintain their position because of its cultural.

In a study conducted by Onyango (2007), to find out the construction of masculinity in the Kiswahili children's literature in Kenya. It was observed that male characters were displayed as more powerful compared to the female characters. For example, in a story known as '*Mgombachangaraweni*,' a male character by the name Changaweni is described as strong, hardworking and reasonable with respect. Throughout the story the writer exalts him and thus exalting men in the society. In another study conducted by Onyango (2008), to investigate the masculine construction of rape in the Kenyan press, it was observed that women were portrayed negatively while men were portrayed positively. In one of the utterances by men, women were presented as prostitutes while men were clients. A woman is a prostitute because of acting against the society's moral guidelines. Unlike women, men in the Kenyan society are allowed to have multiple sexual partners. A man who is involved with several women sexually is seen as a hero while a woman with the same character is seen as a prostitute. Therefore, it was discovered that labeling women as prostitutes is a ground for men to justify their power over them

In a study that investigated the negotiation for social space across genders in *mugithii* song and dance in Nairobi Kenya, gender inequality was realized. In this study, women were portrayed as creatures who should be put under men's control. Women were seen as incomplete, unfaithful and cruel creatures. This definition of women justifies the rule of men. The *mugithii* songs and dance therefore represented the societies expectations whereby gender inequality is reflected through the subordination of women. Presenting women negatively is meant to maintain their subordinate positions while justifying male dominance (Mbiyu, 2013).

Wambura (2016) also observed gender inequality in a study she carried out to investigate gender discourses in Kuria female circumcision songs. In the study women were restricted at home as mothers and servers. Therefore, women were denied an opportunity of interacting outside the homestead forcing them to depend on men for provision. If men don't provide, then women have nothing. This provision provided an avenue for men to own women and be in control of everything, within the homestead and in the outside world. The dependence of women on men promotes the men's social status providers and special people in the society. In a survey conducted by Simiyu (2016), to find out the portrayal of both men and women in selected Bukusu circumcision songs, gender discrimination and inequality in the community's cultural practices was observed whereby the boy child was given privileges and names related with warriors and strong

animals that depict heroism of the community. However, the girl child wasted to domestic chores. This, therefore, shows that the discourse of hegemonic masculinity is constructed by members of the community, suggesting that there is still need of looking deeply into various cultural practices in order to expose and condemn any discriminatory behavior.

Music and dance is one of the practices that is greatly valued in Bukusu culture. Webuye *Jua kali* band is one of the modern bands in the community and therefore it is a reflection of how things are perceived currently. The main artist is Mr. David Barasa, from Kimilili, Bungoma County. This is a region in western Kenya that is mostly occupied by Bukusu speaking residents. Therefore the song's lyrics from the band have been used as a tool explain the behaviour and events as they are understood by the artists and residents. According to Muleka (2016), a song lyric explores gender relations and world views as they entertain its audience. Therefore the song lyrics in the study answered the question on how hegemonic masculinity is portrayed in the society.

2. Research Methodology

This study was qualitative in nature. Qualitative research is usually based on descriptive narrative and visual non numerical data (Gay, Mills and Airasian 2006). The data collected from the two songs is what was used to answer the question in the study. In this case, the song lyrics of *Mama mzazi* and *Khalikha* played part as data. The songs were chosen through purposive sampling. The study looked for popular songs in the band and also songs that had discourses that reflect gender discrimination. The data was collected from the songs. The researchers were the primary instrument in the collection of data. The data was strictly sampled from the song lyrics of Webuye *Jua kali* band and not any other.

The discursive strategies from Discourse Historical Approach theory (DHA) guided the analysis of data. This was to ensure that the results were true and not biased. DHA also ensured that the findings presented the knowledge of hegemonic masculinity as it is in the Bukusu culture. This is because the different strategies found in DHA have the ability to find out answers to the problem using texts as its data (Wodak & Meyer 2001). These strategies include: Nomination, predication, argumentation and perspectivation. Each of the four strategies provided knowledge that was essential to the study. In analyzing the strategies answered the questions on how men have been referred to, traits attributed to them, point of view of the attributes and the intensification and mitigation of the attributes. This was done as an attempt of finding out hegemonic masculinity from the song lyrics. All the discussions and data presentations were done descriptively.

3. Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of hegemonic masculinity as they are portrayed in the song lyrics of *Mama Mzazi* and *Khalikha*. In each of the two song lyrics, one discourse topic that leads to hegemonic masculinity has been used analysed using the four discursive strategies: Nomination, Predication, Perspectivation and intensification/mitigation.

3.1 Khalikha

leader: mai wee khalikhaaa
singers: mai wee khalikhaaa
leader: mai wee khalikhaaa
singers: mai wee khalikhaaa
leader: Wababandiokusemaaa
singers: wababandiokusemaaa
leader: wamamanaokufanyaaa
singers: wamamandiokufanyaaa
leader :wamamandiokufanyaaa
singers: wamamandiokufanyaaa

The song explains the position of men and women. It's a song used in entertaining and therefore both men and women take part in the singing and dancing. The song's lyrics suggest that women are requested to dance, *mai wee khalikhaaa* and goes on to tell us that men are to speak and women are the doers of what men say in *wababandiokusemanawamamandiokufanya*. In this song lyric, *wababandiokusemanawamamandiokufanyaa* came out as the major discourse that leads to hegemonic masculinity and therefore the following were the findings.

3.1.1 Nomination

This presents the groups of people in the song lyrics and how they have been categorized. From the discourse *wababandiokusemanawamamandiokufanya* (men are to speak and women are to do). It is evident that the discourse presents two groups of people, these are men referred to as *wababa* and women referred to as *wamama*.

3.1.2 Predication

This involves labeling the characters positively or negatively. In this song, men are accorded a higher status as compared to women. *Wababandiokusema* means men have the voice, it also means that men have the power to decide, while on the other hand *wamamandiokufanya* means women are to do as directed by men. In general, men have been portrayed as kingpins in the society.

3.1.3 Perspectivation

This presents the artist's point of view concerning the trait of men and women that he has presented. In this case, the artist point of view is derived from the Bukusu culture,

where men and women have clear and different expectations. The man is believed to be the head of the family; his authority and leadership arise from the ownership of land and cattle. This gives him power to rule over women since women were forbidden to own anything in the community; they were also owned by men. Despite the fact that they had a responsibility of taking care of animals and crops, the decision of selling the crops and animals was left in the hands of men (Namulanda 2013).

The song also portrays men to have come on earth as conquerors, with the role of ruling, saving and protecting. On the other hand, women exist to bring and adore beauty, which is to attract men (Wambura 2016). Therefore, the portrayal of men as decision makers in *wa bab andio kusema na wamama ndio kufanya*, is a true picture of the artist's cultural beliefs. Women are being denied the opportunity to own property, to rule and also an opportunity to make decisions in all matters. By denying women an opportunity to exercise power, the song portrays subordination of women and exaltation of men.

3.1.4 Intensification/mitigation

The discourse openly suppresses women and exalts men. Greater force is felt when referring to men than women. In this case, the utterances are intensified. Men have more power than women in the society. Men have power to rule over women whether they like it or not. Women have no say in decision making even in things that themselves have taken part in making them the way they are, for example in harvesting, selling and using the money (Namulanda 2013). Men are openly taking the highest position of leadership and decision making while women have been left to be care takers and servers of men.

3.2 Mama Mzazi

Mama mzaziametushindahukonyumbani
Mama mzaziametushindahukonyumbani
Mimi siimbimiminalia mama mzaziametiaaibu,
ametuaasisiwatoto wane nakilamtotona baba yake,
mtotowa kwanza aliitwaMwangi,
mtotowapilaliitwaChebet,
mtotowatatuWanyonyinawanneOtieno, mama mzazieee,
mama mzazi....

Mama mzaziametushindahukonyumbani
Mai ling'ang'uleOmwanayesiling'ang'ule

Nikiendakwenyekilabu, ninampata mama
mzazinayamepewa, hanaaibuanasemahatamiminipewe,
nipewekeroronipewemajinipewegeji, mama mzazieeee,
mama mzazi...

Mama mzaziametushindahukonyumbani
Mai ling'ang'uleOmwanayesiling'ang'ule

Mimi nalia, nikohainionyeshe baba, aliyeiwekaduniani
 mama nionyeshe wee, kamaatakufa mama nalia,
 kwenyekilabuunapigananawatu, kwasababuyapombe ewe
 mama mzazi,
 kilamtuakijanyumbaniunaniambiamiminimwitemjomba,
 mwingine baba, mwingineeee

Mama mzaziametushindahukonyumbani
 Mai ling'ang'uleOmwanayesiling'ang'ule

Kitale mang'ang'ule
 Kimililimang'ang'ule
 Eldoret mang'ang'ule
 Nakurumang'ang'ule
 Malabamang'ang'ule
 Misikhumang'ang'ule
 Bungomamang'ang'ule
 Eeeeeeeee

Mai wakhukhaile, wamenyakhulandinavana
 vane...Mwangi, Chebet, Wanyonyi, Otieno
 Mama mzaziametushindahukonyumbani *2
 Mai ling'ang'uleOmwanayesiling'ang'ule*2

Mama Mzazi is also a song that is used in entertaining the audience. It is sung in both Kiswahili and Lubukusu. The song has a message on moral values as expected by the community. The song is condemning a mother who is portrayed as a prostitute. The song explains that the woman *mama mzazi*(mother), also known as *ling'ang'ule* (prostitute) is beyond control. She is everywhere in clubs getting drunk and practicing prostitution which has resulted to giving birth to four children whereby each child has his own father from different tribes in Kenya. The first child is Mwangi, the father is Agikuyu, and the second one is Chebet, whose father is a Nandi, followed by Wanyonyi, whose father is a Luhya and lastly, Otieno, whose father is a Luo. The woman is not a good role model because her daughter, Chebet, is also a prostitute. The artiste pleads with the woman to change her behavior because the community cannot take it anymore. The discourse that is the centre of discussion in this song is *mailing'ang'uleomwanayesiling'ang'ule*, meaning the mother is a prostitute and the daughter is also a prostitute. For a woman to be a prostitute, it means that both men and women are involved in the act for some gain. Therefore labeling women as prostitutes and being silent on men is an act of discrimination against women.

3.2.1 Nomination

In grouping, we have a major group of people referred to as *Mang'ang'ule* (prostitutes) because they are two, the mother and the daughter. The other group is men but the song is silent on them. Therefore the song portrays women as prostitutes while men are clients.

3.2.2 Predication

The main actors in this song have been labeled negatively. The women who are the main actors have been labeled as *ling'ang'ule* meaning prostitute. It is negative because men have not been mentioned at all as being part of this behavior despite the fact that they are involved. In Kenya, a prostitute is a person who goes against the moral standards of the society (Onyango 2007). Therefore the songs portray men as upright people while women are not morally upright.

3.2.3 Perspectivation

Just as in any other community, moral values in Bukusu community were highly reinforced. Though it was expected in both genders, most of the moral values limited the rights of women and enforced male dominance. One of the vices that was greatly condemned was extramarital sex. A woman in Bukusu culture is expected to be faithful to her husband even after the death of the husband but the rule is loose when it comes to men. Men admit that they would want to marry a woman who respects her body but at the same time they expect to get fame by being involved with many women sexually (Khaemba 2015). Therefore the reason for women to be given such embarrassing titles is rooted in their cultural background. The rules concerning moral values are biased since they are stricter on women than on men.

The society discriminates women from leisure related activities such as beer-feasts and dance gatherings. Folktales frequently portray women at work rather than at leisure activities. Men are the ones who have been allowed by the society to enjoy leisure activities. Drinking is a pointer to the dignity of women. It is believed that women who drink are irresponsible compared to men who drink. This is because the society expects women to be at work always and therefore drinking will make them not to take their duties seriously (Namulanda 2013). In a way, the song has been used to explain the place of a woman and what is expected of her concerning the moral values. This is done in favor of the man who is looking for his rightful position as a person with essential human traits as compared to woman who is weak and also an embarrassment to the society.

3.3.4 Intensification/mitigation.

The term prostitute is a discriminatory utterance. As mentioned earlier, there is no vocabulary for men with similar traits. Therefore, hegemonic masculinity is reflected, whereby, unlike in men, women are referred to using non-human attributes such as *ling'ang'ule* (prostitute). Both men and women have a right to possess essential human traits that are acceptable in the society. All vices should be condemned justly without favoring a particular group of people, while condemning others through names that are so embarrassing such as *ling'ang'ule*.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS ANDRECOMMENDATIONS

The present study investigated on hegemonic masculinity in song lyrics of Jua kali band from Webuye Kenya. From the findings it's clear that hegemonic masculinity is still being passed from one generation to another through songs with or without the knowledge of the audience. In all the song lyrics that were observed in this study, women are negatively described compared to men. Women are described as voiceless individuals, less intelligent, domestic aides, irresponsible and an embarrassment to the community. In contrast men are responsible, sole decision makers, leaders, rulers, owners and people with high moral standards. In general it's only men who possess essential human traits. Therefore, it can be concluded that hegemonic masculinity is discriminative and should be condemned since it forcefully puts men in a position to retain the ultimate power and respect hence resulting in subordination of women as men struggle to retain their position in the society.

Future artists can use this knowledge as guideline which can help them avoid discriminatory presentations of men and women in their future work since they keep on updating their work to suit the current expectations. Researchers may also use discursive strategies in order to expose other discriminatory utterances in other cultures as a way of trying to see to it that we have a cohesive society where everyone feels appreciated. Finally further studies can be conducted to find out negative effects of hegemonic masculinity to men themselves, women, or towards the various sectors of the society such as economy, politics, family and education.

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