



The Prejudiced Negative Images of Femininity in Wolaita Proverbs

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to analyze selected Wolaita proverbs for their reflection of prejudiced negative images of femininity. The subjects used for the current study were 20 theme-relevant proverbs collected by interviewing systematically selected 12 elders and conducting participant-based observation. The qualitative research design was used to conduct this study. The result indicated that, Wolaita proverbs draw negatively prejudiced images of femininity in overall system of human communication. Such prejudiced and negatively drawn images of femininity include femininity as a symbol of incapability, lack of power to protect self, and sources of danger and problems. Based on these findings, awareness creation trainings should be given to demotivate the use of proverbs having negative images of femininity, Walaita speaking families should encourage their children to use proverbs that reflect gender equality, and the society, at large, should totally avoid the outdated negative perception of femininity in their overall walks of life.

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1. Introduction

Gender is defined as the “psychological, social, and cultural aspects of maleness and femaleness” (Kessler & McKenna, 1978, p. 7). It is reflected in who an individual is or how he/she behaves. It is something that an individual possesses as part of himself/herself and that accompanies him/her as he/she moves through life. It may be understood in terms of masculinity or femininity, or it can be conceived by the specific features like personality, mind, body, and all the other characteristics that comprise an individual. In all these instances, gender is understood as something that resides in the individual (Wharton, 2005).

Polarity in gender is socially constructed (Bruyn & France, 2001) when males and females encounter socio-cultural life through socialization in a given community (Wharton, 2005). Such polarized socio-cultural system of life exposes individuals (males and females) to different practices of life and enforces them to create and maintain gender distinctions which result in differences and inequalities (Butler, 1990; Jeilyan, 2005). These differences and inequalities are the products of a set of social forces which includes the actions of individuals, the expectations that “guide human interactions, the composition of social groups, and the structures and practices of the institutions we move through in our daily lives” (Jeilyan, 2005, p. 59).

As it is constructed in overall system of sociocultural and demographic compilations of life, polarity in gender is reflected in almost all genres of human wisdom: proverbs, riddles, legends, chants, myths, jokes, songs, etc. in a society which has maintained its life-long traditional practices that are embedded in all social institutions (Scott, Crompton, & Lyonette, 2010). Wolaita is a typical example of such a society that has traditional practices of gender-based over-looking or under-looking of individuals in different walks of life. In such case, Wolaitas use a large number of proverbs that reflect multi-dimensioned polarity of gender, especially those that stereotype femininity. The socially-created-and-stereotyped picture of femininity has been reflected in Wolaita proverbs when people interact in different social settings, making use

of proverbs that need series of deep studies to investigate the polarity.

Wolaita is among the thirteen zones in southern nations and nationalities of Ethiopia commonly known by its oral tradition, indigenous wisdom, and folklore. According to Meshesha, Abraham, and Fikre (2014), Wolaita has rich cultural traditions, rituals, civilization, and beliefs that are reflected through different genres of oral traditions and ecological wisdom. However, no study has been carried out on those oral traditions and indigenous wisdom of Wolaita, particularly on Wolaita proverbs for their reflection of prejudiced negative images of femininity.

Nevertheless, some small number of works was done by some individuals in thematic areas of Wolaita proverbs. For instance, Bezabih (2011) simply collected more than 2000 Wolaita proverbs (as a general alphabetical list) and compiled them as a book entitled ‘Wolayttatto leemiso haasaya’ [Wolaita proverbs]. Furthermore, Getachew and Tsegaye (1995) merely collected Wolaita, Dawro, Gamo, and Gofa proverbs, provided direct Amharic translation of each, and published the book entitled ‘Wolaita, Dawro, Gamo, and Gofa Proverbs and their Amharic Translation’. Meshesha et al. (2014) published three scholarly research articles on social, economic, and cultural implications of Wolaita proverbs, without giving significant attention to the implication of gender inequality and prejudiced images of femininity reflected in Wolaita proverbs. Therefore, this study was planned to analyze selected Wolaita proverbs as a way of exposing the prejudiced negative images of femininity in those proverbs and then to demotivate their usage in different social settings as they promote outdated negative polarity in the gender of femininity.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study followed the theoretical framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). According to van Leeuwen (1993, p. 193), CDA can be defined fundamentally as “a type of discourse analytical research concerned with analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power, and control as manifested in language”. In other words, CDA is concerned with

“discourse as the instrument of power and control as well as with discourse as the instrument of the social construction of reality” (van Leeuwen, 1993, p. 193). Furthermore, CDA is defined as “analytical research that studies social power abuse, dominance, and inequality which are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 254).

CDA aims to investigate critically the social inequality (Cameron, 1990; Kotthoff & Wodak, 1997; Seidel, 1988; Thorne, Kramarae, & Henley, 1983; Wodak, 1997) “as it is expressed, signaled, constituted, legitimized and so on by language use” (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 2). In other words, CDA is concerned with “the study of the relationship between language and the contexts in which it is used” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 250). “It deals primarily with the discourse dimensions of power abuse and the injustice and inequality that result from it” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 250). “It grew out of work in different disciplines in the 1960s and early 1970s, including linguistics, semiotics, psychology, anthropology, and sociology” (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 2). “Discourse analysts study language in use: written texts of all kinds, and spoken data, from conversation to highly institutionalized forms of talk” (McCarthy, 1991, p. 12).

A fully ‘critical’ account of discourse would thus require,

a theorization and description of both the social processes and structures which give rise to the production of a text, and of the social structures and processes within which individuals or groups as social historical subjects create meanings in their interaction with texts. (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 2).

The meanings created by such interactions in a given society determine the power relationships of individuals and groups (Tabatabaieian, 2015). With this specific research, CDA makes a critical inquiry on the frame of discourse that creates male-female power relationship reflected in Wolaita proverbs. Thus, it analyses the notion of power dominance of one against the other or the

discrimination of one by the other as part of social order in Wolaita.

A central notion here is that males use their social power as power of controlling their female counterparts. The males use such the power base of “privileged access to scarce resources, such as force, money, status, fame, knowledge, information, culture, or indeed various forms of public discourse and communication” (Lukes, 1986, cited in van Dijk, 1993, p. 254) to limit the freedom of their female counterparts and influence their minds too. Besides, the elementary recourse control, males also use their social power for the manipulating of the minds of females for their own interests. “This is a crucial point where discourse and CDA comes in: managing the minds of others is essentially a function of text and talk” (Fairclough, 1985, p. 743).

3. Methodology

3.1. Design of the Study

The qualitative research design was used for this study. This is because it was believed suitable to interpret and thematically elucidate the existing prejudiced negative images of femininity in selected proverbs of Wolaita.

3.2. Subjects of the Study

The major population of this study is all proverbs of Wolaita reflecting prejudiced negative images of femininity. The researcher collected a total of more than 100 proverbs reflecting femininity (both positively and negatively). However, the sample of 20 proverbs was drawn from 100 theses and more proverbs having gender polarity for the manageability and thematic relevance of the current study. For collection of the proverbs, two tools of data collection were used: semi-structured interview for 12 selected elders and participant-based observation by the researcher himself. Then, the collected proverbs were filtered based on their thematic relevance for the current study and the selected 20 were analyzed using qualitative method of data analysis.

3.3. Sampling Technique

For this study, the researcher used purposive sampling procedure to come up with 20 key

proverbs having thematic reflection of prejudiced negative images of femininity. The total sample of 20 proverbs were collected through interviewing 12 elders who were systematically selected (using snowball sampling) from various communities of Wolaita zone based on their deep knowledge of Wolaita sociocultural and ecological anthology of life. For triangulating the data, the researcher went to the remote villages in different woredas (districts) of Wolaita zone and conducted participant-based observation, being part of the social occasions taking place there.

3.4. Data Analysis

For the analysis of the entire data (proverbs reflecting prejudiced negative images of femininity), the researcher used qualitative method of data analysis. Then, he presented the results and discussion in a systematic approach of transcribing the proverbs, translating them into English, and then analyzing and interpreting them within their relevant thematic category based on the theoretical framework of CDA.

4. Results

4.1. Femininity as a Symbol of Incapability

Wolaitas proverbially mock when the upcoming new baby is a female saying (1) '*Paxabee giyode macca na'e!*' metaphorically to mean '*Who cares for the dead fish*' or similar in internal meaning to the Cambodian proverb, '*Men are gold, women are cloth*'. This proverb is primarily used as a negative emotional reflection of a father who is announced with the news that his new-born-child is a female. It is also used as a negative reaction by a member of Wolaita society when one draws a powerful picture of femininity for successful accomplishment of certain task; as repetitively observed in participant-based observation sessions. This causes otherness in the minds of females; as males deny them recognition for what they have done successfully (Gee, 2005).

Similarly, in their traditional proverbial wisdom, Wolaitas symbolize females as weakest creatures who are incapable of making right decisions saying (2) '*Macca asaa hayqqa asaa gettees*', '*Females are said to be*

weakest personalities'. This proverb is frequently used by Wolaitas in different social settings that embody the issue of decision-making by females. According to an interview response by one of the elders, 'females always make wrong decisions in overall aspects of life: marriage, child rearing, resource management, ... due to their incapability'. As to another interviewed elder, this proverb primarily reflects the hyperbolized incapability of females in making right decision. That is why, another elder, asserts saying, 'Wolaitas traditionally do not give females any chance to make decision on whatever issues of the family or the society at large'. Similar to this, Tonga people of Zambia do not give any chance for females to make decision as reflected in their proverb, '*He who listens to women suffers from famine at harvest time*', to mean decisions made by a woman are always wrong.

As mentioned in the above paragraph, traditionally, Wolaitas believe that, females are incapable in child rearing. They publically criticize the action of child rearing by their own mothers saying (3) '*Abbaaba dishuwa pereruwaw, maami dishuwa huqqunaw*', '*How much comfortable my daddy's care to me when I was a child as compared to my mummy's beleaguered care!*' Wolaitas use this proverb when an individual, reared by a widowed-female, fails to do something that s/he is concerned to do so. They directly attach any kind of personal failure by female-reared individuals with societal negative perception of femininity as a symbol of incapability in child rearing. With face-to-face interview, an elder aged 86 argued that, he is a live witness to such the reality that females are incapable of child rearing when they are not supported by their husbands. He provided examples of large number of personalities reared by widows with unacceptable behavior and unsuccessful life as a proof to his contention. As confirmation to this argument, the observation session proved that, Wolaitas publicly mock individuals reared by widows giving them weak personality.

Proverbially, Wolaitas also disrespect femininity in the institution of marriage by providing its socially-created and stereotyped picture when compared to masculinity. They say (4) '*Shugo wadhda gin bamaachchiyo*

wadhdhees, 'A husband kicks his wife when he is advised to kick a feeble person'. Here the gender of femininity is equated with weakness. As one of the interviewed elders reported, 'even the weaker males have been perceived stronger and better than clever females in the long-lived traditional wisdom of Wolaita; hence females were under-looked and officially marginalized in the institute of marriage in Wolaita', which was observed in practical life situations of married couples during the observation sessions. Because of this reason, the same elder says, 'the overall power of managing a family and its resources has been given to males (the father and sons in the family) with the assumption that females lack capability to manage it'.

4.2. Femininity as Lack of Power to Protect Self

Wolaitas proverbially prejudice femininity saying (5) *Maccaasaynne kuttoy poo'ooro soo geles*, 'Females and hens should not stay out-door during night'. This proverb draws the clear social picture of weakness on femininity to defend and protect them from the expected danger that they might encounter at night if they stay outdoors. Those females who stay outdoors deviating such the practical social situations are considered as prostitutes. As their long lived traditional practice and their biased orientation of gender polarity, Wolaitas do not allow their female children or their wives to go outside at night or they allow them to go with males (thinking that the males are safe-guards to females even the later are younger than the former).

With such society-based-biased-orientation of gender polarity, the marginalized place of femininity to protect self is also mirrored in marriage life of Wolaitas. Thus, Wolaitas proverbially depict this long-lived traditional and negative orientation of femininity saying, (6) *Hariyawunne maccaasawu dullay koshshees*, 'Females and donkeys deserve ill-treatment through kicking'. Wolaitas use this proverb most frequently when they talk about the way how they should treat females in their families. According to face-to-face interview response by one of the elders, females do not have adequate potential to exercise and enjoy democratic treatment when provided by their fathers or by their husbands. As the elder

added, the females, especially wives, have desire to be kicked by their husbands, unless they do not count their husbands as 'males'. That is why, 'we always kick our wives to assure and reassure them that we are males', stated the elder, which is less accepted by the younger generation of Wolaita and totally against Ethiopian government policy regarding gender equality.

Because of their long-lived proverbial orientation, Wolaita males start vesting their power-of-male-superiority on their wives at the beginning of their marriage. To such an end, Wolaitas proverbially say (7) *Mishiran wadhdhenna machchianne miixan zaarena paray issuwa*, 'A wife not oriented her femininity at the beginning of her marriage and a horse not trained well at its infant stage are similar'. Wolaitas train their horses at the early stages and use the horses as obedient servants when they grow big. As similar to the horses, Wolaitas orient their wives to be silent and obedient servants of their husbands at the early time of their marriage by mistreatment like insulting, hitting, and prejudicing. Due to such long-adopted social norm of Wolaita, as responded by one of the elders in face-to-face interview, even wives themselves expect their husbands to silence them and show male-superiority at the early stage of marriage life which is danger for sustaining gender parity.

It is clearly depicted in their proverbial wisdom that, Wolaitas provide males unlimited freedom to exercise polygamy with the assumption that females do not have power to defend their husbands not to marry extra wife. They say, (8) *Ne aayee minotettay ta aayee dawutatettaa diggenna*, 'How much powerful she is, your mother can never protect your father from marrying my mother as an extra wife'. Females shouldn't get social support when they intend to protect their husbands from extra marriage (the observation sessions proved this reality). 'Some two decades ago, a wife of Wolaita man organizes ceremony for her husband's extra-marriage', responded by one of the elders. 'This was accepted as a social norm and publically exercised for centuries that crippled the self-protective power of females', another elder reported.

'In their patriarchal system of life, Wolaitas reject the life preferences of females, thinking

that females are mere properties of males and should be under the overall control of males', said one of the interviewed elders. This marginalized position of females urges them to exercise life without their preferences as portrayed in the proverb, (9) *'Maccaasayne paray shishshobaa mees'*, *'Preferences of females and horses can never be counted'*. This proverb dehumanizes the image of femininity presenting females as being senseless and lack emotion to exercise their life preferences. For such disregard to their preferences in life, if females react to males 'negatively', they are being joked by their fathers or by their husbands with the proverb, (10) *'Maccaasa lanccee maatta tiganaw lo'o'*, *'Who cares for the worthless snoring of females'*. As confirmation to this, the observation session proved that, females have been joked over by their husbands or by their fathers when they cry for their life preferences.

Wolaita proverbs also portray that, females have been unfairly treated by their husbands for centuries. For such unfair treatment of females by their husbands, Wolaitas proverbially elucidate, (11) *'Maccaasay niyo tuma gin yeekkees'*, *'When a husband requests excuse for the mistake he committed on his wife, she cries in grief'*. This proverb indicates that, Wolaita husbands unfairly treat their wives. The observation session clearly indicated that, females are unfairly treated by their husbands. This, as confirmed by the interview response of one of the elders, is the central source of almost all conflicts that would happen in between the married couples of Wolaita. Even the society itself doesn't give any recognition to the fair treatment of females by their husbands. That is why Wolaitas proverbially tease a husband when he fairly treats his wife saying, (12) *'Awayi siiqiyo naiya sawotawusu, azinay siiqiyo machchiya lufatawusu'*, *'A girl well treated by her father commits infidelity, a wife well treated by her husband lisp'*, or reversely tease a wife saying, (13) *'Azinay siiqiyo machchiya pereruwa harggawusu'*, *'A wife well treated by her husband misacts'*, which discourages the right treatment of females by their husbands or by their fathers.

'In our male-dominated and female-silenced society', one of the interviewed elders says, 'females couldn't protect themselves from

males' mistreatment (through insulting and kicking). However, they show their dissatisfaction of mistreatment by their husbands in a very systematic and invisible way'. Another interviewed elder added that, 'such females' dissatisfaction of mistreatment is reflected in their daily routine activities that they accomplish in everyday like cooking, fetching, shopping, They do their jobs reversely to the 'normal' to show their dissatisfaction to the mistreatment given by their husbands' (which is also observed during the observation session). As a confirmation of this idea, Wolaitas proverbially say, (14) *'Azinay ixxiyo machchiya giyay ixxido parssuwa ehawusu'*, *'A wife mistreated by her husband buys and brings him tasteless local drink as revenge'*.

4.3. Femininity as a Source of Danger and Problems

Wolaitas negatively draw a picture of femininity as if it is a major source of danger. They say, (15) *'Macca yelay pala yeles'*, *'Having a female child is having danger'*. According to the interview response of one of the elders, Wolaitas interpret this proverb giving different negative images to females. As to the same elder, a female is the core source of danger to her parents. As he stated, one, at her puberty stage, a girl may have many boyfriends who will create conflict to avoid the intrusion of one by another in the same girl. Second, she will be pregnant for an unofficial boyfriend and he can deny accepting it; which is a serious moral, social, and economic burden to her family, as reported by another interviewed elder. Thirdly, she will be out of control by her parents and become exposed to HIV/AIDS. By these and other related reasons, Wolaitas proverbially call *'Females dangerous children'* saying, (16) *'Itanayi maccaa naa'* reported by the same elder (many people were observed using this proverb during the observation session).

Similarly, 'Wolaitas give the behavior of devil or evil spirit to females', said one of the elders. They equate females with the devil saying (17) *'Xalaheenne maccaasay issuwa'*, *'Devil and females are the same'*, added another elder. 'In Wolaita, the devil gets a picture of evil acts like distraction, insulting, quarreling, conflict, infidelity, dishonesty, cruelty Wolaitas

give these all pictures as key features of femininity; hence, they do not trust females on whatever actions they do', the elder reported. Proverbially they taunt females saying (18) *'Maccaasaa ammaniogee carkkuwa ammaniyogaa'*, *'Females' behavior is just like the behavior of whirlwind; which is not trusted'*, reported another elder.

'Femininity is also mirrored as source of problems in Wolaita proverbs', said one of the elders. The elder continued his contention saying, (19) *'Maccaasay maqosan maattay dolenna'*, *'Advice of females are too severe that can destroy a lot of valuable things'*. Wolaitas use this proverb with negative implication of females as they provide extreme advice that creates problems for the one who gets it (most probably their husbands), another elder reported. As a support to this idea, another elder stated that, he is a live witness for the problems that he encountered by accepting advice from his wife. He added that, a husband should not value problem-generating 'womanish' advice of his wife if he likes to be safe in life.

'Females are also considered as sources of problems for their families when they do not take care of unsafe sex with their male counterparts in the community', reported one of the elders. The same elder added that, the long-lived norm of Wolaita is too much tight which rejects making sex before marriage and disrespects girls who commit such a mistake. Proverbially, they say, according to another elder, (20) *'Shoorwawu kehiya geela'ya baawaason yelawusu'*, *'A girl who exposes herself to unsafe sex within the community gets a risk of giving birth to a fatherless child'*. 'When this situation happens', the same elder added, 'the girl herself and her family get into serious moral, social, and economic crisis as it is highly rejected act to the societal norm of Wolaita' (the observation sessions confirmed this reality).

5. Concluding Remarks

In almost all walks of life, in human history, femininity has been socially constructed as the symbol of incapability (Bruyn & France, 2001; Oha, 1998; Wharton, 2005). People have been polarized femininity negatively as if it is always inferior to masculinity which distracts

the internally-driven self-confidence and independence of female individuals in almost all social contexts of human life. Confirming this reality, in their proverbial wisdom, Wolaitas always perceive femininity as a primary symbol of incapability (see the interpretation of proverb no (1) in results section). They proverbially mock a father who got a new-female-baby thinking that females are valueless for their fathers. In addition, they disvalue female's effort of accomplishing successful deeds. This is due to the prejudiced societal perception of females as always weaker than their male counterparts.

Similarly, as their proverbial wisdom portray, Wolaitas do not give opportunity for females to make decisions. They believe that, females are incapable of making right decisions. As clearly indicated in the result section (see the interpretation of proverb no (2) in results section), they do not trust decisions made by females. They perceive females as individuals who always make wrong decisions in overall aspects of life: marriage, child rearing, and resource management. Because of this backward perception on femininity, Wolaitas traditionally do not give females any chance to make decision on whatever issues of the family or the society at large. Thus, females of Wolaita have become mere observant of any decision in their families and in their societies that promotes disempowerment of females to large extent in Wolaita.

In their traditional proverbial wisdom, Wolaitas also believe that, females are incapable in child rearing. They publically criticize the actions of children reared by the widowed mothers (see the interpretation of proverb no (3) in results section). They perceive individuals reared by widowed-female as weak personalities. They directly attach any kind of personal failure by those individuals with societal negative perception of femininity which marginalizes females' skills and knowledge of rearing their children.

Proverbially, Wolaitas also disrespect femininity in the institution of marriage by providing it socially-created and stereotyped picture when compared to masculinity. They equate the gender of femininity with weakness (see the interpretation of proverb no (4) in results section). Even, proverbially, they draw

a weaker male better picture than a stronger female in their community. This makes females under-looked and officially marginalized in the institute of marriage in Wolaita. As a result, males have given the overall power of controlling a family and its resources which made the females totally disempowered to make decisions on the issues concerning their family.

Therefore, it can be generalized from the above discussion that, Wolaitas draw femininity as the symbol of incapability in their long-lived proverbial wisdom; hence, they de-motivate the equal engagement of females on different activities accomplished at family level or at the society level at large.

According to Bruyn and France (2001), societies in various corners of the world marginalize females by totally vesting economic and political power to masculinity. As result of this, there has been socially created hegemonic picture of females as they have no adequate power to protect self from different dangers. As confirmation to this, Wolaitas proverbially prejudice femininity in interactive situations of their daily communications. They draw weak social picture of femininity with the assumption that females can never defend and protect them from the expected danger that they might encounter in their living community (see the interpretation of proverb no (5) in results section). They do this, as indicated in the interview session, because of their long-lived traditional wisdom which presents female gender with biased negative picture.

With such society-based-biased-orientation of gender polarity, Wolaitas mirror the marginalized place of femininity to protect self in their marriage life. By its very nature in history, marriage in Wolaita hasn't yet reflected parity in gender (Haile Gabriel, 2007). As clearly portrayed in the proverbial wisdom of Wolaita (see the interpretation of proverb no (6) in results section), males have been empowered as the sole owners of power in the family which marginalizes the position of females as if they were servants of males. Thus, husbands of Wolaita have kicked and silenced their wives for centuries. As the result, females have publicly denied

opportunity to exercise and enjoy democratic treatment by their fathers or by their husbands.

As clearly depicted in their long-lived proverbial wisdom, Wolaita males start vesting their power-of-male-superiority on their wives at the beginning of their marriage (see the interpretation of proverb no (7) in results section). They give home-based-training to their wives on the skills of being silent and obedient to their husbands at the early stages of their marriage life. Due to such long-adopted social norm of Wolaita, as indicated by interview, even Wolaita females themselves expect their husbands to kick them and show male-superiority at the early stage of marriage life which is danger for sustaining gender parity.

The deep-rooted social norm of Wolaita provides males with unlimited freedom to exercise polygamy (marriage-to-many wives) with the assumption that females do not have power to defend their husbands not to marry extra wife (Haile Gabriel, 2007). For females, this norm is too much tight that doesn't allow a female to marry even a single additional husband (see the interpretation of proverb no (8) in results section). Females shouldn't get social support when they intend to protect their husbands from extra marriage. 'Some two decades ago, a wife of Wolaita man organizes ceremony for her husband's extra-marriage', responded by one of the elders. This has been accepted as a social norm and publically exercised for centuries that crippled the self-protective power of females in Wolaita.

In their patriarchal system of life, Wolaitas reject the life preferences of females thinking that females are mere properties of males and should be under the overall control of males. This marginalized position of females urges them to exercise life without their preferences (see the interpretation of proverb no (9) in results section). Such the public perception of viewing females as being senseless and lack of emotion to exercise their life preferences dehumanizes the image of femininity. For such disregard to their preferences in life, if females react males 'negatively', females become being joked by their fathers or by their husbands (see the interpretation of proverb no (10) in results section).

Because of such socially constructed negative outlook of femininity by the society, Wolaita females have been unfairly treated by their husbands for centuries (see the interpretation of proverb no (11) in results section). Wolaita husbands unfairly treat their wives which is the central source of almost all conflicts that would happen between the married couples of Wolaita. Even the society itself doesn't give recognition to the fair treatment of females by their husbands (see the interpretation of proverb no (12 and 13) in results section), which discourages the right treatment of females by their husbands or by their fathers in Wolaita.

In male-dominated and female-silenced society of Wolaita, females couldn't protect themselves from males' mistreatment (through insulting and kicking). However, they show their dissatisfaction of mistreatment by their husbands in a very systematic and invisible way. Such their dissatisfaction of mistreatment is reflected in their daily routine activities that they accomplish in everyday like cooking, fetching, shopping, etc. They do their jobs reversely to the 'normal' to show their dissatisfaction to the mistreatment given by their husbands (see the interpretation of proverb no (14) in results section).

From the above discussion, we can generalize the conclusion that, gender of femininity has been given negatively drawn and prejudiced picture of lacking power to protect self in Wolaita proverbial wisdom. Such the prejudiced and dehumanized picture of feminine gender highly endangered the effort to sustain gender parity in Wolaita resulted in females maltreatment till-to-date.

Even though interpreted differently at diverse contexts of human society in the globe, femininity has been reflected as source of danger and problems (Oha, 1998). More specifically, Wolaitas negatively draw picture of femininity as if it is a major source of danger in their long-lived traditional wisdom. As Wolaitas reflect in different contexts of human communication using proverbs, a female is the core source of danger to her parents (see the interpretation of proverb no (15) in results section). They perceive that, girls invite danger to their family which can result in serious moral, social, and economic

burden to their parent. The assumption behind this, according to the interview responses of elders, is that girls are very easy to be deceived by their male counterparts and become endangered that would take the attention of her parents (see the interpretation of proverb no (16) in results section).

Similarly, Wolaitas give the behavior of devil or evil spirit to females. In a figurative speech of simile, they equate females with devil (see the interpretation of proverb no (17) in results section). In Wolaita, devil gets a picture of evil acts like distraction, insulting, quarreling, conflict, infidelity, dishonesty, cruelty etc. Wolaitas give these all pictures as key features of femininity; hence, they do not trust females on whatever actions they do. They believe that, females are roguish in their nature; hence, they taunt females using their proverbs (see the interpretation of proverb no (18) in results section). As indicated by the interview result, Wolaitas believe that, the behavior of females is invisible and changing.

Proverbially-deep-rooted traditional wisdom of Wolaita also mirrors femininity as source of different problems. For instance, they say the advices of females are extreme and negative (see the interpretation of proverb no (19) in results section) that creates problem for the one who accepts it (most probably to their husbands). Besides, Wolaitas also view females as weaker individuals in taking care of unsafe sex who are also sources of moral, social, and economic crisis to their family in particular and society at large (see the interpretation of proverb no (19) in results section).

Therefore, based on the above discussion, we can deduce an inference that Wolaita proverbs embody the dehumanized and prejudiced negative images of femininity as sources of danger and problems which re-bounces back efforts to ensure gender parity in overall anthology of Wolaita society.

Overall, based on the analysis and discussion made above, it can be concluded that, Wolaita proverbs reflect the prejudiced negative images of femininity. These prejudiced negative images are practically reflected and being embedded in the overall system of human communication in Wolaita society using proverbs. As a prejudiced negative

image, Wolaita proverbs reflect femininity as a symbol of incapability in making right decision, lack of skills and knowledge for rearing children, and lack of adequate potential for taking responsibility of their own family. Similarly, Wolaita proverbs draw the image of femininity as lack of power to protect the self from the expected danger, hence be vulnerable to different dangers in the society. Moreover, proverbs of Wolaita view femininity as a source of danger and problems to themselves and to their own families.

According to Lukes (1986, cited in van Dijk, 1993, p. 254), “such inferior and dehumanized image of femininity provides males the social power of controlling all the resources, such as force, money, status, fame, knowledge, information, and culture”. As a result, males get social power base to limit the freedom of their female counterparts and influence their minds, too. Besides, males also use this social power for the manipulating of the minds of females for their own interests (Fairclough, 1985), which has been clearly reflected in the overall anthology of communication using proverbs in Wolaita communities.

Generally speaking, such dehumanized and prejudiced negative images of femininity reflected in Wolaita proverbs re-bounce back the efforts to ensure gender parity and equality in overall anthology of Wolaita communities. To reverse this situation, therefore, appropriate professionals should give awareness creation trainings to people of Wolaita to de-motivate the use of proverbs having negative images of femininity. Walaita speaking families should encourage their children to use the proverbs that reflect gender equality, and the society, at large, should totally avoid the outdated negative perception of femininity in their overall walks of life.

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