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A Feminist Critique of Patriarchal Hegemony and Ideological Discourse in Rum's *A Woman Is No Man*

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Abstract
The language has consistently been utilised as a potent weapon in creating, maintaining and reproducing the power structure even in societies that apparently look liberal and progressive. This study evaluates the patriarchal restrictions on women's access to education and analyses how patriarchy normalizes women's financial dependence on men in Rum's A Woman is No Man. The study is qualitative. The researcher employed Fairclough's Three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis for analysis of the selected text and Lazar's Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis has been used as the theoretical framework. The findings reveal that the ideological discourse sustains gender-based power imbalances and rationalizes the restriction of women's access to education and financial self-sufficiency. Cultural norms and societal discourse intersect to restrict women's access to education within a patriarchal Arab society and the patriarchal culture normalizes women's financial dependence on men which reinforces the patriarchal hegemony. The community's discourse discourages women from pursuing educational and career ambitions with social consequences for those who challenge these norms. The study underscores the need for a more comprehensive examination of the challenges faced by women particularly in relation to education and financial independence in societies that may outwardly appear to be liberal.

Keywords: *FCDA, Patriarchy, Hegemony, Ideology, Discourse.*

Introduction

Background to the Study

The issue of female oppression which is marked by dire situations has always occupied the sphere of feminist criticism. The societies support the idea of unequal position of men and women that

is based on the deeply rooted belief that men are naturally in a more superior position than women. It is especially the women who are subjected to extreme suffering in such repressive cultural environments as depicted by the situation of Arab women in *A Woman is No Man* (2019) who are exposed to significant cultural limitations that fall in the category of gender inequalities *(Piepmeier, 2009).* As Taourit (2015) delves into how in most cases the existing societal norms place a high position on men and undermine the value of women in the Arab society. This gender difference is evident even at birth where women are forced to lead a subservient life where they are required to, and solely obey the male members of their families (*Taourit, 2015)*.

Patriarchy

According to Walby (1989), patriarchy is a complex and interconnected set of institutions and practises in the society that mainly favour males and encourages male dominance over females. It is defined as a social structure or system where men form the largest group of power and authority and women have to be subservient or marginalised. Women have been subjected to patriarchy especially a form of patriarchy known as paternalistic dominance. Such a term is used to describe a relationship where the dominating group feels greater prestige than the subservient group and both parties assume the subordination obligations and reciprocity but the superiority of the superior group is still apparent (Lerner, 1987). Furthermore, according to Pateman (1988), the superiority of men over women is an aspect of a socio-political system that recreates and reproduces dominance of men over women. Patriarchy is not a system of power dynamics, but also affects other ideologies even though this may vary in different local communities and to different extents (Piepmeier, 2009). Firestone (2015) notes in another context that women are oppressed due to biological identity in particular, as they give birth and are supposed to take care of children. This has prompted the creation of traditional gender roles with the men being viewed as providers and women being viewed as nurturers. Also, patriarchy supports the notion that women are viewed as the main caregivers and wives and, thus, the education of women is degraded (Bose and Kim (2009).

Hegemony

Feminist theorists and activists decry hegemony on the basis that it may be exploitative and reinforce power imbalances that already exist. According to Gramsci (1971), hegemony refers to domination of one social class over other people in society. Hegemony does not only involve use of force or coercion but also it is an application of cultural and intellectual leadership. The ruling caste supports its hegemony through various institutions and practices such as the media, education, religion and the legal system. These institutions collaborate in a bid to develop a hegemonic culture which strengthens the authority of the dominant group. He was of the view that the ruling class does not only have power by dominating economically and politically but also by dominating culture. The ruling culture establishes a sense of commonality that supports the dominance of the ruling state. Hooks (2004) defines patriarchal hegemony as a complicated societal organization where men are those in power and with more benefits compared to members of the opposite gender identities in a particular society.

Statement of the Problem

The patriarchal structures in many societies create substantial challenges for women's access to education and financial independence. Women are often demoted to traditional gender roles which limits their opportunities to pursue education and attain skills to support themselves financially. This status quo underpins their dependence on men and the cycle of patriarchal hegemony and gender inequality is perpetuated consequently. The study evaluates the way patriarchy restricts women’s access to education and analyses the normalization of their financial

dependence on men in Rum's *A Woman is No Man* (2019) with reference to Lazar's (2005) Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis.

Research Objectives

1. To evaluate the way patriarchy restricts women's access to education in *A Woman is No Man*.
2. To analyse how patriarchy normalizes women's financial dependence on men in *A Woman is No Man.*

Research Questions

1. How does patriarchy restrict women's access to education in *A Woman is No Man?*
2. How does patriarchy normalize women's financial dependence on men in *A Woman is No Man*?

Significance of the Study

The study will offer insights the lived experiences of Arab-American women as depicted in the novel by Rum (2019). It also brings out the importance of having a deeper insight into how patriarchy impacts the lives of women especially in terms of education and dependence on money.

Delimitations

This study is deliberately bounded to ensure depth and clarity. Its scope is restricted to the text of *A Woman is No Man* (2019). Analysis is confined to the textual data of the novel itself, excluding extra textual sources like interviews or adaptations.

Literature Review

Patriarchy and Hegemony

The social organisation system of patriarchy in which the role of men is dominant and female voices and agency are repressed has a long-standing effect on various facets of the life of women. One domain of influence of patriarchy has been on education. Patriarchal society has had historical restrictions on acquisition of financial independence by women and compelling them to play the roles of financial dependents. Gheytanchi (2000) argues that patriarchy is considerably a wider phenomenon that extends beyond unequal distribution of power between men and women in modern cultures. The patriarchal hegemony in this case is an intricate social system where males are more authoritative and have more advantages than those who identify with other gender identity groups in a particular society (Hooks, 2004).

Morover, Butler (2011) remarks that the patriarchal hegemony is based on deep-rooted cultural norms, values and beliefs that support traditional roles, expectations and stereotypes associated with the gender. These social norms impact masculinity and femininity perceptions as they brand male dominance as acceptable. The hegemony of patriarchy is imposed by the internalized cultural norms, values and beliefs. Individuals always act out and assume gender roles which are defined by social norms and expectations.

Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

Feminism and discourse analysis have a close correlation and both are complementary to one another. FCDA is considered to be the extension of critical discourse analysis and a field of research in feminist scholarship. According to Lazar (2005) the need of FCDA was stimulated by the fact that key CDA theorists such as Fairclough and Van Dijk (2006) were not specifically concerned with gender analysis. The objective is to ensure that society becomes more tolerant and that gender should no longer be a big factor in affecting power relations between men and women. Among the goals of FCDA is the exposure of the hidden ideologies creating generally accepted or indisputable beliefs regarding gender. FCDA refers to a method of language and discourse study which tries to create consciousness of such inequalities and bring social change

by examining how discourse is employed in order to reinforce and perpetuate asymmetric power relation between males and females (Lazar, 2005).

According to Lazar (2007) men relish access to different types of power including symbolic, political, social and economic capital. These power structures are supported by ideologies that do not directly present themselves but run on the periphery and are considered as the norm. Although such ideologies are predominant, it does not necessarily suggest that they are accepted as prevailing given the fact that such ideologies are founded on a consent which is constructed using discursive tactics. The result of these ideologies being accepted as natural may obscure the inherent power disparities and inequalities that exist.

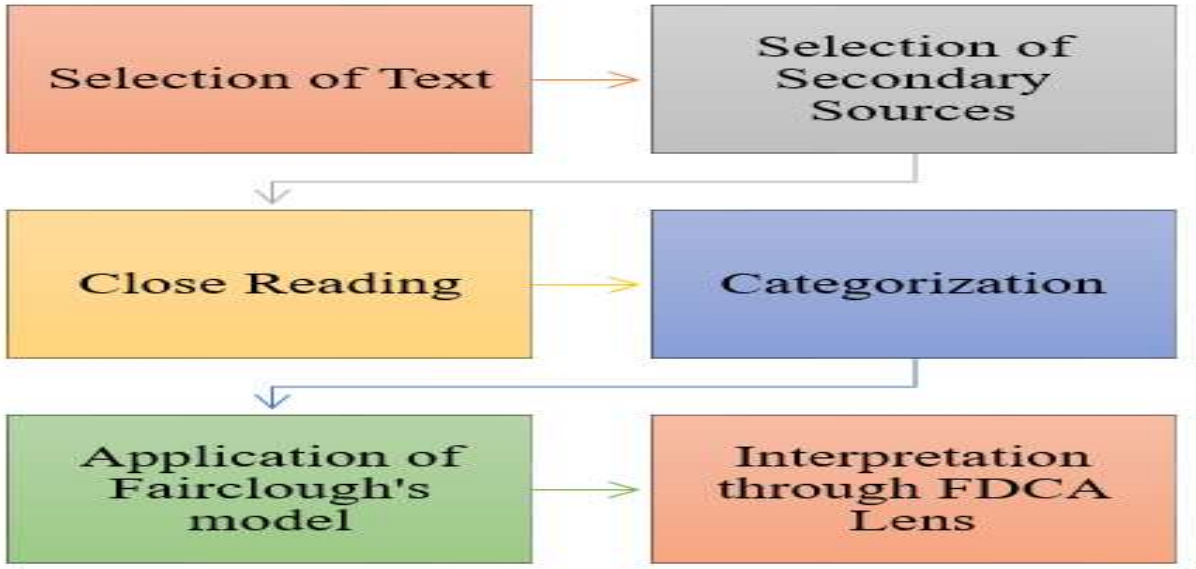
Previous researches used FCDA to deal with feminist concern in completely different contexts. Saddiqa et al. (2022) revealed the manner in which women in third-world countries are exposed and subject to the exploitation of the patriarchal society. Yaiche (2021) addressed the issue of Palestinian colonialism, cultural patriarchy and domestic violence. Mikic (2022) studied the Arab-American patriarchal culture through the lens of shame. Salvianny and Nurcahyani (2020) examined the issue of women oppression and resistance. The work by Sari (2020) explored the types of patriarchal oppressions. The study carried out by Wulandari et al. (2019) examined the twenty-first-century liberal feminism in America.

Although the existing studies have mostly revealed the overall themes of patriarchy and feminist discourse within *A Woman is No Man* (2019) it lacks a critical discourse analysis of the novel. The researcher evaluates the patriarchal inhibition of women access to education and examines how patriarchy justifies women financial reliance on men.

Research Methodology

Research Design

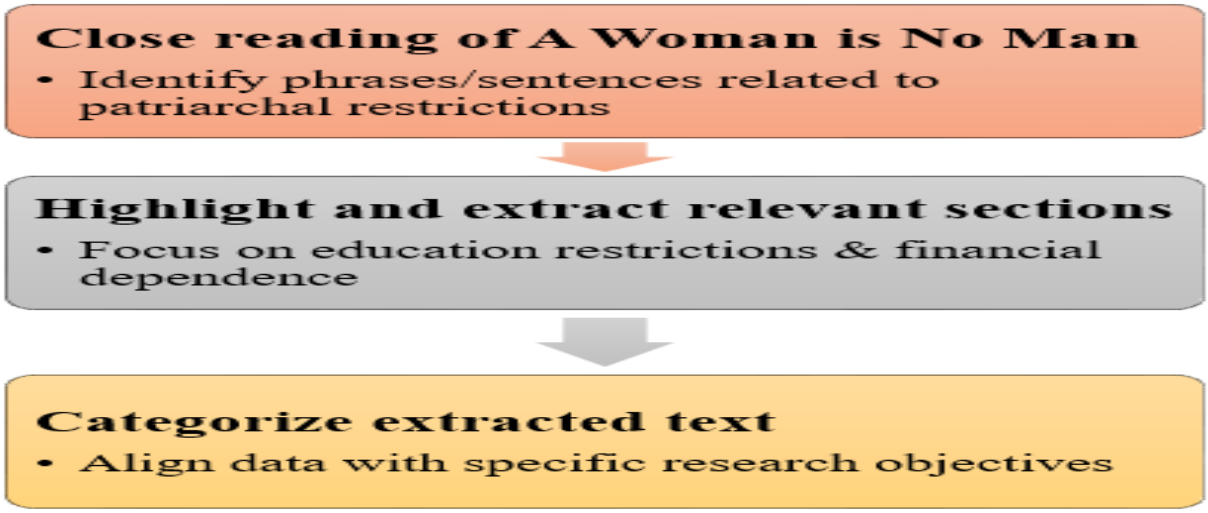
The study is qualitative. Berg (2007) states that the qualitative approach enables the revelation of elusive meanings, definitions, concepts and metaphors as well as it endeavours to answers to social problems by exploring various social contexts and the members of the society who live in them.



Sources of Data

The selected text of Rum's *A Woman is No Man* (2019) has been taken as the primary source of the data for analysis. Selected research articles relevant to the topic, books and internet sources provided the secondary sources of data for a detailed understanding of the issues discussed in the current study.

Data Collection



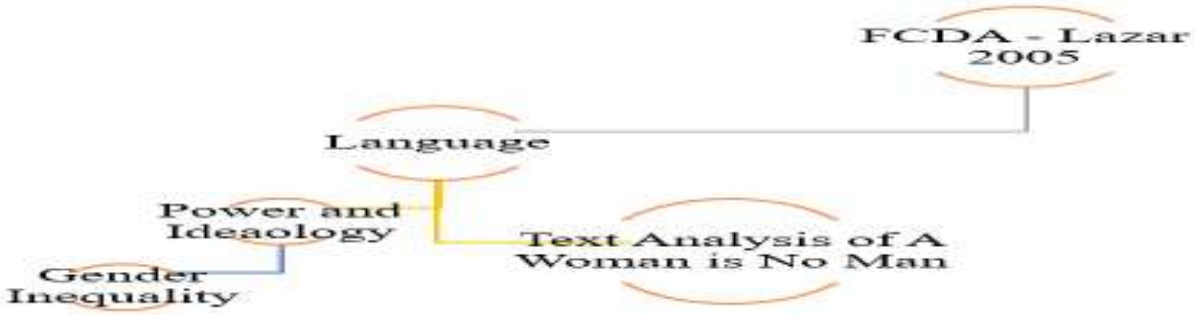
A close reading of *A Woman is No Man* (2019) was carried out to identify phrases and sentences that directly addressed the research objectives. The focus was on identifying sections of the text that depicted instances of patriarchal restrictions on education and financial dependence. The extracted text was then categorized based on the specific research objectives.

Data Analysis

The data extracted from *A Woman is No Man* (2019) for analysis was analysed by employing Fairclough's Three-dimensional model (1989). This model allows for the examination of text at multiple levels, including textual analysis, discursive practice analysis and social practice analysis.

Theoretical Framework

This research is mainly focused on unearthing the social and cultural background where the ideological discourse is shaped and practiced to strengthen the male hegemony. Therefore, the Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis offered by Lazar (2005) has been chosen as a relevant lens for inquiry. According to Lazar (2005), power and ideologies are embedded in the discourse to maintain a social order in which men are more powerful. This is particularly necessary in the contemporary world where gender, power and ideology are more complicated than ever before. The discourse of gender and power is getting complicated to various settings. Feminist CDA studies are about the way the language is used to shape and contest unequal power relations and prevalent ideologies in the society. FCDA studies how individuals utilize language to form unequal power inequalities between men and women.



Findings And Conclusion

Findings

1. The examination of the chosen textual excerpts of the *A Woman is No Man* (2019) illuminates those cultural conventions; the language of society and social practices reproduce gender structures of power as well as the oppression of women.
2. The findings enlighten that the cultural norms and social discourse overlap to hinder the access of women to education in a patriarchal Arab family as presented in *A Woman is No Man* (2019).
3. The language employed in the novel creates a binary view of the value of women and relates it only to their roles in the family and thus undermined the idea of women having other progressive opportunities than family duty.
4. The social setting makes it difficult to pursue educational and professional goals for women with social repercussions against those who go against the norms which reinforces the hegemony of males.
5. Findings further reveal that the ideological discourse upholds the existing gender-based power relations and justifies the deprivation of the rights of women to obtain education and provide financial independence.
6. The social context of the patriarchal society also contributes towards the economic reliance of women on men by curtailing their economic pursuits.

Conclusion

A Woman is No Man (2019) is one of the powerful descriptions of a patriarchal Arab community in the United States where cultural norms, society and social practices interconnect to hinder the possibility of women accessing education and that normalize their financial dependence on men. The irresistible power of the patriarchy on the lives of the female characters has been enlightened in the chosen textual passages. The findings demonstrate the existence of a society in which the traditional division of genders prevails with females being forced to marriage and motherhood above all the other aspects including education and economic autonomy. The narrative forms a binary view of the value of women recognizing them only with their family roles. Such undermining of the potential that women might hold beyond the domestic role supports the hegemonic relations of power that limit access to education and financial independence. Moreover, the typical beliefs and ideologies within the community help to reinforce and maintain the norms which prevent women towards actively seeking education and career goals. This cultural compression and gender expectations have a strong impact on freedom of choice for women. When women are brave enough to oppose these traditional constructs, they are bound to face a variety of repercussions such as social isolation and alienation. The study sheds light on the role of societal values as pillars that support gender-based inequalities and justification to restrict the access of women to education and financial independent decisions systematically.

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